

**ISRAEL: PALESTINE PUSHED
BEYOND ENDURANCE**

**CREATING BALANCE IN REPORTING THE
FACTS BEHIND THE CONFLICT**

PEARLS AND IRRITATIONS ET AL

Publishing Details

Israel: Palestine pushed beyond endurance by Pearls and Irritations et al

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1st Edition 2025, paperback.

ISBN: xxx-xxx-xxxx-xx-x

Publishing services by: Australian eBook Publisher

A catalogue record for this book is available from the National Library of Australia.

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PREFACE

This book, like our public policy journal *Pearls and Irritations* presents information, analysis, clarification, views and perspectives largely unavailable in mainstream media in Australia and elsewhere. Here, the writings of contributing authors aim to promote understanding and engagement with the plight and injustices of the war perpetrated, since 8 October 2023, against Gaza and its people.

Israel's war against Gaza

Media coverage of the war in Gaza since October 2023 has spread a series of lies propagated by Israel and the United States. The Murdoch NewsCorp outlets, in particular, are guilty, but this reporting continues in the Australian media. Truth and morality seem to hold little value as 'alternative facts' emerge daily from Washington, Tel Aviv, and London.

What hypocrisy it is, for example, to read reports of our Attorney General's planned visit to Israel to mend relations with a criminal Government. This is our government's response to concern about Netanyahu's retaliatory slamming of Australia when it voted in favour of a UN resolution demanding Israel end its presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

The evidence against such a ‘diplomatic visit is clear:

- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has issued warrants for the arrest of Netanyahu for crimes against humanity and war crimes committed from at least 8 October 2023.
- The Albanese Government has not condemned Israel’s war of genocide against 2.2 million Palestinians for over a year and a half, killing and wounding over 250,000 civilians, 75% of whom are women and children.
- It is not enforcing the findings against Israel by the Court of Justice (ICJ), the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the UN General Assembly Resolution of 18 September 2024 which implemented the ICJ decision.
- It has not condemned Israel’s decades-long colonialism and apartheid against the Palestinian people. In 1948, Palestinians owned 94% of all land. Now Israel owns 82% and wants more. Our Government recognises Israel, but not the State of Palestine.

By appeasing the Israeli regime the Albanese Government has given a green light to a war of genocide under the pretext of ‘self-defence’. It has also contributed to the current situation where defending the Palestinian people is dismissed as anti-Semitism.

Then was fulfilled what had been said by Jeremiah the prophet:

*A voice was heard in Ramah,
sobbing and loud lamentation;
Rachel weeping for her children,
And she would not be consoled,
Since they were no more.*

The following collection of articles by authors who are some of Australia’s most experienced analysts, who bring a depth of experience as past Australian leaders, ambassadors, public servants, academics and journalists. Our commentary is also supported by esteemed

international commentators. They are not paid for their contributions and their considered commentary is independent.

I hope you are informed and challenged by the selections here.

John Menadue

Contributing editor

HOW ZIONISM PROSELYTISES

SARA DOWSE

16 October 2024



In her recent acceptance speech as recipient of British PEN Pinter Prize, writer Arundhati Roy made special note of President Biden's words on his visit to Israel shortly after 7 October 2023.

I don't believe you have to be a Jew to be a Zionist', Biden declared, 'and I am a Zionist'.

It was a statement of America's undying loyalty to Israel which, like many such statements, papered over what is in fact a far more complicated set of issues. For while anyone can be a Zionist, converting to Judaism is no easy matter. Unlike others, Judaism isn't a proselytising religion, and of the many things that Judaism is, it certainly isn't Zionism.

It's curious how spiritual movements founded with calls for love and peace have transmogrified at one stage or another into militant proselytisers. Thus was Christianity under the Crusades, Islam under the Mongols, Buddhism today in Myanmar. Yet in most respects Judaism would seem to be the reverse of that trajectory.

Judaism began as a tribal religion. Abraham's tribe, the Hebrews, worshipped Yahweh, an especially jealous, vengeful deity. Nor was there much peace-loving in what became the kingdom of Judah. The first five books of the *Old Testament*, what we Jews call *The Torah*, and parts of the extended *Tanach*, fairly bristle with Judah's conflict with its neighbours. If Judah hadn't beaten the Hittites, for example, Jews might well have ended up praying to the Hittite goddess Kattaha. But if that's a fancy the archaeological record demolishes, there's little argument about Yahweh being a particularly harsh taskmaster. So much so that Abraham was all too ready to sacrifice his son Isaac until Yahweh himself told him to drop his knife, assuring him he was only being tested.

It was the Babylonian Exile of 595 BCE that changed Judaism forever. The rabbis who assembled in Yavne after the destruction of the Second Temple initiated a body of teachings, the overall effect of which was to transform the vengeful Yahweh into a monotheist deity so powerful he cannot even be named – the Ein Sof, or 'endless unknowable' of the kabbalists. Though some Jews remained in what we know now as Palestine, they were hugely outnumbered by Jews in the Diaspora, who for the most part carried out the Talmudic tradition, with its emphasis on principles like *tzedakah* (justice) and *tikkun olam* (repairing the

world). But unlike other ‘people of the book’, Jews of all denominations have eschewed proselytising. Arguably, the one exception to this has been Zionism which, as we are witnessing in all its horror, has tried to legitimise itself with the militancy of the earlier scriptures.

If necessarily oversimplified for the current exercise, these fundamental developments are crucial to understanding how Israel became so out of control today. While from the mid-nineteenth century Zionists dreamt of returning to Jerusalem, not every Zionist wanted a Jewish state there. Theodor Herzl’s Political Zionism was the product of France’s Dreyfus case and the Russian pogroms triggered by the 1881 assassination of Tsar Alexander II. What came to be known as Cultural Zionism encouraged further Jewish links to the Holy Land but vehemently opposed establishing a Jewish-privileged state there. It’s important to note here that other Jewish groups of the time, like the Bund, wanted nothing to do with the Zionist project. Some warned of the dangers inherent in it, or of its undermining cherished Jewish values. To many it was another false messiah.

Then came the 1930s. As the fate of Europe’s Jewry became ever more dire, Political Zionism gained traction, not only among Jews but Nazis as well, as evidenced in the infamous Haavara Agreement, through which some 60,000 German Jews migrated to Palestine between 1933 and 1939. It was an early German ‘solution’ to the so-called Jewish question. The scheme was problematic, to say the least. The Zionists in Palestine used it to increase their numbers, but only Jews who could pay to go did. For Germany the arrangement served to break the 1933 anti-Nazi boycott while getting rid of some of its Jews. Yet European and American organisations condemned the arrangement (as did, interestingly enough, Ze’ev Jabotinsky, the most militant Zionist of his day), and as with the current crisis, the Haavara, or Transfer Agreement, tore the Jewish world apart.

While Diasporic Jews today are enjoined to support Israel come what may, an ever-expanding number of us are appalled, distressed beyond measure, at the genocide being conducted in our name. After cataloguing the many horrors Israel has rained down on Gaza, now Lebanon, now Yemen, goading Iran and risking world war in the

bargain, Arundhati Roy was moved in her address to ask, ‘Who would have imagined that we would live to see the day when German police would arrest Jewish citizens for protesting against Israel and Zionism and accuse them of anti-Semitism?’ Yet this is the topsy-turvy, *Alice in Wonderland* world we live in. Facts and complexities are buried in torrents of words and slogans.

Jingoists are especially good on slogans. ‘Israel has a right to defend itself.’ (Like this?) ‘ Hamas, a proscribed terrorist organisation ...’ (substitute if necessary ‘Hezbollah’ or ‘Houthi’, but what does ‘terrorist’ mean?) ‘Intifada’ means ‘Israel has no right to exist’ – but it doesn’t actually mean that. ‘From the river to the sea’, likewise. ‘The greatest loss of Jewish life since the Holocaust.’ (Compared to tens upon tens of thousands of Palestinians?) ‘Holocaust’ and ‘antisemitism’ are routinely dragged out to distract from Israel’s unrelenting barbarism. Who has benefited? Certainly not Israelis. Certainly not Diasporic Jews, many of whom hold the tenets of *tikkun olam* and *tzedakah* dear. It certainly doesn’t augur well for global peace.

It may not take much to be a Zionist these days. As Joe Biden said, you don’t even have to be a Jew. What he didn’t say, and may not understand, is that an ever-increasing number of committed Jews have lost all faith in Zionism. If they had any to begin with.

THE CONTEXT FOR OCTOBER 7 IS WILFULLY AND DELIBERATELY IGNORED

JOHN MENADUE

The context for October 7 is wilfully and deliberately ignored

7 October 2024



October 7 did not occur in a vacuum. It was the result of decades long Israeli occupation, never ending violence and oppression of Palestinians. The pressure cooker exploded!

A slightly updated post from December 19 2023.

Supporters of Zionism highlight the horrors of October 7, 'never again' to divert attention from the continuing genocide in Gaza inflicted by Israel. Our politicians and media cooperate in this diversionary tactic. We are encouraged to turn away from the unspeakable Israeli inflicted atrocities and war crimes.

As the Palestinian lawyer Diana Buttu puts it, 'The world tells us that nothing can justify October 7, and yet everything Israel has done can be justified by October 7.'

Hamas is the excuse for the Israeli attack on Gaza. It is not the reason.

The real Israeli reason and objective in Gaza is to drive out the population and destroy infrastructure as part of a long term plan to expel Palestinians in Gaza and elsewhere.

This settler colonisation has been ongoing since 1948, starting with the Nakba. In Australia, we are very familiar with settler colonisation – driving out the original inhabitants.

In 1948, Palestinians owned 94% of all land; now Israelis own 82%. These figures tell the real story. Israel is an illegal occupying power. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has made that very clear.

October 7 did not occur in a vacuum. It was the result of decades long Israeli occupation, never ending violence and oppression. The pressure cooker exploded!

The United States (US) and Australia parrot on about a two state solution but we do nothing to advance it. We use it as a fig leaf to hide our support for US policies in support of Israel.

Recognising Palestine would be a first step in a political settlement. But the Israeli government rejects it. Netanyahu boasts that he has thwarted a Palestinian State.

Instead, Israel pursues occupation of more and more land, ethnic cleansing and apartheid.

Even if the military defeat of Hamas was possible it would not end Palestinian resistance. It would continue in another and stronger form.

Hamas is certainly not winning in our Washington manipulated media. But it is winning overwhelmingly in the Arab street and even in Australian streets.

Netanyahu repeatedly tells us about how Hamas is a great threat to Israel. But in recent years he has been channelling financial support to Hamas.

In 2016, Netanyahu began allowing the Qataris to send money to Gaza. Netanyahu said that money was humanitarian aid. His motive for this secret funding however has been to build Hamas as the rival to Fatah and President Abbas. Netanyahu is now hoist with his own petard. And Palestinians are paying the price with high tech Israeli killing.

A recent poll by the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) of persons in Gaza and the West Bank should be essential reading. It reports on Hamas and other key issues;

- Support for Hamas has more than tripled in the West Bank compared to three months ago. In the Gaza Strip, support for Hamas increased but not significantly. Despite the increase in its popularity, the majority in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip does not support Hamas. It is worth noting that support for Hamas usually rises temporarily during or immediately after a war and then returns to the previous level several months after the end of the war.
- Support for President Mahmoud Abbas and his Fatah party drops significantly. The same is true for the trust in the Palestinian Authority as a whole, as demand for its dissolution rises to nearly 60%, the highest percentage ever recorded in PSR polls. Demand for Abbas's resignation is rising to around 90 percent, and even higher in the West Bank. Despite the decline in

support for Fatah and Abbas, the most popular Palestinian figure remains Marwan Barghouti, a Fatah leader (in jail). Barghouti is still able to beat Hamas' candidate Ismail Haniyeh or any other.

- Support for armed struggle rises ten percentage points compared to three months ago, with more than 60% saying it is the best means of ending the Israeli occupation; in the West Bank, the percentage rises further to close to 70%. Moreover, a majority in the West Bank believes that the formation of armed groups in communities subject to settler attacks is the most effective means of combating settler terrorism against towns and villages in the West Bank.
- Despite the above-mentioned reference to the lack of confidence in the seriousness of US and European talk about reviving the two-state solution and despite the increase in support for armed struggle, support for the two-state solution has not dropped in this poll. To the contrary, support for this solution has increased slightly in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This increase seems to come especially from those who believe that the US and European talk about the two-state solution is indeed serious.

Asked about their degree of 'satisfaction' of various actors in the Gaza genocide the US was placed last.

See full details of the poll here.

<https://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/961>

The Zionist Lobby has become tiresome in accusing its critics of anti-semitism. It uses it as a battering ram against all its critics. The Lobby seeks to define 'anti-semitism' to suit its own purposes. It has become a victim of its own propaganda.

There has to be a political settlement acceptable to both Palestinians and Israelis. The US has the power to force that settlement but it is in thrall and manipulated by the very powerful Israeli Lobby in the US.

US 'leadership' is failing everywhere. In Gaza, President Biden urges Israel to be more cautious in its killing!

Where are the peacemakers?

Certainly not in the violent US with its camp followers like Australia and the United Kingdom (UK). We thought there were Labor governments in the UK and Australia that cared about peace with justice.

We have lost our moral compass.

Where is our humanity?

HARDMAN NETANYAHU A CENTURY OUT OF DATE, FEEDING DUTTON'S COLONIAL NARRATIVE

MICHAEL PASCOE

14 October 2024



There was a time when Netanyahu's tactics would go unquestioned. That time helps explain those who continue to

give Israel unqualified and unquestioning support and ties in with the ‘hard man’ image Peter Dutton wants to own, writes Michael Pascoe.

Cullin-la-Ringo, near Springsure in central Queensland, is the site of Australia’s biggest single massacre of colonists in the Frontier War – also known as the Wills tragedy. Gayiri warriors armed with nulla nullas killed 19 men, women and children camped in preparation for establishing a station on 260 square kilometres of Gayiri land.

In the way of such things, the attack was in revenge for the murder of Gayiri men by a neighbouring squatter who falsely accused them of stealing cattle.

And, in the further way of such things, more than 300 and perhaps as many as 370 Gayiri men, women and children were subsequently hunted down and slaughtered.

Taking the higher number – ‘dispersals’ were routinely underreported, if reported at all – the revenge kill ratio was 19.5 to one. There was no questioning of such murder, of genocide, only praise. It used to be so easy, even easier, if a coloniser had been attacked. Wiping out the blacks was policy.

That was 1863. Two decades later, Peter Dutton’s great-great-grandfather became the local member for the Springsure area and was Queensland’s Secretary for Lands as the bloody colonisation, the massacres, rolled on in north Queensland.

The Frontier Wars

The Frontier Wars across northern Australia, the genocide, continued at least into the 1930s – or to 1981 if you count a mass poisoning in Alice Springs that killed two people and hospitalised another six.

The last officially approved killings were in 1928, a series of raids west of Alice Springs led by Constable William George Murray. Collectively called the Coniston massacre, they followed the murder of a white dingo trapper by a Walpiri man. A hasty board of inquiry tasked with whitewashing Coniston found that 31 Aboriginal people had been

killed, each justifiably so. The Walpiri put the figure at 200, so a revenge kill ratio of somewhere between 31 and 200 to one. And the man who killed the dingo trapper was not among the dead.

The nobbled inquiry's chairman subsequently regretted his involvement, saying that if the same circumstances happened again, someone would be hanged for the killings. Massacring blackfellas had become less politically popular.

Historians Tony Roberts and Henry Reynolds have documented the role of colonial politicians, including Alexander Downer's grandfather, John Downer, in masterminding, condoning or concealing mass murder in the late 19th century. It was popular policy with electors in the north – Aboriginal people were not electors – but became steadily less so in the cities and internationally.

Israel kill ratios

A century later, Israel is finding lavish kill ratios and large-scale “collateral damage” losses, to use the euphemism, are increasingly unacceptable internationally, too.

Bibi Netanyahu's Gaza kill ratio is running at more than 34 to one based on the toll of identified war dead, with an overwhelming percentage of non-combatant women and children. A Lancet article has reported a conservative estimate of the indirect death toll of such a war – from disease, starvation, and destroyed health infrastructure – would be four times the present count, a kill ratio of some 140 to one, nearly eight per cent of Gaza's pre-war population.

Such percentages would not have been a problem in northern Australia a century or so ago, especially given the provocation of the October 7 attacks by Hamas, a Cullin-la-ringo. The percentage of some Aboriginal nations killed by colonisers was closer to 100 per cent than eight. I can find no current mention of Gayiri people.

The prelude to the sparks for the Cullin-la-Ringo, Coniston and other massacres during the Frontier War was universal – dispossession, oppression and desperation in the face of colonisation.

It is no accident that among the democracies most outspoken in their criticism of Israel's Gaza war are those with strong memories of their own colonisation – South Africa and Ireland.

Our colonial story

Australia's colonial story is more recessed, history is written by the victors, the standard fare for most of us a sanitised version of the white man's triumph against the odds, blackfellas barely recorded in school texts – and then dismissively – until relatively recently. The impact of the colonisers' claims of terra nullius was not considered, not a concern.

Having failed to accept the invitation of the Uluru statement, "our" history remains that of the colonisers, not the Australians. To the extent it was ever mentioned, the Frontier Wars were portrayed as "treacherous blacks", never Australians fighting invaders stealing their land and murdering its owners, wholesale rape and pillage.

The psychology of denial runs deep, the creeds and attitudes handed down through generations, if only subconsciously. Not all or always, but often enough, resulting in the inability of much of the conservative base to come to terms with our heritage, with families' pasts, with the source of our wealth.

It is little wonder then that the side of our polity labelled "conservative" unreservedly backs the Netanyahu government and its actions and has no criticism of the kill ratio, the fatal collateral damage of tens of thousands of children, the broader damage of hundreds of thousands. To the victor, the spoils.

Peter Dutton's stance

If Peter Dutton has expressed any sympathy for those tens of thousands of innocents killed and the greater number maimed in Gaza or voiced any support for a ceasefire, I've missed it. Maybe at some point in the future, he will say he said something to someone, like his apology for attacking Lebanese migrants.

Total unconditional support for Netanyahu and casting shade on all Palestinians also works well as an Islamophobic dog whistle, the immediate political aim, but the underlying culture is one of being on

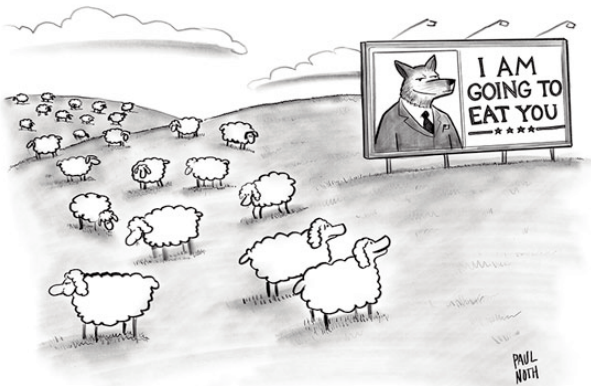
the colonisers' side, backing the perceived superior race/religion/culture against those treacherous inferior natives.

It's the same conservative culture that supported apartheid South Africa until it was no more, that more recently would preference white South African farmers as our humanitarian intake, that would prefer to have no Palestinians here or, for that matter, Lebanese. Well, not Muslim Lebanese, anyway. It is the culture seeking the comfort and cossetting of the white Anglosphere in Asia.

And going hard, going brutal, "playing tackle, not touch", seeing the world only in black and white, is the strong man image Dutton is consciously promoting in support of what is becoming the LNP's most regular chorus: "Albanese is weak."

In the way of conservative thinking and some electorates' voting, the "strong man" appeals even to people who may disagree with the policies espoused.

Cue the magnificent Paul North cartoon of a wolf politician's billboard promising "I will eat you" and sheep saying, "He tells it like it is".



"He tells it like it is."

The hard man image

There is a hard man image but no nuance in backing the colonisers' version of history without quibble. Our own preferred coloniser history – begone you traitorous black armband types – resonates with the story offered by the Netanyahu extremists. They, too, believe the land is theirs by right for the taking and making fruitful, that no apology is required.

A century after Coniston, it is not that simple anymore. Despite the journalists killed and excluded, a world mainly without coloniser sympathies watches and is discomforted. In light of Gaza, Norway, Spain, and Ireland joined 143 other nations this year in recognising the state of Palestine. France, Japan, South Korea and Slovenia were among the Security Council members to support full Palestinian membership of the UN. Only the US voted against it, using its veto power.

The world has changed. The percentage of the “native” population Netanyahu would need to kill to achieve Queensland's Frontier War victory would not be countenanced, even while nothing more than “concern” is voiced as the percentage rises.

The mutual intractability of the combatants ensures the disaster continues and will be reborn in the survivors. Of course, Hamas are terrorists – what else could they be against the power and might of US-backed Israel when they are offered no hope of improvement?

‘Terrorism is the war of the poor, and war is the terrorism of the rich.’

Peter Ustinov.

In the eyes of the coloniser culture, as demonstrated by the Murdoch press, IRA letter bombs were appalling terrorism, but thousands of exploding paggers were admirable Israeli genius no matter who they killed or maimed.

In the eyes of the coloniser culture, bombing multiple families to kill one Hamas or Hezbollah target is acceptable. Collateral damage is irrelevant when you believe you are fighting a total war – there are no innocents.

The Israeli extremists can point to Dresden and Hiroshima and

Cambodia and Vietnam and Iraq and wonder why they should be criticised for killing civilians. It is a fair question.

But theirs is a colonialist's war in a mainly post-colonial world.

A century after Coniston – minor massacres unless you were Walpiri – peace can no longer be won by extermination.

Republished from Michael West Media, October 05 2024

AUSTRALIA, ISRAEL AND THE UNITED NATIONS

MARGARET REYNOLDS

12 October 2024



In 1949 Australia's Dr H.V. Evatt was described as 'The most brilliant and effective voice of Small Powers – a leading statesman

for the world’s conscience.’ When will another Australian voice speak up in the name of humanity at the United Nations?

If the Australian Government valued its historic role in the establishment of the United Nations (UN), maybe it would be in a better position to influence Israel and the United States (US) to abide by globally agreed international standards. Instead, our leaders parrot the myth of a US ‘rules-based order’ created by the powerful to protect the already powerful and often ignoring the real United Nations developed system of international law.

Israel has not demonstrated any commitment to international law after the Hamas attack in October 2023. As a close ally and friend, the Australian Government could have advocated for independent professional mediation, for the immediate return of Israeli hostages and referral of Hamas leaders to the International Criminal Court (ICC). But powerful nations are prone to rely on military retaliation which greatly expands the conflict, fails to resolve the initial crisis and devastates already vulnerable communities. Australia chose instead to advocate for Israel’s ‘right to defend itself’.

Since 1949, the State of Israel has ignored 229 United Nations Security Council resolutions that had the potential to limit conflict in the Middle East. Instead, Israel has chosen to build and strengthen its military power, confident that its great protector, the United States, will always be there to support the state with financial resources and weapons. This has created an isolationist and defensive culture for the Israeli people and a hostile reactive environment from their immediate neighbours.

For the past twelve months we have watched the contradictions of the US administration urging restraint and a ceasefire, while continuing to supply and increase the defence aid it guarantees Israel. Has the Australian Prime Minister dared to suggest a US freeze on funding to Israel until a negotiated settlement is determined? Remember both the US and Australia were quick to freeze United Nations Relief Works

Assistance funding to desperate Palestinians, because of a later discredited link to Hamas. However neither the United States nor Australian leaders appear to recognise that their practical and moral support of Israel makes them complicit in the war they have enabled to continue and recently expand.

Could it have been different? Israel as a nation was itself a creation of the United Nations and the Australian Government had a significant role when 'Partition' was negotiated and supported by the fledgling organisation. On 29 November 1947, the United Nations General Assembly voted 33 to 13 with 10 abstentions and one state absent to partition Mandatory Palestine into two states-one Jewish and one Arab. The Chifley Government's Minister for External Affairs, Dr H.V. Evatt was a strong advocate for Australia's support and, as Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestine Question, he led negotiations which resulted in the State of Israel. He was President of the United Nations General Assembly when the historic May 1949 vote admitted Israel as the 59th member of the United Nations.

Given this early history, successive Australian Governments should have been more proactive in urging Israel to work within the United Nations, rather than constantly ignoring and deriding it. Of course, blame also rests with the United States which shares comparable disregard for the international body as it asserts its determination to dominate global relations.

The recent speech given by Prime Minister Netanyahu attacking the United Nations as 'a swamp of antisemitism' and his subsequent banning the entry of United Nations Secretary General Guterres to Israel, shows us a man out of control and desperate to justify the extremes of his murderous regime.

In the last twelve months Israel has become a pariah state widely condemned for war crimes, genocide and ruthless disregard for humanity. Yet on the anniversary of the October 7 attack the Australian Government failed to outline how and when it will respond to comply

with its own agreed obligations as a United Nations member state and signatory to legal instruments designed to uphold international law. Rulings of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) have been ignored by both the Australian Prime Minister and our Attorney General. There has been no statement to parliament or even a media release to explain to the public how Australia will respond to the ICJ ruling of July 19 that Israel is violating the rights of Palestinians through prolonged occupation, apartheid and ethnic cleansing. Furthermore, the ICJ specifically found that states have an obligation not to render aid or assistance which would maintain Israel's illegal presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Despite this clear legal ruling, the Australian Government managed to cobble together an excuse for abstaining while the United Nations General Assembly voted in support 124-14. It appears no official analysis or discussion has been initiated by Australia's Attorney General's Department to consider how Australia plans to walk its way through this legal challenge. How will it vote next time the United Nations General Assembly calls on member states to show their unconditional support for the rule of law in the interest of all humanity?

The Foreign Minister has disregarded calls to develop an Australian Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza, the West Bank and now Lebanon. When will the Defence Minister face the reality that Australians in defence industries are continuing to be part of the Israeli war machine responsible for thousands of Palestinian and Lebanese deaths and injuries? The role of Australia's Pine Gap is top secret, but we can be sure its global technology is contributing to support Israel's war with little scrutiny from Australian officials. Is the Immigration Minister investigating if any Australian-Israeli dual citizens are among the 1000 Israel Defence Force members referred to the International Criminal Court for war crimes? And will Australia's Health Minister — such a staunch supporter of 'Israel's Right to Defend itself' — be developing an Australian Health Assistance Plan for Palestine and Lebanon to restore the wellbeing of all those civilians targeted by the Israel Defence Force?

Perhaps it is now official that the Australian Government has surrendered to Israel's rule of terror, and we can only watch from the sidelines for further catastrophe?

In 1945, Australia's Dr H.V. Evatt was described by the New York Times as:

'The most brilliant and effective voice of Small Powers, a leading statesman for the world's conscience'. Fraser, 2014:100

When will another Australian voice speak up in the name of humanity at the United Nations?

ISRAELI SNIPERS ROUTINELY, DELIBERATELY SHOOT PALESTINIAN KIDS IN THE HEAD

CAITLIN JOHNSTONE

12 October 2024



There's yet another doctor testimonial about Israeli forces constantly shooting Palestinian children in the head, this one published in the *New York Times*.

The report, titled *65 Doctors, Nurses and Paramedics: What We Saw in Gaza*, begins as follows:

‘I worked as a trauma surgeon in Gaza from March 25 to April 8. I’ve volunteered in Ukraine and Haiti, and I grew up in Flint, Mich. I’ve seen violence and worked in conflict zones. But of the many things that stood out about working in a hospital in Gaza, one got to me: Nearly every day I was there, I saw a new young child who had been shot in the head or the chest, virtually all of whom went on to die. Thirteen in total.’

‘At the time, I assumed this had to be the work of a particularly sadistic soldier located nearby. But after returning home, I met an emergency medicine physician who had worked in a different hospital in Gaza two months before me. ‘I couldn’t believe the number of kids I saw shot in the head,’ I told him. To my surprise, he responded: ‘Yeah, me, too. Every single day.’

Numerous named medical staff who worked in Gaza then testify in the report about routine encounters with children who’d been shot in the head and chest by Israeli forces, as well as children and infants suffering from severe malnutrition and easily preventable infections.

Such reports have been coming out all year. Because Israel has not been allowing foreign press into Gaza, medical staff have in many ways become the de facto western journalists on the ground in the enclave—and they are all saying the same thing.

Back in July a group of 45 doctors and nurses who’d been working in Gaza signed an open letter to President Biden testifying that ‘every single signatory to this letter treated children in Gaza who suffered violence that *must* have been deliberately directed at them.’

‘Specifically, every one of us on a daily basis treated pre-teen children who were shot in the head and chest,’ the letter continues.

Also in July, *Politico* published an article by two American surgeons named Mark Perlmutter and Feroze Sidhwa titled *Nothing Prepared Us*

for *What We Saw: Two Weeks Inside a Gaza Hospital*, which contains the following passage:

‘We started seeing a series of children, preteens mostly, who’d been shot in the head. They’d go on to slowly die, only to be replaced by new victims who’d also been shot in the head, and who would also go on to slowly die. Their families told us one of two stories: the children were playing inside when they were shot by Israeli forces, or they were playing in the street when they were shot by Israeli forces.’

In April an article titled *Not a normal war: doctors say children have been targeted by Israeli snipers in Gaza* was published in *The Guardian*, citing nine doctors who’d worked in Gaza after October 7 who ‘reported treating a steady stream of children, elderly people and others who were clearly not combatants with single bullet wounds to the head or chest.’

Forensic pathologists were able to identify bullets used by the Israeli military in these attacks on children:

‘*The Guardian* shared descriptions and images of gunshot wounds suffered by eight children with military experts and forensic pathologists. They said it was difficult to conclusively determine the circumstances of the shootings based on the descriptions and photos alone, although in some of the cases they were able to identify ammunition used by the Israeli military.’

In February the *Los Angeles Times* published an article titled *I’m an American doctor who went to Gaza. What I saw wasn’t war—it was annihilation*. The author, a reconstructive surgeon named Irfan Galaria, writes as follows:

‘On one occasion, a handful of children, all about ages 5 to 8, were carried to the emergency room by their parents. All had single sniper shots to the head. These families were returning to their homes in Khan Yunis, about 2.5 miles away from the hospital, after Israeli tanks had

withdrawn. But the snipers apparently stayed behind. None of these children survived.’

So this is happening. The evidence is undeniable, and the sourcing is as solid as it gets. There are mountains upon mountains of rock solid proof that Israeli forces routinely, deliberately shoot Palestinian children in the head in Gaza.

The only reason this isn’t being treated as an established fact by the western political-media class is because the Israeli military denies it, telling *The Guardian* in response to the aforementioned report that ‘The Israel Defence Force (IDF) only targets terrorists and military targets. In stark contrast to Hamas’s deliberate attacks on Israeli civilians, including men, women and children, the IDF follows international law and takes feasible precautions to mitigate civilian harm.’

‘Doctors say otherwise,’ *The Guardian* wrote.

Indeed, there is no longer any fact-based reason to deny that Israel is deliberately targeting children with sniper fire. The facts are in and the case is closed. The only basis anyone can have for denying this established fact is their own personal loyalty to the state of Israel and its military, and/or their own personal disdain for Palestinian lives.

This fact punches holes in so many of the narratives used to defend Israel over the past year. That Israel is conducting itself in a more ethical way than Hamas. That Israel is waging a war against Hamas and not the Palestinian people. That the IDF are ‘the most moral army in the world’ and are taking extraordinary measures to avoid civilian casualties. That civilians are being killed in Gaza because Hamas uses them as ‘human shields’. That this is a war fought for Israel’s self-defence, and not a campaign of extermination driven by racism and hate.

There is simply no way to believe any of these things are true when you acknowledge the extensively-documented fact that Israeli forces are routinely shooting children in the head throughout the Gaza Strip.

Republished from Caitlin Johnstone’s Newsletter, October 10 2024

ISRAEL DOES NOT HAVE A RIGHT TO DEFEND ITSELF, AS OUR PM KEEPS SAYING

PAUL HEYWOOD-SMITH

11 October 2024



Israel has no right of self-defence against resistance to the illegal occupation. Israel cannot both occupy Palestinian lands, and then launch an attack on those lands by citing ‘self-defence’ when

occupied populations resist. Neither can Israel treat those resisting in occupied territories as enemy combatants.

Consider this scenario: the Prime Minister states in response to a question from a journalist: *Israel has a right to defend itself*. That assertion followed a question on Israel/Palestine.

One thing is clear, particularly if the journalist asking the question was from the ABC. The question was certainly not as follows: *Prime Minister, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has ruled that Israel is illegally occupying Palestinian lands, and has established an apartheid state through its occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza. Both of these practices are illegal and must end. What is Australia doing to promote that end?*

The reader would be justified in thinking that the answer to this question would not be “Israel has a right to defend itself. It has a right to exist”.

Now let us get serious.

The following cannot be challenged.

Israel is illegally occupying the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. The ICJ has so found, and has ordered that that occupation must end immediately, and that all settlers must evacuate Palestinian lands. The ICJ has found that Israel has established an apartheid state on Palestinian lands.

An apartheid state is a criminal state and cannot be allowed by the international community to exist. Ergo, Israel has no right of self-defence against resistance to the illegal occupation. Israel cannot both occupy Palestinian lands, and then launch an attack on those lands by citing ‘self-defence’ when occupied populations resist. Neither can Israel treat those resisting in occupied territories as enemy combatants. Israel has the right to protect its citizens within its own borders but it does not have the right to use overwhelming military force against people under its occupation. Nor, under international law, does Israel have the right to wage a war of collective punishment on the West Bank, Gaza, or, indeed, Lebanon, when it resists the illegal occupation of Lebanese

territory – the Shebaa Farms – or when it comes to the aid of its brothers in Gaza and the West Bank.

The ICJ relied *inter alia* on the following established instruments of international law:

- Security Council Resolutions 242 (following the 1967 Six Day War), 338 (following the 1973 Yom Kippur War), and 2335 (the 2016 Resolution calling for the end of settlements)
- Article 3 of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- Apartheid Convention – UN 1973, Article 1, and
- Rome Statute, Article 7, establishing and defining the crime of apartheid.

It also relied upon its own 2004 judgement re the Wall, the Wall built on Palestinian land and found to have been illegally built.

The matter has of course been taken further by the General Assembly of the UN. On September 18 it adopted a resolution which overwhelmingly endorsed the findings of the ICJ, necessarily calling for every soldier and settler to be removed from Palestinian territory, and Palestinians compensated and allowed to return to their homes. Further, the resolution affirmed that all countries are legally obliged to cease any recognition of or support for the Israeli settler-colonial project, to work to end Israel's racial segregation and apartheid, to ban any products from settlements, to sanction settlers and others involved in the occupation, and to cut off all military, diplomatic, economic, commercial, financial, investment, trade, political, and legal relations with the Israeli occupation. The resolution required and was adopted by a two-thirds majority of the States present and voting. It was a significant resolution.

The Australian government has not sought to challenge these findings or directions. It says nothing against them. It has a history of acting so. Readers may recall attempts to establish any basis for the Australian government to challenge earlier findings, by B'Tselem, *Human Rights Watch*, and Amnesty International to the effect that Israel is an

apartheid state in articles such as *FOI exposes Australia's attempts to protect Israel on apartheid status*, March 28, 2023.

What can decent, humane, Australians do to address this situation? There are two essential things which must be done.

The first is that at the next election the last two preferences of the voter must be the ALP, then the Coalition. The first preferences can be the Greens, or Senator Payman's new party, or a Teal candidate, provided the voter has assured themselves that the Teal candidate is like-minded.

The second is that you must inform yourself of how to adopt and engage in or implement the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) strategy.

Please do these things for humanity, for the Palestinian people, and for Australia's self-respect.

Finally, Prime Minister, understand this: In the context of what we are seeing today in Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon, Israel does not have a right to defend itself!

SHERIDAN WRONG ON WONG

GARETH EVANS

3 October 2024



Greg Sheridan is doubtless now too long in the tooth to change his journalistic ways. But it really is time that he recognised the force of that immortal observation by Shakespeare's

contemporary, Francis Bacon, that ‘Speaking in perpetual hyperbole is comely in nothing but love’.

No Sheridan article seems complete without some person or policy being labelled ‘insane’, ‘deranged’, ‘obscene’ or the ‘worst ever’, or some variation on these themes, and our foreign minister is subjected to a full such linguistic barrage for her address to the United Nations General Assembly last week (*Penny Wong’s United Nations (UN) speech shows Labor has abandoned Israel, The Australian, 1/10*).

His judgment is not one that will be shared by any genuinely fair-minded observer. The core of her speech was a passionate and articulate defence of the fundamental principles of the UN Charter, a cry for peaceful resolution of all the terrible conflicts now roiling the world, not just in the Middle East, and a demand that the principles of international humanitarian law — devoted to the protection of innocent civilians — be universally respected in any state’s military actions, however otherwise justifiable.

Penny Wong did not hold back in describing and condemning the horror of the Hamas October 7 attack, and there is nothing in anything she said in New York — or that any other member of the Albanese Government has said anywhere — that suggests indifference to the scourge of antisemitism, or in any way plays into the hands of those who are hostile to Israel’s very right to exist.

What she does say about the scarifying 40,000 death toll so far in Gaza is that ‘Palestinian citizens cannot be made to pay the price of defeating Hamas’ and that ‘Lebanon cannot become the next Gaza’. And in doing so she simply echoes the response of political leaders right around the world, including in those Western countries with whom Australia traditionally most identifies.

Sheridan’s most withering criticism is directed at our foreign minister’s renewed declaration — which he describes as made with ‘sublime and fatuous undergraduate certainty’ — of Australian support for the early recognition by the UN of Palestinian statehood, not just ‘as the destination of a peace process, but a contribution of momentum towards peace.’

Australia is hardly alone in believing, as Wong put it, that a two-state solution — with strong built-in guarantees for the security of both — is the only hope not just of breaking the endless cycle of violence between Israelis and Palestinians, but strengthening the forces of peace and undermining extremism right across the region. Nor is she, and Australia, alone in believing that for the UN to formally recognise Palestinian statehood — as some 140 countries have already individually done — would be a helpful circuit-breaker, in an environment where Israel opposition to even contemplating such a solution is currently so ingrained.

As I have argued elsewhere, the basic case for such recognition is that doing so is vital to restore a balance that has tipped overwhelmingly in favour of Israel. No peace negotiation can succeed if the parties at the table are completely mismatched. For the foreseeable future, the best — and possibly the only — way to counter the current mismatch, giving Palestinians extra leverage and bargaining power, is to show that their self-determination cause has legitimacy not only in the Islamic world and the global south, but also among traditional pillars of the global north, like the UK, Australia, and other US allies and partners.

There are many, more sympathetic to Palestinian aspirations than Sheridan and those who sail with him will ever be, who nonetheless argue that, however much the underlying dynamics might change for the better with such a development, formal recognition of Palestinian statehood is an empty, quixotic gesture. They will say that a two-state solution now looks utterly unattainable, owing to ever more entrenched Israeli hostility, and to the territorial fragmentation created by Israel's increasingly unrestrained West Bank settlement-building.

All true enough, but the dream of a two-state solution must be kept alive. For the world to recognise Palestine, in an attempt to revitalise a serious two-state negotiation, is not to reward Hamas or Hezbollah but to act in Israel's own best long-term interests. As Bob Hawke and many others have pointed out over the years, Israel potentially can be a Jewish state, a democratic state, and a state occupying the whole of historical Judea and Samaria. But it cannot be all three at the same time.

The reality is without a political solution that satisfies legitimate Palestinian aspirations, Israel will never be free of the spectre of terrorist attack. My own decades of experience with conflict prevention and resolution, including years of talking to all sides in the Middle East, have drummed home the truth that despair can all too easily turn into rage, and then into indefensible outrage. By the same token, the threat of violence diminishes rapidly during those periods of genuine hope for a just and dignified settlement.

At a time of dramatically heightened tension with Iran, and all the renewed sense of insecurity that comes with it, it has never been more important for Israel to defuse the visceral anger of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and beyond. Most of the rest of the world is now telling Israel that the best way to start is to accept the force of Palestinians' claim to statehood. If Israelis really want a more secure future, it is time for them to listen.

HOW SHOULD AUSTRALIA RESPOND AS ISRAEL PROVOKES WAR?

SUSAN DIRGHAM

2 October 2024



Israel, the Australian government's 'steadfast friend', has committed an act of terror against the people of Lebanon.

It came not long after Israeli journalist Gideon Levy wrote, 'Israel is turning, with alarming speed, into a country that lives on blood.'

The paggers which exploded in Lebanese streets, markets, cars, homes, and hospitals were detonated at 3:30pm, when children were out of school. People were relaxed, not on their guard. At least two children were killed.

Australians who were in Bali on 12 October 2002 would be able to empathise with the people of Lebanon; millions of other Australians would feel compassion. However, the response from our government lets us down.

When interviewed by journalist Sabra Lane on *ABC Radio*, Foreign Minister Senator Penny Wong's words were vacuous and inappropriate:

Sabra Lane: Our correspondent tells us that there is fear and panic in the civilian population in Lebanon with many civilians injured and killed in these attacks. Some human rights groups say that this is state terrorism. Is it?

Foreign Minister: Look, yeah, we do recognise, as I said, Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation, and we recognise the unique security circumstances of the State of Israel. Having said that, you know, we are concerned about all the violence. There is a cycle of violence in the Middle East...

Someone determined to call out Israel's terrorism was Jewish American blogger Richard Silverstein, who posted this emphatic message: 'I am a Jew. I once loved Israel (love-hate actually). I studied at its universities. I am fluent in Hebrew. But Israel has turned. It has become a monster. It is evil.'

Writing for Israel's mainstream *Haaretz* newspaper, Gideon Levy expressed his shock and concern, writing that (although) 'We are in the middle of the most criminal and most redundant war Israel has ever embarked upon...it wants another one.' 'One thousand explosions with 3,000 injuries are an invitation to war.'

Recently ABC journalist John Lyons travelled to Iran, Lebanon and Israel to tackle that question of an impending catastrophic regional war in the Middle East.

In his follow-up report for the *Four Corners* program ‘The Big War’ (26/8/24), Lyons highlights one basic truth: Iran and Israel with their respective allies could set the region alight if they were to go to war. What Lyons didn’t do is investigate who wants a catastrophic regional war and is working to provoke it.

Perhaps the government’s commitment to Israel prevented Lyons from informing his ABC audience that for a long time Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been working hard to provoke a war that would bring in the United States and its allies.

Long before the exploding pagers and the *Four Corners* report, Netanyahu’s intent was evident.

In April, Pulitzer Prize winner Geraldine Brooks wrote: Netanyahu ‘seems deaf to the world’s entreaties against escalation. And we wait, helplessly, to see what risk he will take next.’

Brooks’s opinion piece is titled *Only one man can stop the world plunging into full-scale war*.

In July, that man, Netanyahu, charmed the US Congress when he addressed it and talked up a war between ‘barbarism and civilisation’. The rousing reception Netanyahu received pointed to the strength of the Israel lobby on US foreign policy.

In Israel itself, a great deal of disquiet and dissension is expressed by prominent Israelis.

For example, Maj.-Gen. (ret) Itzhak Brik predicts that Israel will collapse within a year if the war of attrition against Hamas and Hezbollah continues. He sees Israel’s ‘use of assassinations’ as ‘a step threatening to ignite the entire Middle East’.

One opinion writer in *Haaretz* has described Netanyahu as a ‘Vile Messiah Leading a Cult of Lies and Death’.

Israeli historian Ilan Pappé, who has chronicled the history of Zionism, sees the current times as the ‘beginning of the end of Zionism’.

In his view, historians would agree that “the beginning of the end of projects such as Zionism is the most dangerous chapter in the history of a place. It is when the regime... fights for its existence, and then it is very cruel, it’s ruthless”.

There is substantial evidence for such a view. For months, the cruelty of the Zionist project has been most evident in Gaza and the West Bank — and now in Lebanon.

Even the head of Israel’s Shin Bet security agency, Ronen Bar, has noted that Jewish terrorism in the West Bank is out of control and is a serious threat to national security.

A lengthy *New York Times* (*NYT*) article on Israeli extremists has outlined how ‘extremists targeted not only Palestinians but also Israeli officials trying to make peace,’ and ‘how a radical ideology moved from the fringes to the heart of Israeli political power.’

The subtitle for the *NYT* article is telling: ‘After 50 years of failure to stop violence and terrorism against Palestinians by Jewish ultranationalists, lawlessness has become the law.’

A former Israeli minister of defence, has spoken out against two powerful ultranationalists in the Israeli government – Security Minister Ben Gvir and Finance Minister Smotrich – who are inspired by the rabbi of ‘the Jewish underground’, which commits acts of terror in order to ‘hurry up the last war’ – a war of ‘Gog and Magog’.

The ‘Jewish underground’ comprises thousands of settlers who have been armed by the security minister.

According to Columbia University Professor Jeffrey Sachs, “Netanyahu does not want peace because peace would mean having to face politics”.

That is, Australia’s steadfast friend, Israel, never wants peace because it would have to ensure through diplomacy and international law that Palestinians are no longer denied their political rights as equal citizens in a sovereign state.

The politics of peace would also mean Israel would have no reason to claim billions of dollars in US aid for the purchase of weapons. It would mean Palestinians might eventually outnumber Jews in a truly democratic state ‘between the river and the sea’.

Israel’s ongoing oppression of the Palestinian people and its commitment to a forever war are supported in the West by the so-called Christian Zionists who believe that a big war will lead to all dead Christians rising “to meet the Lord in the air” – the ‘rapture’.

Among these Christian Zionists are Mike Pompeo – ex-CIA director and Secretary of State under President Trump – and Scott Morrison. (It is worth noting that Pompeo and Morrison reportedly have a strategic advisor role with AUKUS investor DYNE Maritime.)

(Considering the fulsome support given the state of Israel by some Christians, it should come as no surprise that Zionism began as an evangelical Christian project.)

It surely behoves our government to stand up to the Israel lobby and the Christian Zionists. The big war that Netanyahu wants would be catastrophic for the peoples of the world. It would cost the lives of ADF personnel and have a serious detrimental impact on our economy as well as all aspects of our society.

Besides historian Ilan Pappé, for decades, eminent Jewish intellectuals have opposed the Zionist project and the terror which accompanies it. They include Albert Einstein and Hannah Arendt; Canadian physician and author Gabor Maté; British Israeli academic Avi Shlaim; and Australian British actress Miriam Margolyes.

So few of us want a ‘big war’. Yet, while Israel takes us in that direction, our government behaves like the ‘three wise monkeys’.

US, NOT ISRAEL LOBBY, DRIVING ALBANESE GOVERNMENT'S GAZA POLICY

SCOTT BURCHILL

27 September 2024



Notwithstanding efforts to censure and bully journalists such as Antoinette Lattouf, Mary Kostakidis, John Lyons and Sophie McNeill, as well as grossly exaggerating anti-semitism on

university campuses in an attempt to shut down pro-Palestinian encampments (and divert public attention from the genocide), I think it is a mistake to explain the Albanese Government's Gaza policy shambles and moral degeneration as a testament to the power of the Israel lobby.

The performing arts have also been targeted, as have journalists who don't reflexively endorse Israel's right to slaughter anyone it considers a nuisance or a threat. Even those who consider Israel to be bound by international law are fair game and ripe for slander, including accusations of racism and 'blood libel'.

Anthony Albanese and Penny Wong know in detail just how horrific the slaughter has been, including war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. They get daily briefings. That's why they no longer run damage control, crisis management and the self-defence argument on Israel's behalf as enthusiastically as they did last year.

But I don't think Australian policy is simply in hock to the Israel lobby. I think a more convincing argument is that it is responding to pressure from Washington. The Australian Labor Party (ALP) doesn't worry about a small, noisy local pressure group whose views they widely share. They can be irritating, but are not electorally or politically decisive.

However, in the post-Whitlam period they have always been paranoid about offending the Americans, even when they think the United States (US) might be wrong. How else can AUKUS be explained? Why would Canberra, under instructions from Washington, antagonise our most important trading partner, provoking it with nuclear submarines (which will never be built) just to help the US maintain its strategic primacy in the region?

The most aggressive and expansionist power in our part of the world is the US, not China. AUKUS is a recipe for destabilisation and for handing over \$400 billion of Australian taxpayer dollars to US and British arms contractors.

This compulsive support for US strategic interests, whether it be in East Asia or the Middle East, is the key to Australia's growing international

isolation on Israel. It even trumps real-time video coverage of, until now, the century's worst crime.

Every Western state which has rushed to supply and diplomatically support Israel in its destruction of Gaza, its ongoing colonisation of the West Bank and its second attack on Lebanon in 40 years, will reap unprecedented reputational damage from which honest historians and journalists should never let them recover.

We should not dismiss the influence of the Israeli lobby in Australia, but it is worth noting a couple of points.

First, the primary target of the lobby is the media, ensuring where possible pro-Israeli opinion pieces and news coverage. Intimidation, threats and pressure on journalists and editors to paint Israel in a positive light are all part of the mix. Conversely, those who don't succumb to bullying can expect to be slandered and adversely backgrounded.

In the case of Murdoch media such as *The Australian*, nothing is required of the lobby: they are preaching to the converted. Or more accurately, to people more extreme in their one-sided views than you would find in the Israeli media. Gerard Henderson, Greg Sheridan, Cameron Stewart, Chris Mitchell, Henry Ergas, Gemma Tognini and others appear to be in a competition to see who can be the most fanatical defender of Israel's crimes.

In other outlets, the lobby insists on 'even-handedness', meaning a right of reply to critics who raise uncomfortable questions about Israeli violence and colonisation. There are few, if any other, international subjects where this right is provided so routinely. Can anyone imagine *The Age* granting Russian spokespeople equal time to put their case on Ukraine?

Recently, *The Age* ran a link on the front page of its online version so those who disagreed with Louise Adler's well informed and articulate commentary earlier in the week could have restorative balance in the form of readers' letters. No matter how egregious Israel's slaughter of Palestinians and the seizure of their lands, 'bothsidesism' must prevail.

Secondly, on the question of policy formation, the lobby doesn't need to work very hard on the major parties because both the ALP and the Liberal National Party (LNP) share its position. As on Capitol Hill in Washington, many politicians in Australia's major parties are equally, if not more, fanatically Zionist than the groups who pay for their 'guided tours' around the Middle East.

That's why nothing significant changes on Israel-Palestine policy regardless of who is in government. The views of MPs don't need to be won over by the Israel lobby: they are already in lockstep. With some honourable exceptions, primarily among the Greens, fealty to Israel is bipartisan in Canberra: despite the Gaza genocide, expanding settlements on the West Bank, and now the attacks on Lebanon.

As far as the ALP is concerned, could there be a more propitious moment to recognise Palestine, when successive National Conferences have asked the Albanese Government to accept the right of these benighted people to self-determination? The answer is no, because by attaching the policy change to progress in a non-existent peace process while the Israeli Government and Knesset reject outright the possibility of a two-state solution, Albanese and Wong ensure that nothing can change. They even expelled a senator from the party for calling for the implementation of ALP policy.

It may be tempting to see dark conspiracies at play here, but the uglier truth is that in Australia the Israel lobby doesn't need to work very hard to secure its political objectives. For the most part, they are pushing at an open door.

THESE ARE THE THINGS I'VE LEARNT YOU CAN'T ASK ABOUT ISRAEL

LOUISE ADLER

22 September 2024



In recent years, I have been asked to comment on the Middle East 'impasse', though I am no foreign policy expert. I am merely one of many humanists who mourn this tragic history and rail

against the failure of the international community to exert the great influence it has to bring peace and justice to innocent civilians in this area of the world.

Many Jewish supporters of peace have argued that it is precisely because of our own long history of oppression and discrimination that we must stand with the Palestinian people and support their right to self-determination. I have come to the point where I think differently. It is not because of my own history that I have declared myself to be an ally of the struggle of Palestinian people, it is because as human beings injustice and inequality demand that we all care.

Yes, my own family history has shaped my political views. If my mother and grandparents fleeing Berlin in 1938 had not been accepted here, they would have joined the 6 million murdered in the Holocaust. So, yes, I care deeply that asylum seekers should be met by our welcome embrace.

My father's father was less fortunate. He was deported to Beaune-la-Rolande in the first round-up of immigrant Jews in Paris in 1941 and then sent to Birkenau, where he was murdered. My father, at the age of 14, joined the Jewish section of the communist resistance in Paris. This group of partisans, ordinary young men and women with nothing but courage and commitment, determined it was vital to urge French Jews not to report to their local police station, to encourage them to go into hiding, and to provide rations and places to sleep for young children abruptly orphaned.

My father, with his mother's blessing, took a stand. In such moments, we all have choices, which is not to condemn those who focused on survival, sought ways to escape to Palestine, or took comfort in God's protection. But it is to acknowledge that there was heroism in daily life, despite the great risks. My father's exhortation 'not to look away' was the lesson of his entire life after all that he'd witnessed and lost during World War II and then from the bombing of Hiroshima, the Vietnam War and all the horrors since. And so, all these years later, the question remains: Who will bear witness if we don't?

The lessons of my parents' early years inevitably shaped my understanding of the world. To continue in a personal mode: my teenage years were spent in a socialist Zionist youth movement. I suspect my parents, who weren't Zionists, simply appreciated two hours of peace and quiet on a Sunday afternoon without children. The movement's intention was that at the end of school, we would spend a year on a kibbutz. My parents, entirely focused on education, weren't having a year of picking oranges or plucking turkeys. So, it was agreed that I would spend Christmas in Israel and return to Australia for university. I arrived at the end of 1972. I imagined that I was landing in a socialist utopia. Instead, the reality of the Zionist project made itself explicit at the airport: European Jews stamped my passport, Middle Eastern Jews manned the luggage carousels while Palestinians swept the floors and cleaned the toilets. So much for the socialist dream.

It was the beginning of my own education regarding the entrenched racism underpinning the establishment of the State of Israel. As Saree Makdisi has pointed out in his recent book, *Tolerance is a Wasteland: Palestine and the Culture of Denial*, Israel has long been hailed as the only democracy in the Middle East, which belies the fundamental contradiction: a Jewish state is by definition exclusionary and therefore anti-democratic for everyone who is not Jewish.

My education would continue as a postgraduate student of Edward Said's in the late 1970s when he was being vilified as the 'professor of terror'. In one conversation, he talked about the plight of the Palestinians as the victims of history's victims. I felt uncomfortable when he talked about 'Jews' rather than Israelis or Zionists. I suggested that his terminology left no space for progressive Jews like me who were not Zionists. We moved on to other subjects, but I realised afterwards that my naive plea for nuance was irrelevant to his struggle. It wasn't Edward Said's task to acknowledge this small group of dissenting Jews.

Why should Palestinians (or anyone) respect a distinction between Jewishness and Zionism when the Israeli state is founded on – and its continued existence justified by – precisely this conflation? When the Star of David is emblazoned on the uniforms of the Israel Defence Force (IDF) soldiers who humiliate, torture and murder Palestinians? When,

as an Australian Jew, I can settle on a kibbutz in southern Israel that was once home to the family of a Palestinian – now confined in Gaza mere kilometres away, who have to break through a barbed wire fence to ‘return’ – simply because I am a Jew, and he is a Palestinian?

My education continued when Mohammed el-Kurd, the much-vilified young poet and activist, wrote an essay on the connection between Jews and Israel. He argued,

Here is where I stand. There is a Jew who lives – by force – in half of my home in Jerusalem, and he does so by ‘divine decree’. Many others reside – by force – in Palestinian houses, while their owners linger in refugee camps. It isn’t my fault that they are Jewish. I have zero interest in memorising or apologising for centuries-old tropes created by Europeans, or in giving semantics more heft than they warrant, chiefly when millions of us confront real, tangible oppression, living behind cement walls, or under siege, or in exile, and living with woes too expansive to summarise. I’m tired of the impulse to pre-emptively distance myself from something of which I am not guilty and particularly tired of the assumption that I’m inherently bigoted. I’m tired of the pearl-clutching pretence that should such animosity exist, its existence would be inexplicable and rootless. Most of all, I’m tired of the false equivalence between semantic violence and systemic violence.

My education has continued, as it should. There have been deeply unpleasant encounters with family, friends and frenemies. I am not sharing these stories to elicit sympathy but rather to reveal how deeply fractured and fraught the issue of Israel and the war on Gaza has become. I have been repeatedly berated for mentioning the Holocaust and failing to refer to October 7 in an interview with Laura Tingle on the *ABC’s 7:30*.

I have discovered that it is impossible to ask, however hesitantly, whether anyone feels that the images from Gaza on our TV screens are reminiscent of the brutal and now iconic images from last century, of the photos of the Jews rounded up in the Warsaw ghetto. That is to break a taboo. To compare the conduct of the IDF in prosecuting the

occupation to the Nazi regime's segregation, dispossession and persecution of the Jews in World War II is forbidden.

It seems, though, that I am not the only person who sees parallels. Masha Gessen, at the recent Festival of Dangerous Ideas, made the same point. Gessen rejected the notion that Gaza was an open-air prison and very precisely outlined the topographical parameters of a ghetto, be it in Warsaw or Gaza. The Kremlin critic, journalist and author had earlier been vilified and initially denied an important prize for making exactly this point. It seems that the Holocaust is an inviolable, sacred moment in history, forever beyond comparison. Which, for me, means that we can never learn the vital lessons we should draw from that catastrophe.

I have been told I am desecrating the memory of family who'd been murdered in World War II. As if many Jewish people of my generation in Australia have anyone much left by way of extended family. I have been asked how I felt on October 7 as if my empathy or indifference towards those Israelis murdered on that day was a sign of my loyalty, or lack of it, to Israel and, beyond that, testimony to my Jewishness. If it needs to be said, I watched in horror the coverage of that day and the days after. I had been sickened by the footage and frustrated by the mostly ill-informed and ahistorical reportage that followed.

I have been called a 'kapo' (or collaborator), a 'token Jew', and received lurid messages: my parents would turn in their graves; I am a 'denier of Judaism; the shame you wear is a suitable crucifix'; 'shame on you and all you stand for', and 'there are those in the community who wish to do you harm'. I have been berated in Adelaide's Pioneer Women's Memorial Gardens by 'disgusted' citizens. I have been glared at buying fruit. I have listened as a Ukrainian Jewish immigrant told me, 'They' – the Palestinians – 'are not like us'.

In this small corner of the world, there are 120,000 Jews. I have learnt that it is not acceptable to ask what is our relationship to the modern state of Israel. What is our response to the occupation of Palestine and the plight of the Palestinians?

And my response is to ask why empathy, an acknowledgement of our shared humanity, is such a risk?

A bright young lawyer tells me she's been excluded from her family's WhatsApp group for speaking out about the occupation. A 30-something academic has been attending pro-Palestine marches. For her entire life she has gone to Friday night family dinners, but she is refusing to do so now because discussing the war has become impossible. Her mother fears the family will split apart over the issue.

These are First World problems. Our individual or personal experiences are just that. It would be obscene to equate the pain engendered by the rifts tearing apart Jewish families in the diaspora to the suffering of Palestinian families literally torn apart by Israeli bulldozers and bombs. But it would be equally naive to imagine the two are not related. So the question remains – what is there about that place that engenders such passion and heat when we are so far removed from the region? What is this emotional attachment most Jews declare they feel for Israel? Why is Israel's existence, the idea of it as a safe haven, so entrenched in their hearts and minds? How does a kind of collective amnesia take hold of people who know in their bones about persecution? Because it must be some kind of tacit shared forgetting that enables Israel's zealous advocates in the diaspora to turn away from the reality of the occupation.

To state the obvious, centuries of persecution have left their mark. The Holocaust confirmed a collective psychic terror: the deeply ingrained fear that we can never be safe. However, the establishment of a Jewish state didn't arise as a response to the Holocaust; it was a nationalist project of the 19th century, and its advocates set aside the fact that a Jewish state would entail the denial of an indigenous population. Think of the logic of 'terra nullius' transported to the Middle East. The Holocaust has been written into history as a post facto rationale for the establishment of the State of Israel. Rewriting that history is now prosecuted relentlessly to assert that the cure for antisemitism lies in the State of Israel.

But 75 years later, a succession of wars, countless dead, displaced and deracinated people, the ever-increasing oppression of Palestinians' lives, years of a reactionary government, and the moral, civil and political cost of denying the rights of another people have added up to what precisely?

It is incumbent upon us collectively to summon up the lessons of history as we contemplate the reality that successive wars in the Middle East have only produced a terrible loss of innocent lives, be they young people at a rave in Israel or 16,000 children now dead in Gaza, according to Palestinian officials. Shouldn't our profound pity for the children stay our hands, stop us reaching for weapons of destruction? We don't have to retrieve the scales of justice to measure man's inhumanity to man, and we should not indulge in the obscenity of comparisons to declare these victims are more important than those victims.

The tragic lesson Israel failed to learn yet again on October 7 is that peace cannot be premised on the subjugation of a people. Violence invariably returns. Indeed, every attempt to cover it up – be it with the increasingly fascistic policies of the Israeli government, the ever-increasing restrictive conditions of the occupation, or the hysteria of the Zionist lobby in the diaspora in response to the mildest expression of solidarity with Palestinians – only reveals the terrible and inevitable persistence of violence.

The lesson of October 7 is that you cannot normalise and live peacefully in the context of a profound, ongoing injustice. Peace and justice will only come to the region when Palestinians are recognised as a people with the right to self-determination, sovereignty and their own state.

Louise Adler is a former Australian publisher and former board member of numerous arts organisations. This is an edited version of a speech she is giving in Brisbane to mark the UN Day of Peace.

Republished from Sydney Morning Herald, 21 September 2024

ABC'S BELATED REPORTING ON 7 OCTOBER HELPS JUSTIFY GENOCIDE

MICK HALL

14 September 2024



Mick Hall analyses an *ABC* story — 11 months into a genocide — on the Israeli military's use of the Hannibal Directive to kill its own citizens.

Special to Consortium News

At the weekend Australia's national broadcaster, the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)*, featured a story reporting the Israel Defence Force (IDF) had indeed carried out the Hannibal Directive, killing untold numbers of Israeli civilians on 7 October 2023.

It regurgitated several reports in Israeli media dating back as far as January, which revealed the use of the doctrine, interpreted as a licence to kill Israeli soldiers being taken hostage by the enemy.

In this case, the directive was used after Israelis, mostly civilians, were taken prisoner by the Al-Qassam Brigades, either as they were being transported to Gaza or held captive in their homes at kibbutzim in southern Israel.

The latest of those reports, by Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* in July, revealed IDF commanders had ordered captured soldiers to fire at three separate locations, explicitly referencing the Hannibal Directive.

The *ABC* story should not be seen as a sign of legacy media finally coming round to reporting on Gaza truthfully.

Instead, the story should be viewed as an example of establishment media's propensity for begrudgingly giving a nod to demonstrable facts only when needed.

In fact, the belated reporting of Israel's use of the Hannibal Directive 11 months into a genocide reveals a qualitative difference between a passive and subservient mainstream media and an active and vital independent journalism earnestly working in the public interest and in accord with the Genocide Convention, a United Nations (UN) legal instrument that demands states take steps to stop genocide from occurring.

It is telling that the only original element in the *ABC* story were comments the broadcaster sought from "Israeli philosopher" Asa Kasher, author of the IDF's code of ethics, who said use of the directive had been 'legally wrong and morally wrong'.

The directive had supposedly been revoked in 2016 after Israel's attorney-general said killing a hostage was prohibited.

The *ABC*'s use of Kasher as a salient voice is typical of the manner in which the way a story is framed serves to obscure the nature of Israel's colonial domination and the illegality of its occupation.

It also gives a type of balance to the story that keeps the broadcaster safe from the worst excesses of Zionist lobbying, while setting the narrow parameters of acceptable criticism of Israel.

Although Israel is responsible for deliberately killing possibly hundreds of its own citizens during its response to 7 October, this was presented by Kasher as an aberration, a scandalous lack of professional standards of an army bound by an ethical code within a democratic state.

Key act of avoidance

Hence, what the *ABC* story avoided doing was pointing out that Israel falsely blamed Hamas for killing 1,400 civilians, the original inflated figure it used before it was revised down to under 1,200, as part of a disinformation campaign to demonise the resistance group and dehumanise Gazans in general in the wake of Operation Al Aqsa Flood.

That figure of 1,200 killed solely by Hamas is still routinely reported by corporate media. [Kamala Harris, in her debate with Donald Trump, on Tuesday night repeated the disinformation, saying Hamas had killed all 1,200 Israelis.]

Other elements of this propaganda included false accounts of dozens of babies beheaded, others ripped from the womb or cooked alive in ovens, as well as systemic rape and horrific disfigurement of women by resistance fighters.

These stories, devised by Israeli military and political figures and laundered by mainstream media, helped whip up an orgy of hate and revenge and frenzied support within Israeli society for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's biblical injunction to commit genocide against an occupied population under siege.

The propaganda, crudely calibrated to appeal to a deep-seated Orientalism within the West, including a fear of barbarous, irrational Muslims murdering Europeans in the most savage fashion, sought to

condition the public to accept Israel's erroneous right to defend itself in whatever way it saw fit.

Led by the United States, Western governments spoke with one voice after 7 October, giving diplomatic cover to atrocities that may yet result in some leaders facing charges at the International Criminal Court (ICC).

This was the framing by independent journalists at outlets like *Electronic Intifada*, *The Grayzone* and *Consortium News* and their reports were written at the time when challenging the dominant narrative was critical.

The *ABC* report said some testimonies from Israeli civilians and military personnel said that Israeli forces responding to the Hamas attack had killed Israelis, but that those making such statements were condemned. However, it added, there followed more testimonies and Israeli media reports confirming it was true.

That paragraph, with its reference to the 'condemnations' of the testimonies, was the nearest the *ABC* journalists came to explaining why their outlet had not reported the Hannibal Directive's use before now — external pressure.

From option to imperative

The doctrine, written in 1986 in response to the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers in Lebanon, gave the IDF an option of taking a risk of killing soldiers when attacking their hostage-takers. Over time, it evolved into a strategic imperative of killing their own as a better option than having them taken prisoner.

It was clear why Hamas took 251 hostages back to Gaza on 7 October, according to Israel. In 2011, Hamas swapped one Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit, for more than 1,000 prisoners. No doubt the Hamas leadership wanted to use them to bargain over the thousands of Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli dungeons, some 9,940 as of June, according to human rights organisations.

The *ABC* news piece acknowledged the veracity of Israeli media reports that the IDF dispatched attack drones, fired hellfire rockets and 30mm

cannons from dozens of helicopters at vehicles that were driving away from the Nova Music Festival and that tanks fired into houses at Kibbutzim as resistance fighters gathered up hostages.

It quoted former Air Force Colonel Nof Erez, who had told a *Haaretz* podcast:

This was a mass Hannibal. It was tons and tons of openings in the fence, and thousands of people in every type of vehicle, some with hostages and some without.

His comments followed early reports in January in the newspaper *Yedioth Ahronot*, which said IDF pilots attacked vehicles returning to Gaza despite a fear they might contain hostages.

Reporter Yoav Zeitoun stated:

Twenty-eight fighter helicopters shot over the course of the day all of the ammunition in their bellies, in renewed runs to rearm. We are talking about hundreds of 30-millimetre cannon mortars and Hellfire missiles.

The frequency of fire at the thousands of terrorists was enormous at the start, and only at a certain point did the pilots begin to slow their attacks and carefully choose the targets.

He said tank officers also confirmed they applied their own interpretation of the directive when firing on vehicles returning to Gaza.

Another journalist, Ronen Bergman, writing for the same newspaper in January, said 70 vehicles were destroyed by Israeli tanks and firing from aircraft killing everyone inside.

He said,

The IDF instructed all its fighting units... to stop 'at all costs' any attempt by Hamas terrorists to return to Gaza, using language very similar to the original 'Hannibal Directive', despite repeated assurances by the security establishment that the procedure has been cancelled.

The *ABC* pointed out that Israeli civilians survived Israeli forces firing on them and killing other hostages during at least two incidents, repeating testimonies of Kibbutz survivors who said they had been fired on by the IDF, from a helicopter at Nir Oz and from tank shelling at Be'eri.

Timing and complicity

The *BBC*, *CNN* and other Western media institutions have yet to follow the *ABC* in acknowledging the Hannibal Directive was used on 7 October. Given the reliability of eyewitness accounts and statements of military officials featured in Israeli media and disseminated by Western independent journalists, those stories are inevitable, but remain a matter of timing.

Acknowledging that Israel knew its own forces had slaughtered its own citizens — just as it is doing by killing Israeli hostages amid its indiscriminate bombing of Gaza — risks removing a key building block of Israel's justification for annihilating the basic means of survival in Gaza in its 'war against Hamas'.

As the IDF responded to the *ABC's* request for a response to its story:

The IDF is currently focused on eliminating the threat from the terrorist organisation Hamas. Questions of this kind will be looked into at a later stage.

Media self-censorship is time-dependent, with omission and obfuscation useful and necessary for a particular period, according to the agenda it serves, in this case, an ethnic cleansing not yet fully complete.

Eventually news leaders, either to save credibility or remain relevant, allow journalists to report facts. And when that happens, foreign policy settings of Western governments typically dictate the depth and pace of disclosure.

The *ABC* story points to a cowardice among newsroom leaders, wary of a backlash from the Israeli lobby and flack from a sub-imperial

Australian Government zealously aligned with United States (US) foreign policy if the dominant narrative isn't adhered to.

Their approach contrasts sharply with the courage of independent journalists, subject to character assassinations and even arrest under anti-terror laws, as was the case with journalists Richard Medhurst and Sarah Wilkinson recently in the United Kingdom. Their work remains contemporaneous instead of post facto, bringing information into the public domain so that the destruction of the Palestinian people can be halted while in motion, before fully enacted.

Republished from Consortium News, September 12 2024

THE UNITED NATIONS AND STATES, INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY, ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR PALESTINE AND ISRAEL

CHRIS SIDOTI

12 September 2024



The United Nations General Assembly (GA) commences its 79th session this week. The session continues until the end of the year.

Among other things, at this session the GA will respond to the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, delivered on 20 July 2024.

The Advisory Opinion was the result of work done by the United Nations (UN) Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem, and Israel. In our report to the GA in October 2022, we set out our legal analysis and concluded that the Israeli occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory was unlawful and that Israeli policy and practice was discriminatory. Having expressed our view, we recommended that the GA seek the most authoritative advice possible in the international system, the advice of the International Court of Justice.

In its Advisory Opinion, the Court came to the same conclusions as we had. It found that:

- all Palestine (and the occupied Golan) was under belligerent occupation and the Occupying Power (Israel) is fully subject to International Humanitarian Law (especially the Fourth Geneva Convention) and International Human Rights Law
- the occupation is unlawful and must be ended as rapidly as possible
- settlements are unlawful and must be withdrawn as rapidly as possible and further settlement and extension of settlement ended
- the Occupying Power is violating Article 3 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which prohibits segregation and apartheid.

The Court also said,

... the United Nations, and especially the General Assembly, which requested this opinion, and the Security Council, should consider the precise modalities and further action required to bring to an end as

rapidly as possible the unlawful presence of the State of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

The GA will consider this issue in this session and give its response. Our Commission is preparing a legal policy paper to advise the GA on ‘precise modalities and further action’ that, in our opinion, the GA should take. That paper will be released within the next few weeks. I expect that the GA will adopt a resolution that lists actions individual States and groups of States should take to implement the Court’s Opinion.

The GA’s consistent and continuing concern for the situation concerning Palestine and Israel is unsurprising. After all, the GA and the UN generally played a major role in bringing about that situation and in its continuation for the last 76 years.

In 1947, at its second session, the GA decided that the British Mandate Territory of Palestine should be divided into ‘independent Arab and Jewish states’, with Jerusalem under international jurisdiction. The GA made the decision in response to the United Kingdom’s announced intention to surrender the mandate in August 1948. The United Kingdom (UK) had received the mandate from the League of Nations. From the time of, and by virtue of, that decision, General Assembly resolution 181(II), the UN has been responsible for what has happened in the former Mandate Palestine.

Some eminent jurists have argued that resolution 181(II) was beyond the power of the GA and so invalid. No international court has had to consider this issue and the GA has not returned to re-consider the resolution. Our Commission is established by a UN body and so accepts and acts on the basis of the resolutions of UN organs, including the GA and the Security Council. I would make one comment and ask one question, however.

My comment concerns the UN’s continuing responsibility for the situation in Palestine and Israel. The Government of Israel continually criticises the UN for spending more time on that situation than on any other country-specific situation. It counts resolutions of UN bodies and says, correctly, that there are more on Israel than on any other state. It

argues that the UN is pre-occupied with Palestine and spends too much time condemning Israel. That argument takes no account of the fact that the UN is more responsible, over a longer period of time, for that situation than for any other in the world.

My question concerns the centrality of resolution 181(II) for the State of Israel. I accept the legitimacy of the State of Israel and of the State of Palestine on the basis of resolution 181(II). The Israeli Government and Parliament, however, have rejected Palestinian statehood and so, by necessary consequence, they have repudiated resolution 181(II). My question is what is the basis for the legitimacy of the State of Israel without resolution 181(II)?

When the GA, during this session, considers 'precise modalities and further action', it will consider the guidance the Court provided.

All States are under an obligation not to recognise as legal the situation arising from the unlawful presence of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. They are also under an obligation not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the situation created by Israel's illegal presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It is for all States, while respecting the Charter of the United Nations and international law, to ensure that any impediment resulting from the illegal presence of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the exercise of the Palestinian people of its right to self-determination is brought to an end. In addition, all the States parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention have the obligation, while respecting the Charter of the United Nations and international law, to ensure compliance by Israel with international humanitarian law as embodied in that Convention.

We can expect that the GA will present 'precise modalities and further action' that include political, economic, cultural and military measures. GA resolutions are not binding and are not enforceable, but they have considerable political clout and moral suasion. So we can also expect that individual states and groups of states will act to implement the measures the GA adopts. The Australian Government will be under considerable pressure, especially from countries in our immediate neighbourhood, to act.

ISRAELI PHYSICIANS
HAVE REMINDED US
THAT THE CARE AND
PROTECTION OF GAZA'S
CHILDREN IS A HUMAN
OBLIGATION — WILL WE
HEED THEIR CALL?

FIONA STANLEY, PAUL KOMESAROFF, SUE WAREHAM AND
Bushra Othman

27 August 2024



The organisation Physicians for Human Rights Israel (PHRI) issued an urgent global appeal on 17 June on behalf of the children of Gaza, demanding ‘immediate and decisive action from the international community to prevent further loss of life and to address the dire and immediate needs of Gaza’s most vulnerable population’.

The care and protection of children is arguably the greatest responsibility of every human being. It cuts across cultural, political, religious, and every other divide. It applies in times of war, peace, and everything in between. Tragically, the world needs reminding of this as destruction in Gaza continues, inflicting an unimaginable toll on the children trapped there – a plight that is appalling even in comparison with other recent conflicts.

PHRI states that ‘the ongoing war and blockade in Gaza have created dire conditions for children, exacerbating an already severe situation, worsened by years of violence and deprivation’. Their appeal draws attention to widespread malnutrition and starvation, to the infectious illnesses that have now become rampant as a result of overcrowding and the destruction of sanitation and clean water supplies, and to the 1,000 children (at least) with limbs amputated as the result of injuries caused by war.

Alarmingly, the first case of confirmed polio has just been detected in an unvaccinated 10-month-old child in Gaza – a grave sign of a possible unprecedented health crisis for the hundreds of thousands of unvaccinated children.

The plight of Palestinian children

Between 13 June and 3 July, while volunteering at Al Aqsa hospital in central Gaza, Dr Othman saw countless malnourished infants and children who have no access to life-saving nutrition. Neonates with congenital heart defects, who could thrive with surgery, are being denied medical evacuation and do not survive. There are adolescents with multiple fractures requiring external fixation who will be debilitated for life given the lack of infrastructure to support their wound care and rehabilitation.

When a Russian missile struck a children's hospital in Kyiv and other Ukrainian targets in early July, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Foreign Minister Penny Wong did not hesitate to label the attacks 'abhorrent', reminding us of Russia's 'illegal, immoral invasion'. However, we have heard none of these words in response to the attacks by Israel on every children's hospital in Gaza, the finding of mass graves at hospitals with hundreds of bodies, including those of children, the stringent restrictions on evacuating children who are in dire need of medical care, and the multiple other wartime atrocities inflicted.

Children's lives should not be collateral in the pursuit of partisan political goals, with different standards applied according to their ethnic origin or nationality. As one placard at a recent rally asked: 'Why is it so 'complicated' when the children happen to be Palestinian?'

No one can say we did not know. Within days of the beginning of the current war, its likely terrible consequences were already apparent, with senior United Nations (UN) experts expressing their outrage at Israeli crimes against humanity and warning of the risk of genocide. Ten months later, the end of the conflict remains elusive. There can be no justifying what many regard as crimes against humanity or the lack of an effective international response — not even the horrors committed by Hamas against Israeli adults and children on 7 October 2023.

Urgent action is needed

PHRI demands an immediate and sustained ceasefire, the protection of all medical facilities and personnel from attacks, the provision of immediate and adequate medical and humanitarian aid, and comprehensive physical, rehabilitative and mental health care for the children.

Appeals to Israel to stop the destruction and to allow the passage of aid have consistently fallen on deaf ears. Legal orders in January and again in March from the International Court of Justice, for Israel to enable the immediate provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance, have continually been ignored with impunity.

After 10 months of Israeli assault on an entire generation of Palestinian children, Australia still claims a 'warm and close' relationship with

Israel, at political, military and economic levels. Calls by our government for an end to the carnage, while necessary, are not enough; severe consequences for ongoing Israeli crimes are needed. The sanctions announced by Wong against several Israeli settlers in the West Bank are an overdue and small step in the right direction. However, to enact purposeful change that will help the children of Gaza, it is imperative that our government urgently takes more effective measures.

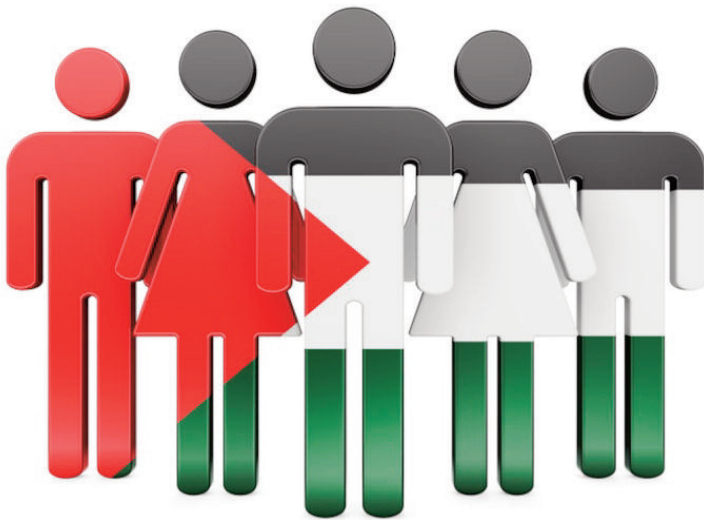
The courageous stance of medical doctors in Israel must be strongly supported and their demands implemented.

Republished from ABC Religion & Ethics, August 20 2024

ISRAEL'S AUSTRALIAN 'HOSTAGES'

KELLIE TRANTER

15 August 2024



Hundreds of Australians' family members holding valid Australian visas are being prevented from fleeing devastated Gaza

– by the Israeli military, and the impotence of the Australian Government.

Republished from *DECLASSIFIED AUSTRALIA*, August 8, 2024

The Department of Home Affairs could not confirm to *Declassified Australia* whether 1,318 visa holders who have not arrived in Australia from Gaza remain trapped in Gaza or even if they are alive.

The Department has confirmed that as at 31 May 2024 tourist visas had been issued to 2,438 people fleeing Gaza since 7 October 2023, but that only 1,120 of them had arrived in Australia. That means 1,318 people with valid Australian visas are yet to arrive safely in Australia.

Early in May the Israeli military seized control of the Gaza Strip side of the Rafah border crossing with Egypt and effectively closed it. The Rafah crossing is crucial for both incoming aid and Palestinians fleeing the carnage in Gaza.

So even those who have enough money to pay the Egyptian company controlling the crossing, ‘Hala Consulting and Tourism’, the US\$5,000 per person fee, for what amounts to a bribe, are now unable to flee Gaza.

Current Australian Government travel advice regarding Gaza is contained on the Smart Traveller website:

Our ability to provide consular help in Gaza is extremely limited. If you’re in Gaza, be aware of your surroundings and review your personal security plans. Monitor local media (including social media), United Nation (UN) alerts, and your own organisation’s security contacts for information about changing security conditions and alerts to seek shelter. If it’s possible to leave, carefully consider the safest means.

The Australian Government website also refers to the actions of the Israel military in preventing people fleeing:

Israel has a naval blockade in place off Gaza. Previous attempts to break the naval blockade along the coast of Gaza have resulted in injury,

death, arrest and the deportation of foreigners. Don't join others seeking to break the naval blockade.

Exiting Gaza is extremely difficult and unpredictable with only two land crossings for pedestrians into and out of Gaza. Israel controls Erez which has been closed since 7 October 2023.

Egypt controls Rafah, which has remained closed since the Israeli military seized control in early May. The advice helpfully warns about using the Rafah border crossing: 'It has been subject to [Israeli] air strikes during the current Gaza conflict.'

The government advice concludes that: 'You may not be able to leave Gaza even if you have a valid exit permit.'

Policy 'in lock step' with allies

United Kingdom (UK) travel advice is that

The Rafah border crossing has been closed to all civilians due to Israeli military operations in the area since 6 May. When re-opened, it is for the Egyptian and Israeli authorities to determine who is permitted to cross, and when.

If you are a British national in Gaza who wants to leave Gaza, you should make contact with us as soon as possible. There are currently no exit routes available for foreign nationals to depart Gaza as a result of the military operations, but we are working with the Israeli, Egyptian and Jordanian authorities to explore alternatives.

United States (US) has advised its citizens that it

is unable to provide routine or emergency consular services to US citizens in Gaza as US government employees are prohibited from traveling there... The pedestrian crossing between Gaza and Israel was damaged on October 7 and remains closed, and the pedestrian crossing between Egypt and Gaza has been closed since May 7 and it is unknown when it will re-open. There are sporadic telecommunication

and internet outages within Gaza further inhibiting the ability of residents to obtain information.

Canada in May announced ‘a five-fold increase in visas for Palestinians in Gaza seeking to join their family members in the country, despite the Canadian Government’s inability to help applicants get out of the bombarded Palestinian enclave.’

It beggars belief that none of these countries, all ‘supporters’ of Israel – and in the case of the US its primary funder and enabler – cannot either individually or collectively get Israel to do anything to assist their citizens to safety. How hard would it be for Israel just to reopen for humanitarian purposes the Rafah Crossing, which it now controls?

All of these governments, including ours, seem to accept that Israel can do as it wishes, without regard for the interests of their imprisoned citizens and their families, so we can only revert to trying to discover the true extent of the problem.

Government is hiding the numbers

The lack of information about the precise number of Australians, foreign nationals and their immediate family members who remain trapped in Gaza prompted questions by the writer to be put to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) on 31 July 2024.

The information requested: ‘the number of Australians and their families, Australian permanent residents and their families, and long-term visa holders and their families in Gaza receiving consular support and wishing to leave Gaza; the number... registered for information only; and the number... known to be living in Gaza as of 7 October 2023.’

The Department’s reply didn’t give any numbers. It responded:

The Australian Government recognises that this is an incredibly distressing time for those with friends and family in Gaza.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade continues to do all we can to support Australians and their immediate family members,

including parents, still in Gaza who wish to depart but are unable to do so. [emphasis added].

The Rafah border crossing is controlled by the Egyptian and Israeli authorities, not the Australian Government. Throughout the conflict they have put tight restrictions on who can cross, and it is currently closed. While we are doing all we can, the Australian Government must work within this system, as do other countries with nationals in Gaza.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is in ongoing communication with Israeli and Egyptian authorities as well as likeminded countries.

The Australian Government has so far supported a total of 268 Australian citizens, permanent residents and their family members, to depart Gaza.

While it is understood that there are a number of people who have valid Australian visas but do not meet the criteria for crossing the border out of Gaza, and that an Australian visa is an entry document for Australia rather than an exit permit in the country where a holder resides, the Australian Government has been reluctant to publicly give numbers or say whose criteria must be met and exactly what the criteria are.

So as it stands we do not know the actual number Australians, including foreign nationals and their immediate family members, who to DFAT's knowledge remain in Gaza, nor do we know the actual number of people within those categories who have registered with or are otherwise 'on the books' with DFAT or who have otherwise sought assistance from DFAT in their removal from Gaza, even though those figures would be known to the government.

When DFAT was pressed once more by Declassified Australia for the actual number of Australians, including foreign nationals and their immediate family members who to DFAT's knowledge remain in Gaza; and the actual number of people within those categories who have registered with or are otherwise 'on the books' with DFAT or who have otherwise sought assistance from DFAT in their removal from Gaza, DFAT responded:

‘We have nothing further to add to our previous response to your enquiry.’ – *Dept Foreign Affairs & Trade*

We are thus left to do the best we can to work out those numbers for ourselves.

DFAT documents obtained by *Declassified Australia* under Freedom of Information (FOI) I stated, that as at November 2023, when the situation was described as dire and human suffering widespread:

The government is doing all it can to support [redacted] Australians and their families still in Gaza who wish to depart, including providing the best available information and options for their safety and communicating through all available channels....

We continue to provide assistance to [redacted] in Gaza, including Australian citizens, permanent residents and their immediate family members who have told us they want our help to depart.

Australia is communicating about departure options with all individuals registered with us in Gaza, however disruptions to communication, infrastructure in Gaza has made contact difficult. DFAT will continue to provide support to any individual registered with us who are unable to or do not want to leave Gaza.

DFAT is providing consular assistance to [redacted] Australians and their family members as a result of the conflict including [redacted] in Gaza.

Any actual numbers of Australian citizens, permanent residents and their immediate family in Gaza have been redacted. Presumably the numbers of those people at risk of injury or death are significant enough to threaten political consequences if publicly known – why else would the government not want us to know the numbers?

No safe sanctuary

Declassified Australia spoke with Ms Suzan Wahhab, President of the support group Palestinian Christians in Australia.

She confirmed that 200 Palestinian Christians with valid Australian visas are presently trapped inside two churches in the middle of Gaza City. About 60 percent of those trapped are children and many have medical conditions or injuries or both.

Although sheltering in the churches, their safety is far from certain. Along with mosques, the Israel military have attacked Christian churches in the Gaza Strip during its present war on Gaza. In October, Israel bombed a Christian Greek Orthodox church in Gaza City sheltering hundreds of people. The air strike killed 18 including children, and wounded many more.

In December, Israeli snipers shot dead a woman and her daughter and wounded seven more at the Catholic's Holy Family Church in Gaza City. Israeli tanks fired rockets into the convent of the Sisters of Mother Teresa, the Missionaries of Charity. This prompted a condemnation by Pope Francis who called for a ceasefire and described the Israeli attacks as 'terrorism'.

According to Ms Wahhab there are also as many as 500 Palestinian Muslims – a large percentage being children – holding valid Australian visas who are trapped in the middle of Gaza and in the South.

Ms Wahhab met with then Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs Andrew Giles, on 23 April 2024 in Melbourne and provided him with a printout of the database of the 200 Palestinian Christians with valid Australian visas trapped in their churches in Gaza, and needing government assistance to leave.

When *Declassified Australia* asked what she heard back from the then Immigration Minister, she said, 'We haven't heard from the government.'

Even though the Labor Government has been under sustained pressure to provide humanitarian visas to those wishing to flee Gaza, the government's current Humanitarian Visa considerations apply only to the 1300 Palestinians already in Australia. They do not immediately apply to the people who remain in Gaza.

Life and Death in Gaza

With the ongoing bombardments, the critical shortages of food, clean water and medical and other supplies, the rising tide of disease and the lack of health facilities, what is the fate of those left behind?

- Over 39,000 residents have been killed so far, the majority women and children. Many times that number have been injured.
- 1.9 million people have been displaced (9 in 10 people).
- Aerial, land and maritime bombardment across the Gaza Strip is continuous.
- Lack of food and clean water have created an additional humanitarian crisis.
- Solid waste management has collapsed.
- Disease, mostly preventable, is rife.
- 31 out of 36 hospitals have been damaged or destroyed.
- Two-thirds of Gaza buildings have been damaged or destroyed.
- 80% of Gaza has been placed under evacuation orders or designated no-go zones by Israeli forces.
- 80% of schools have been destroyed or damaged.
- Every university in Gaza has been obliterated.
- The International Labour Organisation has reported that the unemployment rate in the Gaza Strip has reached 79.1 per cent.

On this background of the urgency and extent of the need, the Department of Home Affairs revealed to the Senate that 4,916 visas had been refused in large part due to an inability to prove an intention to return to Gaza.

A family by definition

Before December 2023, family members could sponsor, apply and almost immediately be granted tourist visas for family members fleeing Gaza, according to Ms Wahhab.

However in December the government moved to strictly enforce the definition of ‘immediate family’ that includes only a spouse/defacto or

underage child but excludes siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents.

The DFAT online 'crisis portal' currently defines immediate family members as a partner of an Australian citizen or permanent resident; minor children and parents of Australian minors; and parents of Australians (only for those parents currently in Gaza).

We are not able to be told by DFAT how many people in Gaza have had Australian tourist visas approved only to see them expire after 3 or 6 months because the holders were prevented from fleeing the country while their visas were current, necessitating reapplication.

Nor can the public be told how many valid Australian visa holders have died because they have been unable to flee Gaza.

Senator David Shoebridge, Greens Spokesperson for Immigration, told *Declassified Australia*:

When there is conflict and violence there is an expectation that the government will protect its citizens and be open about the dangers they face. In Gaza right now there are hundreds of trapped people who have been offered protection by Australia but who have been unable to escape the genocide.

The humanitarian response to people fleeing the genocide in Gaza has been an unmitigated failure by the Albanese Government. Part of the issue is that the government continues to offer only tourist visas to people who are not tourists but asylum seekers.

Under the Labor Government, Palestinians are having their visas refused, with Home Affairs saying they are not genuine tourists, when they honestly say they don't want to return to a genocide. This is a deliberate bureaucratic cruelty.

If the Albanese Government's friendship with the Netanyahu Government has any useful purpose at least it could be used to allow the evacuation of Australian visa holders.

While the government may be under no specific constitutional or legislative obligations to act, the Australian public would undoubtedly expect it to act on moral, ethical and humanitarian bases.

As a matter of common humanity, it is simply unacceptable for any government to cravenly defer to Israel's vindictive pogrom against the Palestinian people.

This should be so, given what is happening on the ground, the widely available direct evidence of the personal agonies of the residents, and the wholesale physical destruction of their living space and essential infrastructure – in addition to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) finding of a plausible risk of irreversible harm in the genocide case against Israel, and the latest ICJ ruling that the Israeli occupation of Gaza has been and is entirely illegal.

As a matter of common humanity, it is simply unacceptable for any government to cravenly defer to Israel's vindictive pogrom against the Palestinian people. This is abundantly clear from the worldwide popular outrage, with huge numbers of protesters including several Jewish organisations and many Jewish people.

The Australian Government could at the very least exert real pressure on Israel to permit current Australian visa or passport holders to be safely transported out of Gaza immediately.

It has been provided with the database of Palestinian Christian visa holders and knows of their actual locations. Other community support organisations in Australia undoubtedly could immediately supply the government with similar lists of the other visa holders and details of their whereabouts.

Equally, and just as importantly, it must also immediately permit all Gazans to apply for humanitarian rather than tourist visas. If what is taking place before our eyes in Gaza is not a humanitarian crisis, nothing is.

CRYING ANTISEMITISM DROWNS OUT THE REAL PROBLEM

DENNIS ALTMAN

31 July 2024



Zionism has become for some people a sort of ethnic superiority which denies equal claims to recognition by Palestinians. If we are

unable to talk about this within the Jewish community we are doing a great disservice to both Palestinians and Israelis, writes Dennis Altman.

This article is a response to Deborah Stone's article *Lived experience, paranoia and slippery antisemitism*.

Dear Deborah,

Like you I am worried about rising antisemitism, but unlike you I am unwilling to accept that criticism of Israel's status as a defined Jewish state is itself antisemitic.

The idea of defining a state in this way—which applies equally to the Islamic Republic of Iran—marginalises the 25% of Israelis who are not Jews. And the examples given in the IHRA definition include a prohibition on calling Israel a racist state. It is ironic that in a country in which it is very frequent to hear supporters of Indigenous Australians define ours as a racist state, it is somehow improper to state this of Israel

My grandfather, Aaron Patkin, was a leading Australian Zionist; he died when I was six, so I only know of his views second hand. But I understand why he came to this position after the Holocaust.

Eighty years later Zionism has become for some people a sort of ethnic superiority which denies equal claims to recognition by Palestinians. If we are unable to talk about this within the Jewish community we are doing a great disservice to both Palestinians and Israelis.

It is particularly depressing to hear Israeli spokesmen deny that there is a Palestinian nation, when this was the jibe thrown at Zionists who argued for a Jewish state. Maybe the first step is to stress what the two peoples share, rather than to support a situation where one is apparently to be kept permanently under the yoke of the other.

Last week I spent a very moving few hours at the Holocaust Museum. I defy anyone who has watched the regular footage coming from Gaza not to draw parallels, a view that many of our community peak bodies would claim is antisemitic. I would counter that it is the opposite, that precisely because of our own history we should be able to feel the pain

of Palestinians and face up to the reality of policies that equate a Jewish homeland with the dispossession of people with an equal claim to a homeland.

I am horrified by the apparent disinterest of Hamas in protecting its own citizens by using schools and hospitals as military bases, but I am equally horrified by reports that Israel Defence Force (IDF) forces will destroy civilian infrastructure with considerable loss of life in the hope of killing a small number of terrorists—and, quite likely, some of the Israeli hostages as well.

I, too, am troubled by chants of ‘From the rivers to the sea’. But let us be honest and acknowledge that this is also the intent of the Netanyahu government, which clearly is determined to maintain control of the entire area of Israel/Palestine. Life in the occupied territories of the West Bank is reminiscent of life for Jews in the old Russian Pale, from which so many of our ancestors fled.

I have no magic solution to the conflict; whatever the rights and wrongs of the argument, it is indisputable that the growth of Jewish settlements on the West Bank makes the Oslo Peace proposals no longer viable. But the idea that Israel can continue to deny recognition of the rights of seven million Palestinians is equally delusional.

In Australia, the Opposition has seized on antisemitism as a stick to beat Albanese with and is now demanding an Inquiry into antisemitism on Australian Campuses. My own campus is an outer-suburban one, probably more typical of Australian universities than either Melbourne or Sydney. We had a small pro-Palestinian encampment, but from what I can see the vast bulk of students were unaffected and not very interested. If there are clear examples of antisemitism they need to be dealt with, but grandstanding by Liberal politicians will not address the root of the problem.

My own experience suggests that many students come from cultural backgrounds where a low-level antisemitism is rife, and universities need to address this, a more complex problem than wiping out offensive graffiti.

Antisemitism has multiple roots, and the current conflict has allowed hidden hatreds to surface. I am less worried by the crazy end of the Palestine supporters [in my experience, often not Arab] than by the rise of neo-Nazi groups and a resurgence of Nazi-style rhetoric on the dark web.

There is clearly antisemitism being preached in some Muslim gatherings, and I hope these will be dealt with under existing Australian law. But to conflate this with attacks on Israel is to make a great mistake. Fatima Payman and Mehreen Faruqi are not our real enemies; the bands of young men, chanting Nazi-inspired slogans are.

It would be a great mistake to assume that criticism of Israel is antisemitic, even if that criticism appears offensive and exaggerated. Instead of claiming accusations of ‘apartheid’ and ‘genocide’ are antisemitic, we need listen to them and engage with the debate. That the International Criminal Court has ruled against both Hamas and Israeli leaders should lead us to a far more critical stance towards Israel than our major community organisations are prepared to countenance.

I live in the federal electorate of Cooper, which was named after William Cooper, who led an Indigenous protest against Nazi Germany after the horrors of Kristallnacht. His ability to empathise with others who were marginalised and persecuted should be an inspiration for those Jews who want both to save the people of Israel and do so while also saving the people of Palestine.

Regards,

Dennis

Republished from The Jewish Independent, July 15, 2024

AUSTRALIAN LEADERSHIP TO END THE WAR ON GAZA: OPEN LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER

ALISON BROINOWSKI ET. AL.

24 July 2024



We write to express our extreme concern that Senator Payman has resigned from the Labor Government.

Letter sent to Prime Minister Anthony Albanese at the end of the Parliamentary session in June requesting urgent Australian Leadership to end the War on Gaza:

Dear Prime Minister,

We write to express our extreme concern that Senator Payman has resigned from the Labor Government.

We are saddened that you, as a well-known strong advocate for Palestinian statehood, could not have prevented this most unfortunate situation where failure to implement Labor Party policy has led to a very public dispute in the party, union movement and the community.

The tragedy of Gaza is recognised by many Australians who want to see your government initiating more active support for the people of Gaza and the West Bank.

Therefore, we strongly recommend

- that you appoint former Foreign Minister Bob Carr to lead a ‘Rebuilding and Rehabilitation Taskforce’ to work with a wide range of Australian individuals and organisations to develop an Australian Plan of Action for Gaza that will be ready for immediate implementation when a ceasefire occurs.
- that your government must recognise it cannot continue to accept the Government of Israel as a ‘trusted friend’ so sanctions, comparable to those imposed on the Government of Russia after it invaded Ukraine, must be immediately announced .
- that the occasion of the NSW Australian Labor Party (ALP) State Conference in July would provide a welcome opportunity for the announcement of Australian recognition of the State of Palestine.

We are writing this letter in confidence for your early consideration and response because we genuinely want to see an end to the blame game and a re-emergence of traditional Australian Labor Party leadership in foreign policy.

Yours sincerely,

Alison Broinowski
John Menadue

Ali Kazak
Stuart Rees

Mary Kostakidis
Margaret Reynolds

Further update:

Since this letter was sent, further developments in the Parliament of Israel and the International Court of Justice have increased the urgency for the Australian Government to act and we appeal to the Prime Minister to commit his government to its responsibilities under international law. It is important to note Australia's Justice Hilary Charlesworth appended a declaration to the International Court of Justice most recent advisory opinion that Israel's occupation 'does not qualify as an act of self defence'.

Quotes from letter signatories:

Last week the Israeli Knesset passed a resolution rejecting the creation of a Palestinian state (68-9) even as part of a peace agreement. Israel's rejection invalidates the Federal Government's claims to postpone implementation of its policy to recognise (ICJ) the State of Palestine. Furthermore, on July 19th the decision of the International Court of Justice, ruled that Israel's occupation and the colonies it built in the Palestinian territories in 1967, as well as the presence of Jewish colonists and the apartheid wall, are all illegal. The Court's advice is that United Nations member states must not render aid or assistance in maintaining the situation. The Albanese Government must urgently respond after months of ignoring both the International Criminal Court allegations of complicity and the International Court of Justice statements about genocide in Gaza and Rafah.

– Ali Kazak

Your government has many times referred to the importance of a 'rules based international order'. But it has not adequately responded to the recent ICJ Advisory Opinion that:

- Israel's continued presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is unlawful
- Israel is under an obligation to end its unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories as rapidly as possible and
- Israel is under an obligation to immediately cease all new settlement activities and to evacuate all settlers from the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

– John Menadue

References to harmony in our multicultural community ring hollow when such double standards are applied in our government's response to the actions of other States. It is beyond time for strong condemnation of Israel's actions and firm measures that will contribute to ensuring Israel ceases its crimes against humanity and is prevailed upon to participate in a peaceful and just settlement.

– Mary Kostakidis

Failure to respond to this letter suggests the indifference to citizen requests has become a central feature of a government characterised by cowardly inconsistencies as in treating a young courageous senator badly yet refusing to consistently condemn Israel's slaughter and destruction. Equally discouraging is the refusal to take seriously the proposal that Australia via the offices of the former Foreign Minister Bob Carr should take initiatives to promote peace and justice in a ravaged land and in the interests of a persecuted and oppressed people. A significant Labor State Conference has an opportunity to promote Australian initiatives for peace to cease collusion with Israel's illegalities. These goals represent the aspirations of a common humanity and would make a courageous change of policy direction by the Australian Government.

– Stuart Rees

Time's up Prime Minister!

What more evidence do you need to recall our Ambassador to Israel, impose sanctions and join the international community in demanding a ceasefire and independent negotiations?

– Margaret Reynolds

WHAT HAPPENS NOW THAT ISRAEL HAS FORMALLY REJECTED A TWO-STATE SOLUTION?

PERCY ALLAN (DEC'D)

20 July 2024



Given the Israeli Parliament's overwhelming rejection of a two-state solution the world needs to recognise that it is no longer

possible, at least in the short and possibly medium term. It's a mirage that opinion polls show most Israelis and Palestinians don't want. Given their long acrimony, the sad truth is that each side wants to overpower the other and have only one nation.

The Palestinians want continued intifadas with the hope that Iran, Iraqi militias, and Hezbollah will come to their aid and extinguish Israel. Israelis hope that they can defeat Hamas and Hezbollah, destroy Iran's nuclear ambitions, and rule the occupied territories without further resistance.

In the short to medium term, Israel has the upper hand. In the longer-term, Israel needs to come to terms with its Palestinian population and its Arab neighbours to survive. But for now, the realpolitik points to just one outcome which idealists in the West refuse to recognise because they adhere to the fantasy of a two-state solution.

Professor John Mearsheimer contends that Israel's end game is for a Greater Israel that annexes the West Bank and Gaza and forces Palestinians to flee elsewhere. And the United States (US) won't stop that since the Israeli lobby in America has political sway. If he is right, the future is not a two-state solution, but a mass refugee crisis.

Mearsheimer's compelling case for this scenario was put to the Centre for Independent Studies in May which was ably hosted by its CEO Tom Switzer.

Mearsheimer is a spellbinding speaker and won a prestigious academic award for being one of America's most distinguished and influential scholars. Mearsheimer is renowned for his prescience on world crises based on analysing power balance realities rather than indulging in wishful thinking. Unfortunately, he does not offer remedies on each crisis, just what is likely to unfold. A summary of his thoughts and works is provided by *Wikipedia*.

He believes the world is anarchic, with superpowers seeking security through forward offence rather than homeland defence. The only way to avoid war is to achieve agreed balances of power where major nations respect each other's regional spheres of influence. In other words, a multipolar world, not one where the US fights to retain post-

Soviet era global hegemony since that is both unaffordable and unsustainable.

Interestingly, US Presidential favourite Donald Trump and his fellow Isolationist Conservative (Iso-Cons) accept the same conclusion which is why they have sidelined the Neo-Conservatives (Neo-Cons) within the Republican Party. The mass media has been slow to pick up this huge shift in GOP/Republican Party politics focusing instead on the dire consequences of the Iso-Cons' hostility to foreign imports and immigrants.

ISRAEL LOBBY'S ATTACK ON KOSTAKIDIS THREATENS EVERYONE'S RIGHT TO FREE

GREG BARNES

17 July 2024



Mary Kostakidis is one of Australia's finest journalists, but more

than that, she also resolutely stands against oppression and injustice.

I witnessed this first hand when I worked alongside Mary in the Australian Assange campaign. But now she finds herself on the receiving end of an extensive complaint by Alon Cassuto, the CEO of the Zionist Federation of Australia, a renowned member of the powerful Israel lobby group in this country, over tweets and retweets Ms. Kostakidis has made since October 7.

As Ms. Kostakidis is forced to ‘lawyer up’ to defend herself against Mr. Cassuto who has engaged Arnold Bloch Liebler, a firm which has been acting for a number of pro-Israel activists since October 7, broader issues are at stake.

I am not, in this analysis, offering any legal views on the Cassuto complaint, particularly the purported use of s18C of the Commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act, which prohibits the doing of an act that is reasonably likely to ‘offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate’ someone on the basis of their race or ethnicity.

As an aside, however, it is ironic, but not surprising given the gross hypocrisy of the hard right in this country, that they are not coming to Ms. Kostakidis’ defence. The hard right hates section 18C because they say it censors them. But when it suits them they are happy to see the Israel lobby and other causes they support resorting to this provision.

By broader issues I mean freedom of speech, and in addition specifically in the Gaza conflict context, the nature of commentary and statements on X, and the need to ensure that it is understood that simply because an X user reposts something does not mean they endorse the original post.

But first some general observations about the attack on freedom of speech and freedom of expression which is coming thick and fast the way the Gaza conflict is playing out in Australia.

To call for the eradication of Israel is no more odious than statements that ethnic cleansing of Palestinians is acceptable. Yet it seems the media focuses on the latter rather than the former.

It is apparent that in this conflict the establishment, by which one means institutions like the *ABC*, other mainstream media, many universities, and the major political parties, with the notable and laudatory exception of the Greens, are bending over backwards to accommodate the Israel lobby. The appointment of an Anti-Semitism Commissioner, and threatened expulsions of students cases in point.

And let's single out the particularly egregious example of the *ABC*'s pathetic sitting on the fence over the Gaza conflict. How can one sit on the fence as a journalist when genocide is happening? The *ABC* is happy to take an anti Russia and anti China stance but Israel seems to be a special case.

In the Gaza conflict, where Israel is committing genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, and has been doing so since Hamas' appalling conduct on October 7, it is critical that all views are heard. It is also important we know what both sides are saying, including at the extreme ends.

And this is why there is nothing wrong with *X* and other social media account users, either pro-Israel or pro-Palestinian, from drawing attention to outlandish claims. If we do not do so, then we are putting our heads in the sand.

We also need to recognize there is a very big difference, and a meaningful one, between reposting an *X* post (or a post on Facebook for that matter), and posting one yourself.

The latter can be said to express a view. The former might be agreeing, or simply reporting on the post. In other words, bringing it to our attention.

To trawl through *X* accounts looking for reposts we don't like and then seeking to close down, or curtail the owner of that account, represents an attack on freedom of thought and freedom of speech.

None of this is to suggest for a moment that you should condone or use social media to incite violence (a Trump supporter tool), or break other laws.

To return however to the broader implications for freedom of speech in Australia posed by the all too frequent pursuit and painting of pro Palestinian advocates and opponents of Israel's military and political apparatus, as somehow endorsing terrorism or anti-semitism.

While the media 'goes after' people like Ms. Kostakidis and other high profile individuals in this country who publish and republish material from the perspective of those opposed to Israel and its actions, there is little or no equivalent outcry over those who are endorsing Israel's crimes. Crimes which are the subject of the International Criminal Court process and rulings from the International Court of Justice.

When do we see the Australian media or political establishment harass these people? Never.

But what we do hear and read from the Australian establishment is that critics are 'antisemitic'. This is a slur which is so frequent in its use, it redefines the term 'over used'. It is designed to censor. And the Prime Minister Mr Albanese has given it a boost with his pandering to the pro Israel groups in Australia by spending taxpayers funds on a special commissioner? Why not a commissioner to protect Asian Australians or those from African countries?

The Gaza conflict has shown how fragile freedom of speech and freedom of expression is in Australia. It has exposed yet again that without a constitutionally protected free speech right, our laws and policies can be subverted by interest groups who want to tape the mouths of their opponents.

AUSTRALIA MUST RECOGNISE PALESTINE TO PROMOTE PEACE

FATIMA PAYMAN

19 June 2024



Such a move would support the peace efforts, not undermine them, as some have argued.

Over the last eight months, we have witnessed the mass killing and displacement of Palestinians and the devastation and destruction of Gaza carried out by Israel under the guise of ‘self-defence’. As the Israeli government continues to disregard its obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians and cease genocidal acts, it is imperative for influential nations to take a definitive stance.

Australia, with its global standing and democratic values, is in a strong position to facilitate peace. An important step in this direction is recognising a Palestinian state. It is also a moral and ethical imperative.

On 29 May, a motion was presented to the lower house of the Australian Parliament by the Greens to vote on whether Australia should follow Spain, Norway, Ireland, Slovenia, and the overwhelming majority of the world’s nations in recognising Palestinian statehood, but it failed to pass as 80 MPs voted against it.

My party, the Australian Labor Party, has consistently argued that such motions are political machinations on the part of the Greens in order to score ‘cheap points’ and sway the public.

Even if that were the case, this ‘politicking’ does not detract from the underlying fact that a genocide is ongoing, and the Australian public knows it. Tens of thousands of Palestinians have been slaughtered, among them 15,000 children.

Australians have seen for themselves the image of seven-year-old Sidra Hassouna hanging from a wall with her legs blown off and the footage of a man holding the corpse of 18-months-old Ahmad beheaded by an Israeli bombing. They have heard the sound of six-year-old Hind Rajab’s last words, desperately pleading for help as Israeli tanks closed in on her.

Social media is rife with images and videos of children with multiple limbs amputated. Entire families have been wiped off the registry. According to the Geneva-based Euro Med Human Rights Monitor, more than 70,000 tonnes of bombs have been dropped on Gaza between October 2023 and April 2024.

Australians have read the endless human rights reports from the likes of Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and even Israel's own B'Tselem describing the governance in Israel as akin to 'apartheid' and Gaza as an 'open-air prison'.

They have heard Israeli ministers calling for the ethnic cleansing and occupation of Gaza. They have seen the International Court of Justice (ICJ) rule that there is a plausible case of genocide in Gaza. They have watched the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) request arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for war crimes.

France has affirmed its support for the ICC. Sweden has done the same. Germany has announced it would arrest Netanyahu if the ICC warrant is issued. United States (US) Senator Elizabeth Warren has stated that there is ample evidence for international courts to find Israel guilty of genocide.

Renowned American Professor John Mearsheimer who came to Australia's Centre for Independent Studies, has emphatically asserted that Israel is choosing between apartheid and ethnic cleansing in its treatment of Palestinians.

United Nations (UN) experts have stated that Israel has committed at least three acts of genocide over the past eight months. UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese has stated that 'Israel's genocide of Palestinians in Gaza is an escalatory stage of a long-standing settler colonial process of erasure'.

This is why a recognition of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders is imperative. Australia's recognition would be a symbolic and bold rejection of Israel's current bid to erase the Palestinian people. Recognition of a Palestinian state would not frustrate a peace process; rather, it would rescue that very peace process and keep it alive.

This is the reason why Ireland, Spain, Norway and Slovenia moved to recognise a Palestinian state. It was not to reject or antagonise Israel. It was to rescue the process Israel is frantically trying to destroy.

Australia must reinforce the fundamental moral principle at the heart of the conflict: the right to self-determination. The Palestinian people, like any other, have an inherent right to govern themselves, to live freely on their own land, and to build their future. This right is enshrined in international law, including in the United Nations Charter.

By recognising a Palestinian state, Australia would be affirming its commitment to this universal principle and frustrate Israel's bid to crush such aspirations of the Palestinians.

Israel is seeking to erase the agency of the Palestinian people. Australia must stand up to restore and reinforce it. Our country must not become one that smothers voices calling for justice, or one that censors the oppressed seeking freedom.

Australian hearts have an affinity for justice. This is the reason why our students across the country are standing up as their predecessors did when they denounced the wars in Vietnam, and Iraq, and Afghanistan. The students were right on each of these generation-defining conflicts. Will it be that history repeats itself again by which we ignore them again?

In opposition, our prime minister and the Labor Party were fierce champions of Palestine and passionate voices for justice. I ask that we summon that spirit of old and do the same in power. Let historians write of us that we were on the right side of history, that we boldly reinforced international law, and that we were a shining beacon and voice for freedom.

It is time to recognise Palestine.

Republished from AL JAZEERA, June 17, 2024

THE AGE HITS A LOW PURSUING DISCREDITED NARRATIVES ABOUT OCT. 7 ATTACK

SAM VARGHESE

10 July 2024



Melbourne tabloid *The Age* has done its already sagging reputation no favours by running, as an exclusive, an article that claims to detail what it calls the ‘denial and disinformation facing

October 7 survivors’ – Israelis who were attacked by Hamas – with the centrepiece of the article being an interview with an Israeli reservist – who was interviewed twice in 2023.

The story, written by the publication’s chief reporter Chip Le Grand, contains a surprising number of errors and omissions, with the actual premise driving the story being somewhat unclear at the end. As far as one can determine, it appears to be a bid to target, among others, two Australians – Mary Kostakidis, a former *SBS* broadcaster, and Randa Abdel-Fattah, an academic and author of Palestinian origin – for allegedly raising doubts about what mainstream media claimed transpired during the Hamas attack.

Right at the start of his yarn, Le Grand made a classic blooper, by writing about a federal MP who, he says, was approached by three women soon after October 7, to voice their dismay about the events transpiring in Gaza. But right there, Le Grand makes it clear that the politician in question was someone who was Jewish – and that narrowed down the field for anyone who wanted to make an educated guess as to who this MP was. This reflects poorly on Le Grand’s journalistic skills.

The reservist, one Nimrod Palmach, was interviewed by the UK’s *Jewish News* on November 30 last year; he was interviewed again by Cameron Stewart, a senior journalist at *The Australian* on December 8, again in 2023. How Le Grand and *The Age* could claim an exclusive on the third attempt is a mystery. A simple web search would have brought up these articles and killed off the ‘exclusive’ tag.

Le Grand’s whinge, that people he describes as ‘avowed feminist’ are trying to play down the atrocities that allegedly occurred on October 7, is not restricted to Kostakidis and Abdel-Fattah. There are others, males too, whom he accuses of taking a similar stance. His version of events comes mainly from one source which he cites numerous times: a story in *The New York Times* of December 28 which was republished in *The Age*.

But Le Grand did not bother to mention that serious doubts have been raised about the accuracy of this *NYT* story by two senior American

journalists: Ryan Grim and Jeremy Scahill of *The Intercept*, a site set up by Glenn Greenwald among others. To quote Scahill, '*The New York Times (NYT)* has grave, grave mischaracterisations, sins of omission, reliance on people who have no forensic or criminology credentials to be asserting that there was a systematic rape campaign put in place here.' What is disturbing about *The NYT* story is that there are no corrections listed within it – even though the story has been changed numerous times and the version linked to in this article is among the latest, revised in June 2024.

Additionally, Anat Schwartz, a woman who is also listed as one of the three authors of this story, was sacked by *The NYT* after it was found she had liked pro-Israel posts on social media, including one that called to turn Gaza 'into a slaughterhouse'.

Exactly why *The Age* chose to publish such a washed-up tale at this point isn't clear. However, it came on the same day that the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* published a detailed story about how Israeli officers had repeatedly issued what is known as the Hannibal directive; as the *Haaretz* story says, 'Documents and testimonies obtained by *Haaretz* reveal the Hannibal operational order, which directs the use of force to prevent soldiers being taken into captivity, was employed at three army facilities infiltrated by Hamas, potentially endangering civilians as well'. This, of course, would mean that a fair number of the Israelis killed on October 8 were slaughtered by their own side.

Apart from not providing the full facts about *The NYT* story, Le Grand also made no mention of another more recent story about the United Nations (UN) Independent Commission of Inquiry report which has cast doubts on the prevailing Israeli narrative about the October 7 attacks. It was published in June in *The Times* of London, a publication owned by Le Grand's former employer, Rupert Murdoch. Of course, quoting from the *Times* story would have killed off this great exclusive body and soul.

Le Grand's communications with Kostakidis and Abdel-Fattah can only be described as unprofessional. He probably didn't bargain for the fact that both [1, 2] women promptly published his emails on *X* [formerly Twitter]. To Abdel-Fattah, Le Grand wrote, in part: 'Why do you

describe as specious a *New York Times* article [republished by my paper (*The Age*)] titled ‘Screams without words’ given the breadth of material and witness accounts it relied upon?’ Plenty has been said about this *NYT* yarn above.

Kostakidis was quoted in *The Age* story as standing by what she had said about the issue, but Abdel-Fattah does not appear to have responded to Le Grand, merely commenting, ‘File this as yet another example of how mainstream media perpetuates anti-Palestinian racism and launders Israeli propaganda and lies.’

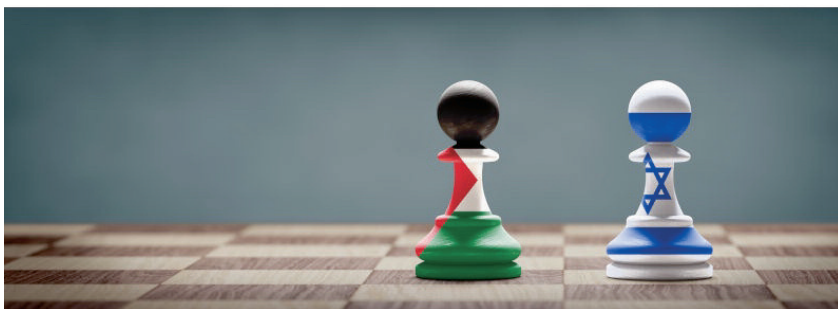
In his missive to Kostakidis, Le Grand said, in part: ‘Notwithstanding the difficulties the [UN] commission confronted in confirming specific instances of rape where the victims were murdered by the perpetrators or either killed or never caught, particularly in circumstances where they were unable to access Israel or Gaza, do you accept it is likely that Israeli women were raped on October 7? If not, why not?’

Le Grand also seemed convinced that denial of the Israeli narrative of what transpired on October 7 is just one step away from Holocaust denial. It would be the understatement of all time so say that such a conclusion could only be drawn by one who is uneducated about the events in Europe in the run-up to World War II, and one who has never taken the trouble to find out the backstories of infamous people like Reinhard Heydrich, Adolf Eichmann, and, above all, failed to read *Mein Kampf*.

ISRAEL AND HAMAS: NO MORAL EQUIVALENCE

STUART REES

27 May 2024



When asked to compare life in apartheid South Africa with conditions in occupied Palestine, Nobel Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu's judgement ran counter to prevailing orthodoxy. People make the comparison, said Tutu, but life in Palestine is far more brutal and repressive than in apartheid South Africa.

A moral equivalency argument, that one side is no different from another, or that one side is morally far worse than the other, has

reappeared in arguments surrounding the International Criminal Court's (ICC) charges against leaders of Israel and Hamas.

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defence Minister Yoav Gallant are charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity including the starving of civilians as a method of warfare and wilfully causing great suffering.

Hamas leaders including Yahya Sinwar and Ismail Haniyeh are charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity including murder, taking hostages, rape and other acts of sexual violence.

That Israel and Hamas are listed in the same charge sheets is outrageous, says President Biden. 'There is no equivalence.' Netanyahu says these charges are totally absurd and anti-Semitic, 'a travesty of justice.'

The comparison made by Archbishop Tutu in relation to Palestine and apartheid South Africa, reappears in these moral equivalence judgments about Israel and Hamas, though history shows the opposite of what western media and politicians want their publics to believe.

In terms of civilians killed and maimed and the duration of massacres, Israel's inhumanities far outstrip even the Hamas atrocities of October 2023.

To an uncritical, ahistorical, Israel compliant media, that claim may be unpalatable, but historical sources from 1948 to 2024, including chronicles of massacres from Ahram online supplemented by the United Nations (UN) office for the coordination of humanitarian affairs (OCHA) are difficult to dispute. From their data I'll list the names, dates and numbers of Palestinians killed and then see what Hamas equivalence there might be.

Starting with the mass killings and displacement of Palestinians in 1948, history shows 33 massacres. A list of at least 18 can begin with Deir Yassin in April 1948 when 107 villagers were murdered by the Irgun and Stern gangs led by subsequent Prime Ministers Begin and Shamir. May 1948 saw massacres Abu Shasha, 60 killed, and in Tantura, 200 young men shot. July 1948 sees the Lydda massacre when 400 lost their lives. October 1948, Saliha sees 94 casualties blown up in a mosque and at Al-

Dawayima, a village near Hebron, 455 individuals were killed having sought refuge in a mosque and cave.

Beyond the atrocities of 1948: Qibya massacre of October 1953, 69 villagers are killed. October 1956, in Kafr Qasim, 49 shot dead. November 1956, Israeli forces attack Khan Younis and Rafah, Palestinian deaths number up to 400. September 1982, Sabra & Shatila, an estimated 3000 Palestinians & Lebanese are murdered. The Kazan Commission determines Israeli authorities indirectly responsible for the massacres. October 1990, Al-Alfa 17 killed. February 1994, Ibrahimi Mosque, Baruch Goldstein murders 29. April 2002, Jenin Refugee camp, 54 killed. 2008, Op. Cast Lead, 1417 Gazans killed. 2012, Gaza incursion, 165 killed. 2012, Protective Edge, over 50 days, 2,205 killed. 2018/19 Great March of Return, 223 Palestinians killed, 13,000 sustain severe injuries. May 2021, entry of Al Aqsa mosque, provocation by supporters of Hamas, Israeli air strike retaliation sees 265 killed.

Casualties relating to Israeli retaliation against Hamas start with Palestinian uprisings, the first intifada from 1987 when 1,087 Palestinians were killed, the second Intifada when Palestinian deaths numbered 3000.

Morality cannot be assessed in terms of body counts, but before October 7 2023, Israeli deaths caused by Hamas are not large. Between 2004 and 2024, Wikipedia records 27 Israeli or foreign national deaths caused by Hamas rocket fire. In the first intifada, 100 Israeli civilians and 60 soldiers were killed. In the second intifada, 1000 Israelis lost their lives.

In the October 7 2023, Hamas incursions into Israel, 1,139 people are killed, 695 civilians, 38 children, 71 foreign nationals, 373 members of defence forces, 252 people reported taken hostage. Aljazeera estimates that 50 casualties came from friendly fire.

Compare those fatalities with the Aljazeera reports that since October 2023, 35,800 Palestinians have been killed, 80,011 injured and on the West Bank, 512 Palestinians have been killed. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) records the deaths of 105 journalists, of 196 humanitarian aid workers, including 1 in every 100 of UNRWA staff.

Records are not infinite but in counts of barbarities, western politicians could only treat Hamas as the main instigator if they ignore an easily available record of history.

Even if atrocities since 1948 are ignored, and it would be highly immoral to do so, estimates of equivalence since October 2024, show Israeli atrocities vastly outnumbering deaths caused by Hamas; and that takes no account of one million people displaced, famine prevalent, all universities, water, sewage plants destroyed, most hospitals, churches, mosques, homes and agricultural land badly damaged or destroyed.

In these circumstances it would be surprising if Hamas spokespersons did not express themselves outraged to be included in the same ICC indictment as Israel.

Of more importance is western media's obscene repeats that Israel can't surely be guilty of atrocities, that the ICC 's charges against Israeli leaders are anti-Semitic. Wilfully blind to history, some commentators go further. According to *The Australian's* Greg Sheridan, politicians who do not reject the ICC are engaging in 'a day of shame' which according to his Pavlovian mate Peta Credlin, shows the Labor Party 'backing Hamas over Israel.'

Moral equivalence arguments can't proceed by obscene determination never to hold Israel accountable, never to delve into the record of history, always to repeat the assumptions that have led to decades of massive injustice.

A skewed version of history can be rectified not by the bully boys' rejection of the ICC but by considering the merits of the court's investigation. But that consideration requires the Israel right or wrong supporters to think about the courageous lead given by Senator Fatima Payman, and perhaps, at last, begin to speak truth to power.

THE SUN SETS ON THE AMERICAN EMPIRE: THE GAZA DEBACLE

JOSEPH CAMILLERI

25 June 2024



The mayhem of the last eight months suggests that the United States (US) remains ascendant in the Middle East, and its global

hegemonic presence undiminished. Reality points in a different direction. Joseph Camilleri explains how, despite its global military reach and expanding alliances in Europe and Asia, America today stands adrift and diminished. Gaza, Ukraine and the China obsession tell the story.

Biden's fulsome backing of Israel in the present confrontation continues a special relationship that dates back to the inception of the state of Israel. It is a relationship that successive US administrations have regarded as the centrepiece of America's regional dominance.

Between 1946 and 2023 Israel was by far the largest cumulative recipient of US economic and military aid, estimated at close to \$300 billion (in constant 2022 dollars). In recent years, the United States has provided Israel an average of \$4 billion annually in foreign military financing and an additional \$500 million for cooperative missile defence programs.

Little surprise then that in April 2024, the Biden Administration chose to sign off on war assistance to Israel estimated at some \$25 billion at the very time that the Palestinian death toll had exceeded 35,000, most of them women and children.

This was the strongest signal yet that, words to the contrary notwithstanding, Washington was prepared to give Israel's war machine carte blanche to conduct its operations as it saw fit.

The special relationship with Israel has served several US objectives. It has enabled the United States to extend and justify its military presence in a region of high strategic importance. It has kept most Arab states on a leash. And, it has been frequently used to contain the assertive reach of adversaries, notably Iran, Syria and Hezbollah, importantly Russia, and plausibly even China.

The sheer brutality of Israel's invasion of Gaza has undone much of this. It has severely curtailed Israel's and America's diplomatic leverage. It has exposed and exacerbated political divisions within Israel and created new tensions in a highly fractured American society.

What went wrong?

The Hamas attack of 7 October 2023 was initially viewed by the Biden administration as a godsend. The relationship with Israel could be safely strengthened, while the idea of the Jewish nation placed once again under siege could help galvanise European allies into action.

By contrast, Hamas was a monstrous terrorist organisation acting in collusion with Iran's autocratic rulers. Its barbaric actions would solidify the West's relationship with Arab governments, and swiftly move the Israeli-Saudi rapprochement towards diplomatic normalisation.

Little of this has come to pass. Israel's conduct in Gaza has proved a huge embarrassment. By early June 2024, the death toll exceeded 37,000, the number of injured had risen above 84,000, while the number of missing was estimated at close to 10,000. Endless US exhortations for Israel to be more protective of Palestinian civilian lives went unheeded.

The entire United Nations (UN) system, from the office of the UN Secretary-General to every UN agency, has been unsparing in its condemnation of all aspects of the Israeli military offensive. UN reports estimate that by the end of April more than 50 per cent of all structures had been destroyed, 360,000 housing units damaged, 5 per cent of the population killed or injured, and two million people displaced.

By May, governments, international organisations and civil society were overwhelmingly critical of Israel's disregard for human life. After five months of mayhem in Gaza and five US vetoes of draft resolutions, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution on 25 March 2024 demanding an 'immediate ceasefire in Gaza for the month of Ramadan' leading to a lasting ceasefire, the 'immediate unconditional release of all hostages' and humanitarian aid access. Under mounting international pressure, the United States felt obliged to allow the adoption of the resolution by abstaining.

Unimpeded by US vetoes, the UN General Assembly was able to act much sooner. On 27 October 2023, 121 governments voted for a resolution calling for a humanitarian truce. Six weeks later a similar resolution was passed with an even larger majority – 153 voting in

favour, 20 against, and 24 abstentions. Then on 10 May 2024, it voted overwhelmingly in support of the Palestinian bid for full UN membership – 143 voting in favour, 9 against, and 25 abstentions.

Israel's diplomatic isolation came into full view with the announcement that Norway, Ireland and Spain would formally recognise Palestinian statehood as of 28 May 2024. Spanish Prime Minister Sánchez, using the bluntest language yet by a European leader, accused Benjamin Netanyahu of presiding over massacres. The number of countries recognising the State of Palestine now stands at 145.

In the meantime, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC) have become the centre of attention. Following the case filed by South Africa, the Court judged that Palestinians in Gaza had plausible rights under the Genocide Convention, and concluded that they were at real risk of irreparable damage.

In the ensuing months, a raft of countries have formally joined, or expressed support for, South Africa's genocide case against Israel, as have several international organisations, including the Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.

No less dramatic was the announcement on 20 May 2024 by ICC chief prosecutor Karim A. A. Khan that he had requested arrest warrants for Prime Minister Netanyahu and his Defence Minister Yoav Gallant. Were ICC judges to grant the requested warrants, 124 countries, including every member of the European Union, would be legally obliged to arrest Netanyahu and Gallant on sight.

This is the first time in the court's history that the leader of a liberal democracy closely allied to the United States has been targeted in this manner. US President Joe Biden described the legal step against Israel's most senior leaders as 'outrageous', while the French Foreign Ministry expressed France's full support for 'the International Criminal Court, its independence and the fight against impunity in all situations'. The contrast could not be starker.

Hundreds of thousands of people across the world have been protesting against the war in Gaza, calling for a ceasefire, the ending of the Israeli

blockade and occupation, humanitarian aid to Gaza, and Palestinian self-determination.

According to one study, at least 7,283 pro-Palestinian protests were held worldwide between 7 October and 24 November.

Since October 7, London alone has seen at least 15 pro-Palestinian marches, with people attending in their tens of thousands, several times, well in excess of 100,000.

The last few months have also seen a flurry of student activism at US college and university campuses, which has since spread to Europe, Australia and Canada. Apart from the usual demands for an immediate and permanent ceasefire, students are calling on universities to terminate their involvement in any research project or financial arrangement which supports Israel and the war in Gaza.

Israel is now at an impasse, with a sharply polarised society, a divided government, a war cabinet that had to be dissolved, a deeply unpopular prime minister whose political survival rests on satisfying the demands of a motley group of extremist parties, and no clear plan as to how the fighting will end or what will then follow. International support for the State of Israel is at its lowest ebb since 1948.

For its part, the United States is saddled with an ally of dubious value. If it continues to serve as Israel's principal backer, it will have to bear the rising costs of economic and military aid, suffer increasing diplomatic isolation, and run the risk of a widening regional conflict beyond its capacity to resolve.

The United States now has to contend with three flashpoints, the wars in Gaza and Ukraine and a fraught relationship with China, with its allies in Europe, Asia and elsewhere increasingly aware of the high costs of complying with US directives and priorities.

In the Global South, the Gaza debacle has reinforced the widely held view that the American ship is in distress. The purported US commitment to democratic values is regarded as at best erratic, at worst unashamedly hypocritical.

Governments in the Global South feel emboldened to pursue an independent course of action, and explore avenues for collaborative action through the UN and other multilateral settings.

As for Washington's principal adversaries, China, Russia and Iran, they feel better placed to pursue their preferred strategic options, confident in the knowledge that the United States is amply distracted by the paralysis of its political institutions and its engagement in two conflicts (Ukraine and Gaza), which promises much pain and little reward.

ISRAEL/PALESTINE: MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AND CONVERSION

JOHN COULTER

11 June 2024



I am 93 years old and come from a large Jewish family; My mother's mother being one of 13 children I had dozens of Jewish uncles and cousins while growing up and through my maternal

connection claim Jewishness. Being old enough, my memory covers the whole history of the formation of modern Israel and the Palestinian State.

Listening to the *BBC News* each evening during WWII and being aware of the terrible holocaust, I was overjoyed when Israel as a separate and new state was created in 1948.

I became a doctor and then a medical researcher for over 20 years. In 1968 on study leave, I visited a number of researchers around the world working on related projects and spent two weeks in Israel, my colleague living in Tel Aviv. Her husband, a lecturer in psychology at the university described himself as a 'liberal' and in many discussions called into question the way Israel was treating the Palestinians. Many of the guides in Jerusalem were Palestinians, so moving around as a tourist I heard accounts different from my beliefs about Israel. I began to realise there was a bigger picture.

In 1987, I became an Australian Democrat Senator for South Australia, and in 1989 was a member of a Parliamentary Delegation to Middle East countries: Syria, Jordan, Israel (including Gaza) and Egypt. The delegation's task was to report on a number of aspects of the situation in this region.

Parliamentary delegations meet with people in the highest office: prime ministers, other senior ministers in governments, army leaders as well as leaders of opposing organisations such as Palestinians living and working in Jerusalem and elsewhere. Among the senior Israeli leaders with whom we had discussion, I found an alarming attitude to which others writing in *Pearls and Irritations* have drawn attention; 'We are God's chosen people' and 'We are the people who suffered the holocaust' therefore 'We have special rights which preclude us from criticism over how we deal with a Palestinian state and the Palestinian people'.

This attitude/belief was not confined to senior people but was widely shared. The delegation travelled to Gaza in a minibus clearly labelled United Nations (UN) where we met with the mayor of a southern region of Gaza. We also visited a maternity clinic.

This clinic was made of concrete blocks, a dirt floor, no windows, just gaps in the concrete blocks and was on one side of a large open gravel covered space with a high school surrounded by a high galvanised fence on the opposite side. The UN bus stood outside the clinic. While the delegation was in the clinic with a number of women (patients), Israeli soldiers came up to the holes in the walls and fired tear gas shells into the clinic. Many of the women were very distressed having experienced this happening previously. We all left the building and then noticed the Israeli soldiers throwing stones over the high fence into the school, in my view, provoking the students to respond. We also visited a UN hospital in Gaza where a UN doctor showed us a number of Palestinian patients including one late teenage man who had been thrown from a high roof by Israelis and had multiple fractures. The attitude ‘We are God’s chosen’ and ‘We are the holocaust survivors’ and therefore we can do what we like to Palestinians permeated Israel from top to bottom.

The impression I formed then, and which has been confirmed by subsequent events, is that there was and is a deep, shared psychosocial illness infecting Israel but not Jews more generally.

I am not condoning the actions of Hamas on October 7. Violence is not a solution to complex, long standing political and social problems but the long history of Israel’s disregard for UN resolutions on Palestine and Israeli treatment of Palestinians provides an explanation as to why this situation came to the boil.

The delegation returned to Australia and several in the delegation were invited to speak to a Zionist meeting in Melbourne. I am ashamed to say that the other MPs who spoke told the audience what it wanted to hear. I told the audience of my first-hand experience. There were mutters of Kristallnacht and some walked out, the Chair closed the meeting without thanking the speakers. As I walked away along a corridor at Monash University a young male student ran after me to thank me for what I had said.

Let’s not confuse and generalise the attitude I and others have identified as underlying the conflict between Israel and Palestine with being anti-Semitic. This blurring of a clear boundary has been used inappropriately and misleadingly by many. There are so many Jews in

Israel and across the world who don't share this view and who cry for the destruction that the country, Israel, has wreaked across UN designated Palestine and the Palestinian people.

But there is another element in this conflict which is virtually ignored and not surprisingly because it is never given the importance it deserves in other widely discussed matters. I refer to population size, growth and environmental sustainability.

When I visited Gaza in 1989 the population was about 700,000. It is now over 2 million and with a high population growth rate (2.28%, 2024, doubling time 31 years) is still growing strongly. Gaza is a narrow strip of coastal sand dune with little water and little good soil. Those who still espouse a two-state solution ignore the fact that there is absolutely no way the Gazan population could survive sustainably on that narrow coastal strip. Meanwhile, Israel, not to be overrun by Palestinian numbers, seeks to build its own population (population growth rate 1.49%, doubling time 47 years) and like Gaza is heavily dependent on foreign financial support.

This gross mismatch between population size/growth rate and sustainability is shared with all the surrounding countries, especially Egypt. There is therefore no solution along Israeli's suggested line to shift the Gazan population elsewhere. Indeed, there is no solution as long as the world pursues the impossibility of economic growth rather than a sustainable future within the bounds of a finite planet. In the meantime, the human slaughter in Gaza and the enormous waste of resources on armaments to further that genocide could be stopped by refusing any more aid to Israel.

ISRAEL'S GAZA HALLUCINATION

RICHARD CULLEN

3 June 2024



One reason Israel is constantly criticised, even from within its obedient posse of Global West backers, is that it has failed to articulate what it has planned for the ‘day after’ the completion

of its Gaza-cleansing, genocide project. The respected historian, Adam Tooze, recently revealed that future planning for ‘Gaza 2035’ has, however, been a focus of intense, surreal Israeli attention.

Tooze explains, with the help of some breathtaking Israeli graphics, how this has come to pass in *Chartbook 284 Gaza: ‘the decade after’ the surreal geoeconomic imaginary of Netanyahu’s ‘economic peace’*.

This extraordinary project document, created by the Office of the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, was first circulated in December, 2023 before being made public in May 2024:

What it envisions is not the kind of the emergency reconstruction prepared by the United Nations (UN), which right now is focused on a decade-long timeline for clearing unexploded ordinance and 37 million tons of rubble, costed to the tune of \$40-50 billion. Netanyahu’s Gaza 2035 is a plan to complete the erasure of Gaza. In its place the Israeli government envisions a mega-rich clone of a globalised commercial and industrial city somewhere between Chicago and Dubai.

As it happens, Mr Netanyahu has been brutally candid about how Israel must prepare the ground for this lurid, fantastical scheme:

Gaza 2035 entails ‘rebuilding from nothing’.

Tooze concludes that:

In the coming months, as the Israel Defence Force (IDF) completes its work of destruction, this is increasingly going to be the question. What to do after this terrible violence? What are the millions of survivors to do? Where and how to make their lives? The grotesquely manicured plans for Gaza 2035 are not an answer to those existential questions. They are a glossy hallucination, which did not even quiet the divided Israeli cabinet for more than a few days. But don’t count them out. They will be back.

You have to read it to believe it.

NOVA PERIS' APOLOGISM FOR COLONIALISM AND GENOCIDE

MICHELLE BERKON

29 May 2024



In repeating blatant Zionist propaganda to justify her support for Israel, Nova Peris erroneously and harmfully conflates Jewish

identity with support for the Zionist project in Palestine, which in effect depicts all Jews as complicit in Israel's criminality. Her abject apologism also betrays all indigenous peoples' struggles against colonial oppression.

In an interview on *Sky News* Peris explains that her decision to step down as co-chair of the Australian Republican Movement was prompted by Craig Foster's social media post that Israel is committing 'the gravest crimes against humanity, of apartheid and genocide.' This should not be controversial. Respected human rights organisations have concluded that Israel practices apartheid, and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is considering whether Israel's barbarism in Gaza constitutes genocide.

Peris also attempts to dilute the ICJ ruling by noting that Joan Donoghue, president of the ICJ at the time, said in a *BBC* interview that the ruling means that Palestinians have 'plausible rights to protection from genocide.' What Peris omits is that Donoghue continued that these rights were at a real risk of irreparable damage. In other words, according to the United Nations (UN), 'the ICJ found it plausible that Israel's acts could amount to genocide.'

On 2GB radio, Peris implies that the growing outrage at Israel's unbridled savagery in Gaza constitutes antisemitism. This is false. Criticism of Israel, even outright rejection of Zionism, is not antisemitic. To the dismay of the Israel lobby, it is unable to silence the growing number of Jewish people condemning not only Israel's current murderous assault on Gaza, but its occupation in the West Bank, its apartheid, its ongoing ethnic cleansing, and indeed the entire Zionist project.. In its eyes, we are also antisemites. If she wants to stem actual antisemitism, Peris should concern herself with the White nationalists of the far-right.

To understand the twisted nexus between Zionism and racism, Peris should delve into the comprehensively documented relationship between Zionism and the Nazi regime. Israel also has a sordid record of supporting regimes repressing their indigenous populations, from apartheid South Africa to the Guatemalan genocide. Israeli leaders have

even cultivated bromances with open and closet antisemites such as Donald Trump, Victor Orban, and Jair Bolsonaro.

Then there's its embrace of fundamentalist evangelical Christians. Scratch their fanatical Zionist loyalties and find that their philosemitism derives from the belief that an apocalyptic war between Israel and Iran will herald the return of their messiah. Jews who haven't converted to Christianity will be immolated, but that doesn't deter Israel from accepting millions in donations, nor from allowing Southern Baptist megachurch pastor Robert Jeffress to pray at the opening of the US embassy in Occupied Jerusalem.

On the basis of a recent ten-day visit to Israel, Peris declares, 'there is no apartheid in Israel.' Of course, her minders arranged visits to a kibbutz devastated by the attacks on October 7, and to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Museum. She would have been kept blissfully ignorant of the irony that this monument to genocide overlooks the site, now a psychiatric hospital, of the village of Deir Yassin where Jewish militias massacred scores of Palestinians a full month before Israel's unilateral declaration of independence, in defiance of ongoing UN negotiations, ignited the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

In a video released earlier this year, Peris echoes Israel's tactic of accruing to itself credit for admirable action by Jews. While it is true that 'Jewish people have played a leading role in establishing the rights of indigenous Australians,' Jews have a strong history of involvement in social justice struggles everywhere, including London's East End, apartheid South Africa, and the civil rights movement in the United States (US). This comes from Jewish teachings and not, as Peris claims, the Jewish experience of 'an eternal connection to a land.'

While many Jewish people feel a strong connection to places that feature in our historical and religious narratives, neither Jewish faith nor Jewish spiritual practice is land-based, and Jews are not analogous with indigenous peoples in their profound spiritual interrelationship with Country. The ancient historic Jewish presence in historic Palestine is irrelevant to Zionist claims on its real estate. Jews lived in Palestine for centuries, as they did across the Arab world, enjoying rights and protections beyond imagining

for those of us who endured centuries of persecution in Christian Europe. As Hamas makes very clear in its 2017 charter, the Palestinian grievance is with Zionism, a colonial project, not with Judaism or Jewish people.

Peris is correct in her refutation of the lie of *terra nullius*. It is, however, ironic that she places Jews as the indigenous people, when it was the Jewish European founders of Zionism who claimed that Palestine was ‘a land without a people (for a people without a land).’ She is similarly ill-informed in her outrage that Jews in Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territory are called ‘settler colonialists.’ The Zionists clearly stated their intention to establish a colony in Palestine, and sought diplomatic and financial support for the project.

Peris is ‘saddened to see our sacred Aboriginal flag [...] being misappropriated by Palestinian, anti-Israel and anti-Jewish groups in Australia.’ On the contrary, the Aboriginal people standing in solidarity with Palestinians in their struggle for human and national rights understand their shared identity as colonised peoples. Furthermore, the Palestine solidarity movement explicitly rejects antisemitism, as it does all forms of racism and exclusion. As Jews, we are particularly warmly welcomed. The only anti-Jewish behaviour most of us experience is from Zionist Jews, who accost us in the street and on public transport, threaten our careers, shower us with deeply antisemitic abuse in council meetings, and even assault us.

Peris’ commitment to ‘truth telling’ is admirable. However, she cannot deliver on that promise while her views remain captive to a lobby group with no scruples, and entrenched networks of influence. An awareness of the actual history and current realities in Israel-Palestine would surely prompt Peris to reconsider her support for a country with a shocking record of colonial violence. A growing number of Jewish Australians would welcome her commitment to justice for all people between the River and the Sea.

QUEEN RANIA OF JORDAN: WHAT'S HAPPENING IN GAZA IS A WAR CRIME

RANIA AL ABDULLAH

11 May 2024



This conflict has killed more children in five months than all the conflicts in the world in the past four years. Children have not

been killed at this rate in any other time in history: the highest kill rate since the genocide in Rwanda in 1994.

Watch the interview between political correspondent Joy Reid and Queen Rania **here**.

Transcript:

Joy Reid: Joining me now is Her Majesty Queen Rania of Jordan. Your Majesty, thank you so much for being here.

Queen Rania: Thank you, Joy. It's a pleasure to be here.

Joy Reid: This is a difficult time and circumstance to be talking with you. As of today, 34,000 people have been killed in Gaza. There is the real threat of mass starvation taking place, and as we know, you are not just the Queen of Jordan, you are also a Palestinian woman of Palestinian heritage. So, I would just love for you to reflect for a moment on what's happening in Gaza as the Queen of Jordan, but also as a Palestinian woman, as a mom.

Queen Rania: Well, you know, I think it's not just my background, but I think for everyone in the Arab World, we have been quite devastated by what we've been seeing in the last seven months. As traumatic and devastating as the events of October 7th had been, we can't justify the way that this war is being fought. This is not a normal war. Every war is ugly, but this is... humanitarian workers who have seen everything have said they've never seen anything like it. The collective punishment of people, the displacement of 1.7 million people from their homes, some people displaced more than once. The fact that out of those 35,000 people killed, 70% are women and children. And this conflict, just to put in perspective, has killed more children in five months than all the conflicts in the world in the past four years. So children have not been killed at this rate in any other time in history, and has had the highest kill rate since the genocide in Rwanda in 1994.

And so there is outrage in the Arab World and around the world at what we're seeing. But also, there's outrage at the world's apathy, the fact that this is allowed to happen. Rightfully after October 7th, the whole world stood up and condemned those actions, but we're not seeing the same

kind of reaction towards what's happening today. And we're seeing people letting Israel violate international law and international humanitarian law without any consequence. And that is creating a sense of disillusionment in the Arab World and a sense of, 'How come international law is applied selectively? Why are our lives worth less? Do we matter in this world?' And I think that this is really having a paradigm shift in the way we're viewing our world order. As terrible as what's happening in Gaza is, I think the way our world order is today is actually looking exponentially worse.

Joy Reid: Well, let's talk about some of the reaction, because you did see South Africa bring a case in the International Court of Justice at The Hague against Israel for its conduct of the war. We recently saw Prime Minister Netanyahu make a statement, a video statement, expressing concern that the (International Criminal Court (ICC), also at The Hague, may bring arrest warrants against himself and other members of his government over the conduct of the war. What is your reaction to that? Is that the kind of reaction that you feel is more appropriate to see justice? Do you have faith in it?

Queen Rania: Well, you know, Israeli officials get very upset when they hear the words 'genocide' or 'apartheid,' and they dismiss them and say that these are big words that people are throwing around. Now, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the highest court in the land and they have deemed it plausible that Israel is committing acts of genocide against the Palestinians. And they have since issued provisional orders, asking them to prevent acts of genocide and to provide unhindered aid. Now, it might take years for them to come out with a final ruling, but we cannot wait. People are being killed today. History is being written today. And we're already very late. And the longer we wait, the larger the stain on our global conscience. And the fact that we're talking about semantics – Is it a genocide? Isn't it? – the fact that we're even debating that should be sending shockwaves in our international community. Who wants to err on the side of a genocide? And those who are attacking the ICJ rulings are actually belittling and dismissing the safeguards that we have in our world to ensure that nations adhere to certain standards of conduct. So yes, I think it's important the ICC take action, that the ICJ take action, but we don't want symbolic gestures.

At the end of the day, and we've seen a change of tone and language from the United States (US) towards Israel, trying to compel Israel to not go to Rafah, for example, or to allow more aid in. But at the end of the day, officials in Israel have shown a reluctance to heed any advice or warnings or counsel from allies. So, we need these measures on the ground to actually say illegal settlements should be stopped, to say that aid should go in, that we are not going to continue to provide offensive weapons that are killing thousands of innocent lives, or the weapons that are provided should be conditional. These actions are very important, and the fact that we're going to apply diplomatic pressure and stop using our veto to let Israel get away with things that other nations don't get away with. It's a very dangerous precedent, when, and this is what people are very upset about, it's when international law is broken with no consequence, when UN resolutions are ignored or dismissed, what does it mean? What does it mean when international humanitarian law is applied selectively? Or when certain countries are punished for poor human rights records, whereas Israel, which is accused of possibly committing genocide is rewarded with more arms? Where's the fairness here? And I think this is causing a lot of outrage. And I think we need to just really take a fresh look at the reality of Palestinians and life under occupation for us to really try to find a reasonable and fair way forward.

Joy Reid: Do you believe that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is a war criminal?

Queen Rania: It doesn't matter what I believe. I think what matters is what international law says. So I'll leave it for the courts to judge. But what I can say...I'm not a legal expert. But what I can say is that what's happening in Gaza today, is when you deprive people and you hinder the entrance of aid, when you adopt starvation as a weapon of war, that is collective punishment; that is a war crime. When you displace an entire population, that is a war crime. When you use...when you kill indiscriminately, so many civilians.

And the whole argument of human shields, that's ringing hollow. When you have a patch of land, as small as Gaza, being one of the most densely populated places in the world, and you use an unprecedented

number of massive bombs, those 2,000-pound bombs, or the unguided bombs or so-called dumb bombs, how can you not kill civilians? And when you say human shields as well, wherever Hamas leaders are, by default, there's going to be civilians around them. So are we supposed to think that Israel that is also using AI generated systems to generate the largest number of targets, you know, prioritising quantity over quality, really sort of doing away with all the principles of proportionality and distinction between combatant and civilian....They've done away with those principles. Are we supposed to believe that they are trying to avoid innocent civilians? When 80% of the schools have been bombed, 80% of health centres, 60% of houses have been destroyed, was there a Hamas operative under every ambulance, in every clinic, in every schoolyard? Are we supposed to believe that? It's very clear that Israel has no problem targeting civilians, and that they assign very little value to Palestinian life. And the impulse in Israel, whenever there's violence against it, is to punish all of the Palestinians for the acts of a few. So, that is collective punishment and that is a war crime.

Joy Reid: We've seen a reaction to what we're seeing on the ground in Gaza around the world. We've seen protests around the world. We've seen them in the United States on college campuses. There are images in Gaza of children holding up signs thanking students at Columbia University and other universities for their support. But we've also seen a massive crackdown on those protests in the United States. What do you make of those protests? Do you think that they will change anything?

Queen Rania: Well look, we can all agree that law and order are extremely important. Nobody wants chaos. And antisemitism is a real thing and it is on the rise, and no student should feel unsafe on their campus. But I think passions are running so high on all sides, that we're losing sight of what these students are actually protesting. And we are spending so much time talking about how these protests should be handled, rather than looking at what the students are protesting, which is the reality in Gaza. So I haven't been seeing...I've been seeing coverage of the protests, but I haven't been seeing enough coverage of what they're protesting. We need to face the realities on the ground of what's happening in Gaza itself.

Now, at the same time, dismissing these students, as you know, ‘oh, they don’t know what they’re talking about,’ or ‘they need an education,’ or ‘they’re just protesting for the sake of it.’ I think this collective dismissal is not only patronising, I think it’s quite insulting for some of these students who know exactly why they’re out there. And they’ve looked at these issues. There are always bad actors. There are always people who would want to crash the protests and try to hijack the message, but there are also a lot of people who really are standing for something. And for them, this issue has become about social justice. It’s not just about Palestine. They are protesting a discrepancy between a world that they were told should be this way, and the way it actually is. They are saying that, yes, we want you to divest from illegal occupation, but they’re also suggesting that there’s more to the story than we have been led to believe. That it’s this whole narrative that we’ve been taught about Israel always being the victim, and Palestinians, who are the occupied, always being the aggressor, is not entirely accurate. Now, a lot of people are invested in the story. And I think when somebody challenges something that you’ve been invested with for so long, your reaction is to want to challenge that and to defend what you believe in. But I think it pushes you out of your comfort zone, and out of your comfort zone is really where progress happens.

I mean, you mentioned my Palestinian background. And, because of that background, I’m aware of the fact that I might identify with the Palestinian side more. And that’s why every day, I challenge myself to actually put myself in the shoes of an average Israeli, to try to see things from their point of view – a relative of a hostage, or just an average person who’s worried about missiles flying onto them. I try to think of that. All I want is for people to just for once try to put themselves in the shoes of Palestinians.

It’s very difficult to wrap your head around the reality of occupation, and what it’s like to be a Palestinian under Israeli occupation. To know that, day in day out, every aspect of your life is policed, it’s controlled, you’re demeaned. To know that, at any moment, you could get detained or arrested, without just cause, without any semblance of due process, and without any consequence. This is life for Palestinians. Even just the daily commute of a Palestinian will tell you a lot. It’s about checkpoints.

It's about, you know, routine delays. They can't get from A to B without permits and without searches. It's about nightly raids, military incursions, lands being confiscated, children being taken from their beds in the middle of the night. You know, Israel is the only country that prosecutes children in military courts. Save the Children have written reports about this, how children are taken usually from their beds at night. They're arrested without charge. Sometimes the charge is just stone throwing, and that could land you 20 years in prison.

And then, they are subjected to a lot of abuse in the prison system, where they are held under solitary confinement, strip searches, beatings of course, deprived of their medicine, hardly fed... This is the reality of Palestinians, the reality of people living in the West Bank. So, we were told that everything that's happening today is a retaliation to October 7th. Well, if that's the case, why are we seeing what's happening in the West Bank, which is run by not Hamas, but by the Palestinian Authority? 8,000 people have been arrested in the West Bank. Almost 500 people were killed, again without due process, 124 of them children. We're seeing land grabs in the West Bank. We've seen the largest land grab in 30 years take place in March – 800 hectares of Palestinian land.

Armed settler attacks are on record high. They're attacking Palestinian homes, burning crops, attacking their solar panels, water tanks, cars... This is happening every day. And it's under full view, if not participation, of the army. It's the army that supplies them with the weapons. And the lines between soldier and settler are so blurred, they might as well not exist. So trying to portray the settler community as a fringe community is not true. Many of the settlers actually will have positions in government and parliament, the judicial system. So, their agenda is inseparable from that at the state [level].

Joy Reid: So given all of that, I mean, in 1994, when you were perhaps in university, or maybe just after –

Queen Rania: No, I was married.

Joy Reid: Ok. There was a peace agreement that was negotiated between the King's father, King Hussein, and Yitzhak Rabin. And it was only the

second peace treaty between a country in the Arab World and Israel. And Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated about a year after that. Then he was, of course, followed by the current prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. Given the history, do you believe that, fundamentally, Prime Minister Netanyahu wants peace with the Palestinians?

Queen Rania: Well, look, I was around when King Hussein signed the peace treaty with Rabin, and I saw the relationship. It was a relationship of trust between two men who understood that they had to make sacrifices and compromises for a larger vision of peace. I know that they wanted a warm peace. It wasn't just a strategic peace; they wanted a peace between the two people. And I saw how passionate my father-in-law was about this and we've had many conversations about this, and I truly am very inspired by his vision. And he's the one who once said to me, 'Rania, you always have to put yourself in the other person's shoes.' I've never forgotten those words. A simple thing to do – but very rarely are people doing that these days. And that is the door to empathy.

But then what happened after Rabin's assassination is that, like you said, Prime Minister Netanyahu came in and we gradually saw the politics in Israel shift further and further to the right until, now, there are hardly any peace groups. You know, I used to routinely sit with Palestinian and Israeli peace groups to have these conversations, to keep bridges, because I always thought that was so important.

Joy Reid: Right.

Queen Rania: There isn't a "left" to talk to anymore. A lot of times, it's like you're either talking to the far right or the extreme right. There is the ideological aspect as well, where the ultra-nationalist Jewish population – it's a deep belief that Palestine is theirs, from the river to the sea. And then you have the politics, where Netanyahu obviously has his own political career to think about. And so I think the future generations are not the priority here, and they were the priority for King Hussein in '94.

Joy Reid: What about President Biden? How would you assess how he has handled this situation so far? And what would you want to see the United States do?

Queen Rania: Well, I just want people to understand that, in the eyes of the world, the US is part of this war. They feel that the US is enabling this war. Israeli officials themselves say that, ‘We couldn’t wage this war without the support of the US,’ because you provide the arms and you provide all the assistance, and also you use your veto powers, etc. And so clearly, the US has a lot of leverage over Israel. And for many people, this leverage hasn’t been used as effectively as it could be, even though the unconditional support for Israel has, for many, surpassed any reasonable political calculus.

Now, there has definitely been a change in tone and language from President Biden; we’ve seen that. He is trying to apply pressure. But I think words alone are not sufficient. Because as I said, there’s a great deal of a sense of impunity and I would say belligerence among Israeli officials, where, you know, international law doesn’t have to apply to them.

Joy Reid: But would you say that – you know, there have been protests inside of Israel as well. And so, there does seem to still be a “left” which is very much against this war and also holds Prime Minister Netanyahu responsible for the failures to anticipate the October 7th attack.

Queen Rania: Most of the protests against the war are because they want to free the hostages.

Joy Reid: Absolutely.

Queen Rania: ...not because they’re actually against the war. So, I think for many, if you could free the hostages, then you can go and continue the war. And that speaks to just how far Israeli society has gone. You know, there is an omnipresent, deep, almost cultural, anti-Palestinian racism that exists now in Israeli society. So that is as a result of decades of statements by officials, by government, by media, by military individuals: that says that Palestinians are inherently a violent people, that they only understand the language of force, that they are always wrong, and that Israel is always justified in inflicting whatever pain it inflicts on the Palestinians because they have it coming. They deserve it. They don’t suffer like us. They don’t have the same morality as we do. And that’s reflected, by the way, in the statements that we’ve heard from

officials right now – I’m not saying it; they’re saying it. They’re saying “human animals.” They’re saying that every single Gazan is a legitimate target. They’re saying that these are children of darkness, that they only understand the laws of the jungle – how can it be okay to be saying that?

Joy Reid: So then given that, as we wrap here, are there reasons for hope? Because there’s still talk of a two-state solution, there’s still talk of somehow there being an “after,” when this war is someday finally over? Are there reasons for hope, given the region, given the heat in the region, and given what you’ve said?

Queen Rania: If I have hope, it’s because I believe that the status quo is not sustainable – not for Israelis, not for Palestinians. We cannot go back to the days before the war. That status quo has been broken forever. And it is a status quo that was based on an illegal occupation that fuelled fear and insecurity on both sides. It’s a status quo that has no political horizons, and therefore made the option of violence more attractive. And I know that people roll their eyes when we say a two-state solution, because they think it’s not viable.

Joy Reid: Right.

Queen Rania: But I think the fact that we’re where we are today is all the more reason, the greater impetus, for us to have a two-state solution, because what is the alternative for Israelis and for Palestinians? What is the alternative? Are we going to keep going through cycles of violence? Is Israel going to occupy the Palestinians indefinitely?

Joy Reid: Right.

Queen Rania: Are they going to become a pariah state, an apartheid state? Are Palestinians going to be continuously subjugated? Is it just going to be more realities created on the ground? But here’s the thing. When the international community starts, and you see officials talking about a two-state solution. This shouldn’t become a chorus line that officials adopt for political face-saving. Because in the past, talk of “peace process” and “peace parameters” and “interim phases of peace” have all been delay tactics, and almost a cover to justify continuously subjugating the Palestinians and creating realities on the ground. So

while these peace processes were happening, Palestinians gradually and consistently saw the reality getting worse and worse and worse.

And so here's another thing I know for sure: Israelis and Palestinians cannot reach an agreement on their own.

Joy Reid: Right

Queen Rania: The international community has to put its weight behind it. And that means that you have to be ready to hold both sides accountable. And having a just peace cannot just be about the stronger side implementing its will over the weaker side, which means that we have to understand the imbalance in power here

Joy Reid: Right.

Queen Rania: Palestinians have less resources, they have less influence, they have less leverage, but they don't have less rights. Disproportionate power should never result in unequal rights. And we have to remember that the Palestinians are occupied. And the occupied shouldn't have to be negotiating their freedom with the occupier. And yet, whenever negotiations take place, the departure point is always 'What will Israel accept? What will Israel agree to?' Not 'what's the minimum they're required to do by international law?'

So we'll take, for example, negotiations over land. Territories that were occupied in 1967. Under Resolution 242, those are Palestinian lands. So if Israel returns to '67 borders, that is Israel giving back land, not giving up land. And, if we take that as a starting point, and we work on compromises on both sides, then we can find a situation that safeguards Israel's security and also gives Palestinians statehood. At the end of the day, there'll be no solution until Palestinians get autonomy, human rights, and statehood... And when I say statehood, I mean a sovereign state.

Joy Reid: Queen Rania, thank you so much. We appreciate you. Thank you.

Queen Rania: Thank you.

Republished from Media Center, 3 May 2024

THE FANTASY OF AN IRANIAN BOMB

SEYMOUR HERSH

13 April 2024



Iran has never had a nuclear bomb—why does Israel insist that it’s an imminent threat?

It remains a classic moment in United Nations history. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu used the dignified setting of a General Assembly speech in the fall of 2012 to raise the spectre of an Iranian nuclear bomb. He displayed a cartoonish drawing of what he said was an Iranian bomb with a lighted fuse on top and asked: ‘How much enriched uranium do you need for a bomb? And how close is Iran to getting it?’ He called his crude drawing a ‘diagram.’

The catcalls came immediately. Jon Stewart of *The Daily Show* waved a copy of the Israeli drawing that night and said, ‘Bibi, bubbe, what’s with the Wile E. Coyote nuclear bomb?’ Stewart showed his antidote to the bomb: a cartoon drawing of a giant magnet.

Fifteen months earlier, in a report for the *New Yorker*, I disclosed that a highly secret National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), whose conclusions were unanimously approved by delegates from seventeen American intelligence and counterintelligence agencies, found that there was no conclusive evidence that Iran had made any effort to build the bomb before or after the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. (A similar unproven allegation, that Iraq possessed an undeclared nuclear and chemical weapons arsenal, was used by the administration of George W. Bush and Dick Cheney to justify the invasion in the wake of the September 11 attacks of 2001.)

As in 2012, there is still no evidence that Iran, which does utilise low levels of enriched uranium to run its sole nuclear power plant, has the capacity to produce the needed amounts of highly enriched uranium for a bomb. Nor is there any evidence of a secure facility capable of fabricating enriched uranium into a solid nuclear core that could trigger a bomb. The American intelligence community has spent years, without success, searching for signs of an underground fabrication facility with ventilation holes that could surface many miles away—in Iran’s more than 600,000 square miles. It’s been decades of searching for air holes.

I reported then that CIA and Special Forces teams had dropped sensors disguised as stones capable of measuring the weight of vehicles traveling on roads leading to mountain complexes in Iran to determine whether trucks in the area went in heavy and came out light. That would be a clue to possible secret weapons work going on inside. Street signs near

universities suspected of conducting nuclear research in heavily populated areas of Tehran were removed and replaced with identical signs implanted with radiation detectors. Street disturbances were triggered late at night by the gutsy American operatives in downtown Tehran to divert passersby and enable American technicians to replace a brick quickly in a suspected nuclear research building with a perfect match capable of measuring, as a Geiger counter would, nuclear emanations. No signs of nuclear emissions were found.

None of this has altered the view of the Israeli leadership that Iran, under its revolutionary Islamic government, is a soon-to-be nuclear power. At the time I wrote about the NIE, it was clear that the new estimate would be politically sensitive, in terms of the United States (US)-Israeli relationship. 'If Iran is not a nuclear threat,' I was told at the time by a senior official, 'the Israelis have no reason to threaten imminent military action. The guys who worked this are good analysts, and their bosses backed them up.'

That was then and this is now. The Biden administration made it plain after taking office, an informed official told me, that it has little interest in NIEs, which are prepared by CIA experts who consult with many of the best scholars in the areas being studied. For example, the final document in the 2012 study of the nuclear capability of Iran was reviewed and evaluated by an esteemed scholar teaching at a major American university who, when he and I spoke privately, vouched for the integrity of the report.

There has been no known NIE dealing with the current war in Ukraine, the on-going Israeli war in Gaza, or the consequences of an oft-threatened Israeli assault on Iran.

Israel is now involved in an expanding exchange of missiles with Hezbollah, the Shitite militia in Lebanon that, under the religious and military leadership of Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, has steadily expanded its political role within the country along with its arsenal of long-range missiles. Israel has evacuated more than 100,000 residents in the past few months whose homes near the Lebanese border have been or could be under missile attack. Israel has returned fire deep into southern Lebanon by missile and air strikes.

Netanyahu has responded to increasing pressure from the usually permissive Biden administration to mitigate conditions inside stricken Gaza by escalating his rhetoric and his actions against Iran. On 1 April Israeli planes struck an annex of the Iranian embassy in Damascus, the Syrian capital, killing sixteen people, including a commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps, also known to some as the Quds force. Netanyahu's message to Biden, as the American president slowly backs away in a tough election year from all-out support for the Israeli war in Gaza, may be, in essence: 'I'm going to keep doing whatever I want.'

The Israeli bombing attack in Syria was a stunning escalation of what has been for decades a low-level tit-for-tat war between Damascus, Tehran, and Tel Aviv. It immediately raised speculation in Israel and elsewhere that Netanyahu is willing to risk war with Iran to stay in office. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the 84-year-old Iranian supreme leader who has been in power since 1989, immediately vowed, as he has done before, to respond. 'Israel would regret its crimes,' he said. Iran has repeatedly made clear that it does not want an all-out war with Israel and has relied on its allies in the region to respond. There has so far been no response by Syria to the April 1 bombings.

Nasrallah, who led Hezbollah to what many viewed as a stalemate in its war with Israel in 2006, told his followers last Friday in the aftermath of the killings in Syria: 'Rest assured that the Iranian response to the attack on the... consulate will inevitably come.' A similar threat of future action came the next day from Major General Mohammad Bagheri, chief of staff of the Iranian armed forces. Israel, he said, according to a report by *Al Mayadeen* in Beirut, 'will regret its actions and we are the ones to determine the method of retaliation.'

There was no hint of an immediate response. The Israeli government, however, has in the days since called up reserves and halted all leaves of Israel Defence Force (IDF) soldiers serving with combat units in Gaza.

Netanyahu has been increasingly criticised in Israel for the seemingly slow pace of the war against Hamas—a much quicker victory was publicly envisioned at the outset—and his failure to recover Israeli hostages. It is unclear how many hostages have survived in captivity

since October 7, when Hamas staged its attack on southern Israel. Netanyahu's promise of a full inquiry into the slow response by the Israel Defence Forces has yet to take place and may never happen.

I asked the knowledgeable official an important question: what is going to happen now, given what seems to be Netanyahu's obvious determination to stay in power by expanding Israel's far-from-completed war in Gaza into the West Bank and the continued diminishment of the Palestinian Authority?

'The Israelis never put a timeline on the war,' he said, 'and its people are behind the war 100 percent.' As for Hamas, 'all are going to die or escape into obscurity.' Hamas's last gasp, he added, is the hope that 'somehow the United States or the world is going to convince the Israelis to come to their senses.'

About the possible response by Iran to Netanyahu's continued aggressiveness, the official asked rhetorically: What was a ranking officer of the Iranian Quds Force doing in the Iranian embassy in Syria? He answered his question: 'The Palestinians are being targeted, and the Iranians are helping the Palestinians. And the Israelis have been blowing up Quds guys in Lebanon and Syria.' Amid the increasing tension, 'the Iranians are not looking for a fight. They've got no bomb, and they've got ISIS-K—the terrorist groups that struck last month at a rock concert in Moscow—'breathing down their necks. And Ayatollah Khamenei's got big troubles with internal strife throughout Iran. 'The old religious leaders in Iran are dying off, and they are dealing with a population that seriously wants to be accepted throughout the world.'

He added that the long-standing economic sanctions on Iran that 'we in America have imposed only impact on the people at the [economic] bottom, and not the leaders. Iran has people in uniform,' he said, 'but it has no bomb and cannot win a war.'

Republished from Seymour Hersh on April 10 2024

ISRAEL'S GENOCIDE BETRAYS THE HOLOCAUST

CHRIS HEDGES

8 January 2024



If we forget the lessons of the Holocaust, we forget who we are and what we are capable of becoming.

Israel's Lebensraum master plan for Gaza, borrowed from the Nazi's depopulation of Jewish ghettos, is clear. Destroy infrastructure, medical facilities and sanitation, including access to clean water. Block shipments of food and fuel. Unleash indiscriminate industrial violence to kill and wound hundreds a day. Let starvation — the United Nations (UN) estimates that more than half a million people are already starving — and epidemics of infectious diseases, along with the daily massacres and the displacement of Palestinians from their homes, turn Gaza into a mortuary. The Palestinians are being forced to choose between death from bombs, disease, exposure or starvation or being driven from their homeland.

There will soon reach a point where death will be so ubiquitous that deportation – for those who want to live – will be the only option.

Danny Danon, Israel's former Ambassador to the UN and a close ally of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, told Israel's Kan Bet radio that he has been contacted by 'countries in Latin America and Africa that are willing to absorb refugees from the Gaza Strip.' 'We have to make it easier for Gazans to leave for other countries,' he said, 'I'm talking about voluntary migration by Palestinians who want to leave.'

The problem for now 'is countries that are willing to absorb them, and we're working on this', Netanyahu told Likud Knesset members.

In the Warsaw Ghetto, the Germans handed out three kilograms of bread and one kilogram of marmalade to anyone who 'voluntarily' registered for deportation. "There were times when hundreds of people had to wait in line for several hours to be 'deported,'" Marek Edelman, one of the commanders of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, writes in *The Ghetto Fights*. 'The number of people anxious to obtain three kilograms of bread was such that the transports, now leaving twice daily with 12,000 people, could not accommodate them all.'

The Nazis shipped their victims to death camps. The Israelis will ship their victims to squalid refugee camps in countries outside of Israel. Israeli leaders are also cynically advertising the proposed ethnic cleansing as voluntary and a humanitarian gesture to solve the catastrophe they created.

This is the plan. No one, especially the Biden administration, intends to stop it.

The most disturbing lesson I learned while covering armed conflicts for two decades is that we all have the capacity, with little prodding, to become willing executioners. The line between the victim and the victimiser is razor thin. The dark lusts of racial and ethnic supremacy, of vengeance and hate, of the eradication of those we condemn as embodying evil, are poisons that are not circumscribed by race, nationality, ethnicity or religion. We can all become Nazis. It takes very little. And if we do not stand in eternal vigilance over evil — our evil — we become, like those carrying out the mass killing in Gaza, monsters.

The cries of those expiring under the rubble in Gaza are the cries of the boys and men executed by the Bosnian Serbs at Srebrenica, the over 1.5 million Cambodians killed by the Khmer Rouge, the thousands of Tutsi families burned alive in churches and the tens of thousands of Jews executed by the Einsatzgruppen at Babi Yar in Ukraine. The Holocaust is not an historical relic. It lives, lurking in the shadows, waiting to ignite its vicious contagion.

We were warned. Raul Hilberg. Primo Levi. Bruno Bettelheim. Hannah Arendt. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. They understood the dark recesses of the human spirit. But this truth is bitter and hard to confront. We prefer the myth. We prefer to see in our own kind, our own race, our own ethnicity, our own nation, our own religion, superior virtues. We prefer to sanctify our hatred. Some of those who bore witness to this awful truth, including Levi, Bettelheim, Jean Améry, the author of *At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and Its Realities*, and Tadeusz Borowski, who wrote *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*, committed suicide. The German playwright and revolutionary Ernst Toller, unable to rouse an indifferent world to assist victims and refugees from the Spanish Civil War, hanged himself in 1939 in a room at the Mayflower Hotel in New York City. On his hotel desk were photos of dead Spanish children.

'Most people have no imagination,' Toller writes. 'If they could imagine the sufferings of others, they would not make them suffer so. What

separated a German mother from a French mother? Slogans which deafened us so that we could not hear the truth.’

Primo Levi railed against the false, morally uplifting narrative of the Holocaust that culminates in the creation of the state of Israel — a narrative embraced by the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C. The contemporary history of the Third Reich, he writes, could be ‘reread as a war against memory, an Orwellian falsification of memory, falsification of reality, negation of reality.’ He wonders if ‘we who have returned’ have ‘been able to understand and make others understand our experience.’

Levi saw us reflected in Chaim Rumkowski, the Nazi collaborator and tyrannical leader of the Łódź Ghetto. Rumkowski sold out his fellow Jews for privilege and power, although he was sent to Auschwitz on the final transport where Jewish Sonderkommando — prisoners forced to help herd victims into the gas chambers and dispose of their bodies — in an act of vengeance reportedly beat him to death outside a crematorium.

‘We are all mirrored in Rumkowski,’ Levi reminds us. ‘His ambiguity is ours, it is our second nature, we hybrids molded from clay and spirit. His fever is ours, the fever of Western civilisation, that ‘descends into hell with trumpets and drums,’ and its miserable adornments are the distorting image of our symbols of social prestige.’ We, like Rumkowski, ‘are so dazzled by power and prestige as to forget our essential fragility. Willingly or not we come to terms with power, forgetting that we are all in the ghetto, that the ghetto is walled in, that outside the ghetto reign the lords of death, and that close by the train is waiting.’

Levi insists that the camps ‘could not be reduced to the two blocks of victims and persecutors.’ He argues, ‘It is naive, absurd, and historically false to believe that an infernal system such as National Socialism sanctifies its victims; on the contrary; it degrades them, it makes them resemble itself.’ He chronicles what he called the ‘grey zone’ between corruption and collaboration. The world, he writes, is not black and white, ‘but a vast zone of grey consciences that stands between the great men of evil and the pure victims.’ We all inhabit this grey zone. We all can be induced to become part of the apparatus of death for trivial

reasons and paltry rewards. This is the terrifying truth of the Holocaust.

It is hard not to be cynical about the plethora of university courses about the Holocaust given the censorship and banning of groups such as Students for Justice in Palestine and Jewish Voices for Peace, imposed by university administrations. What is the point of studying the Holocaust if not to understand its fundamental lesson — when you have the capacity to stop genocide and you do not, you are culpable? It is hard not to be cynical about the ‘humanitarian interventionists’ — Barack Obama, Tony Blair, Hillary Clinton, Joe Biden, Samantha Power — who talk in sanctimonious rhymes about the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ but are silent about war crimes when speaking out would threaten their status and careers. None of the ‘humanitarian interventions’ they championed, from Bosnia to Libya, come close to replicating the suffering and slaughter in Gaza. But there is a cost to defending Palestinians, a cost they do not intend to pay. There is nothing moral about denouncing slavery, the Holocaust or dictatorial regimes that oppose the United States. All it means is you champion the dominant narrative.

The moral universe has been turned upside down. Those who oppose genocide are accused of advocating it. Those who carry out genocide are said to have the right to ‘defend’ themselves. Vetoing ceasefires and providing 2,000-pound bombs to Israel that throw out metal fragments for thousands of feet is the road to peace. Refusing to negotiate with Hamas will free the hostages. Bombing hospitals, schools, mosques, churches, ambulances and refugee camps, along with killing three former Israeli hostages, stripped to the waist, waving an improvised white flag and calling out for help in Hebrew, are routine acts of war. Killing over 21,300 people, including more than 7,700 children, injuring over 55,000 and rendering nearly all of the 2.3 million people in Gaza homeless, is a way to ‘deradicalise’ Palestinians. None of this makes sense, as protesters around the world realise.

A new world is being born. It is a world where the old rules, more often honored in the breach than the observance, no longer matter. It is a world where vast bureaucratic structures and technologically advanced

systems carry out in public view vast killing projects. The industrialised nations, weakened, fearful of global chaos, are sending an ominous message to the Global South and anyone who might think of revolt — we will kill you without restraint.

One day, we will all be Palestinians.

I fear that we live in a world in which war and racism are ubiquitous, in which the powers of government mobilisation and legitimisation are powerful and increasing, in which a sense of personal responsibility is increasingly attenuated by specialisation and bureaucratisation, and in which the peer group exerts tremendous pressures on behaviour and sets moral norms

Christopher R. Browning writes in *Ordinary Men*, about a German reserve police battalion in World War Two that was ultimately responsible for the murder of 83,000 Jews. ‘In such a world, I fear, modern governments that wish to commit mass murder will seldom fail in their efforts for being unable to induce ‘ordinary men’ to become their ‘willing executioners.’”

Evil is protean. It mutates. It finds new forms and new expressions. Germany orchestrated the murder of six million Jews, as well as over six million Gypsies, Poles, homosexuals, communists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Freemasons, artists, journalists, Soviet prisoners of war, people with physical and intellectual disabilities and political opponents. It immediately set out after the war to expiate itself for its crimes. It deftly transferred its racism and demonisation to Muslims, with racial supremacy remaining firmly rooted in the German psyche. At the same time, Germany and the United States (US) rehabilitated thousands of former Nazis, especially from the intelligence services and the scientific community, and did little to prosecute those who directed Nazi war crimes. Germany today is Israel’s second largest arms supplier following the US.

The supposed campaign against anti-Semitism, interpreted as any statement that is critical of the State of Israel or denounces the genocide, is in fact the championing of White Power. It is why the German state,

which has effectively criminalised support for the Palestinians, and the most retrograde white supremacists in the United States, justify the carnage. Germany's long relationship with Israel, including paying over \$90 billion since 1945 in reparations to Holocaust survivors and their heirs, is not about atonement, as the Israeli historian Ilan Pappé writes, but blackmail.

'The argument for a Jewish state as compensation for the Holocaust was a powerful argument, so powerful that nobody listened to the outright rejection of the UN solution by the overwhelming majority of the people of Palestine,' Pappé writes.

What comes out clearly is a European wish to atone. The basic and natural rights of the Palestinians should be sidelined, dwarfed and forgotten altogether for the sake of the forgiveness that Europe was seeking from the newly formed Jewish state. It was much easier to rectify the Nazi evil vis-à-vis a Zionist movement than facing the Jews of the world in general. It was less complex and, more importantly, it did not involve facing the victims of the Holocaust themselves, but rather a state that claimed to represent them. The price for this more convenient atonement was robbing the Palestinians of every basic and natural right they had and allowing the Zionist movement to ethnically cleanse them without fear of any rebuke or condemnation.

The Holocaust was weaponised from almost the moment Israel was founded. It was bastardised to serve the apartheid state. If we forget the lessons of the Holocaust, we forget who we are and what we are capable of becoming. We seek our moral worth in the past, rather than the present. We condemn others, including the Palestinians, to an endless cycle of slaughter. We become the evil we abhor. We consecrate the horror.

Original article published in Unz Review on 31 December 2023

HOW TO END THE WAR IN GAZA

MICHAEL KEATING

14 December 2023



It is urgent to end the loss of life and destruction in Gaza, but as the joint Statement by the Prime Ministers of Australia, Canada and New Zealand recognises, a sustainable ceasefire will require

agreement to a balanced set of conditions consistent with eventually achieving a lasting peace based on a two-state solution. This is how to end the war in Gaza.

While Israel was clearly justified in defending itself against Hamas attack on 7 October [2023], the enormous toll of death and destruction in Gaza is of mounting concern to the rest of the world. Around 18,000 Gazans have now been killed, most of them women and children, 90 per cent of the population has been displaced, and more than 70 per cent of the homes in Gaza have been destroyed.

At the end of last week, the United Nations (UN) proposed an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. This UN resolution was supported by thirteen members of the Security Council, but was vetoed by the United States (US), while the United Kingdom (UK) abstained.

This US veto has been widely condemned elsewhere, although as usual, there has been almost no criticism in the Australian media. A ceasefire might have allowed Hamas to regroup and continue fighting, but if the US vetoes a ceasefire, it is surely incumbent on it to spell out its alternative for ending the war and achieving a lasting peace as soon as possible.

By vetoing the ceasefire, the US is apparently supporting continuation of the war, and essentially on Israel's terms. Bolstered by the US veto, and the purchase of an extra \$US106 million worth of tank ammunition from the US since the veto was announced, Israel has been pushing ahead with its punishing air and ground offensive in Gaza, while the Gazan people are crowded into a smaller and smaller space with nowhere to hide.

While the US professes to want to end the war, unfortunately there is no sign that it will put forward an alternative proposal, until Israel has achieved its objective of annihilating Hamas. And while many may feel that the elimination of the 'terrorist' group Hamas is a necessary condition for a lasting peace, there is a growing risk that Hamas elimination will only be accomplished by what should be a completely unacceptable loss of innocent lives and destruction of Gaza.

Thankfully in a joint statement released on 13 December 2023, the Prime Ministers of Australia, Canada and New Zealand renewed the pressure for international action to achieve what they call a ‘sustainable ceasefire’.

As the three Prime Ministers recognise, a sustainable ceasefire ‘cannot be one-sided’. Hamas must release all hostages, lay down its arms, and there cannot be any role for Hamas in the future governance of Gaza.

The quid pro quo is that the three Prime Ministers:

- ‘Support Palestinians’ right to self-determination’
- ‘Oppose the forcible displacement of Palestinians from Gaza, the re-occupation of Gaza, any reduction in territory, and any use of siege or blockade’
- ‘Emphasise that Gaza must no longer be used as a platform for terrorism. We reaffirm that settlements are illegal under international law. Settlements and settler violence are serious obstacles to a negotiated two-state solution’

To this list of conditions, I would add that Israel equally must withdraw from Gaza after hostilities cease, and it cannot be the occupying power for any period. President Biden has previously indicated that he supports this condition, and it is difficult to see Hamas accepting laying down their arms, releasing all hostages, and going out of existence without Israel equally being required to withdraw. While on the other hand, all Israel’s legitimate demands for security will have been met.

Together these conditions are consistent with the widely accepted ‘two-state solution’ guaranteeing the independence and security of both Israel and Palestine, which has been widely agreed as the basis for a lasting peace settlement.

But that still leaves the question of how to take this proposal forward. First, it will require a United Nations Security Council resolution, with US support this time. Second, there is an enormous task ahead to ensure security within Gaza and that Hamas does not reappear, to rebuild Gaza, and fill the gap in Palestinian political capability.

As I have argued in a previous article, '*Gaza: Israel is winning the battle but losing the war*', that task is best undertaken by a UN trusteeship. Ideally, this trusteeship would be US-led, but personnel would also be drawn from other countries, and especially Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia.

By directly involving the US and the Arab countries, the trusteeship should have credibility with both Israelis and Palestinians. And involving the Arab countries directly in the administration of Gaza for an extended period would help induce them to open their purse strings to provide much of the necessary finance to rebuild Gaza.

Finally, the trusteeship would need to continue for some time – say three years – as it will take time to rebuild Gaza's infrastructure and political capabilities when Hamas is gone.

THE WEAPONISING OF 'ANTISEMITISM' IS TO HIDE THE GENOCIDE

JOHN MENDUE

7 February 2025



As expressed in the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, the vast majority of the world's governments and peoples agree that

Israel is committing genocide in Gaza and now the West Bank. The main supporters of Israel — the United States (US), Canada, Australia and New Zealand (NZ), the settler colonial states — have all expropriated their indigenous populations and find little disagreement with Israel doing the same.

Only the US veto in the Security Council prevents full disclosure of the barbarity of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF), supported by the people of Israel. We have been lied to time and time again that the IDF was only targeting Hamas and not civilians.

Since 2018, Netanyahu has allowed suitcases holding millions in Qatari cash to enter Gaza through its crossings in order to strengthen Hamas against the Palestinian Authority of Mahmoud Abbas. Now we are told by Netanyahu that Hamas is the epitome of terrorist evil and must be destroyed.

Netanyahu has for decades opposed a two-state solution and our timid politicians prattle on about it, but do nothing to seriously advance it. The extremists in the Zionist lobby don't want a two-state solution either. They want Israeli occupation of all of Palestine.

So much of our media is in thrall of the Zionist lobby and its propaganda. They deliberately manufacture consent for the genocide. Truth is discounted. Ignorance is widespread.

This is especially true of *The Australian* newspaper which is a part of the least trusted media group in Australia. The Murdoch media is also the most discredited media group in the English-speaking world. It lies to keep sweet with its readers and viewers. It is a rogue organisation.

They can't get enough of attacks on synagogues, but show no interest in the daily harassment of Muslims. Even throwing eggs in Bondi is seized on by the media and the police as another case of antisemitism.

Islamophobia is a much more serious concern, but Muslims are not as well organised as the Zionist lobby and do not have the ear of politicians and the media. And they don't have a powerful lobby that can call politicians and journalists to heel as and when necessary. A few years ago, Scott Morrison urged the shadow cabinet to capitalise on the

electorate's growing concerns about 'Muslim immigration', 'Muslims in Australia' and the 'inability' of Muslim migrants to integrate.

There is a campaign in the Western world by the Zionist lobby to assert that criticism of the Israeli Government's genocide in Gaza is antisemitic. 'Antisemitism' has become a cloak to hide the genocide, mass murder and displacement of Palestinian people.

We are told to heed the hurt feelings of Zionists, some on university campuses, who support genocide or have wilfully chosen to ignore it. What twisted logic this is.

The Palestinian scholar at Macquarie University, Dr Randa Abdel-Fattah, put it eloquently and correctly. She said, 'the feelings and fragility of Zionists are used as a rhetorical shield to deflect from engaging with the moral and material reality of genocide'.

She asked, 'How can any individual support an apartheid settler colonial state carpet bomb, ... starve ... a population of over 2 million people, murder over 40,000 people..., and still make it about your sense of safety ...?'

'Since when do the victims of genocide have the responsibility to defer to, and protect, the feelings of those who enact, support, and enable their genocide?'

The historic victims of the Holocaust are now inflicting another Holocaust on the Palestinian people. This has been ongoing for a century, seizing Palestinian land, killing the people and destroying their communities. We are expected to ignore it.

The genocidal intent of Israel is abundantly clear as numerous United Nations resolutions, the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court have made clear. The leader of Israel is an indicted war criminal. In the US, he gets support from a convicted felon when he should be arrested and extradited to The Hague for trial.

But the Zionist lobby is hell-bent on stopping criticism of the behaviour of Israel and its criminal leadership.

Under illegal Israeli occupation, Palestinians have a right to rebel. The Zionist strategy to label people who criticise Israel as antisemitic should be exposed as a cover for Israeli genocide.

The lives of Palestinians killed in the Gaza genocide are as valuable as the lives lost by Jews in the European Holocaust. “Never again” must apply not just to Jews, but to Palestinians and all humanity.

We must not allow the weaponisation of antisemitism to crush legitimate criticism of the ongoing genocide and ethnic cleansing in Gaza and the West Bank.

To criticise the Israel genocide is not antisemitic.

ANTISEMITISM IS FUELLED BY ISRAEL AND ITS LOBBY, NOT THEIR OPPONENTS

ALI KAZAK

11 February 2025



It's outrageous that leaders of Zionist-controlled Jewish

organisations and the Israeli lobby blame Australians protesting Israeli war crimes for rising antisemitism.

If any party is responsible for the rise of antisemitism, it is Israel's heinous occupation, aggression, ethnic cleansing, apartheid and sadistic war of genocide it commits in the name of Jews against the Palestinian people that the world has rarely witnessed anywhere else, not the noble Australians who oppose and demonstrate against these crimes. Equally, it is also the responsibility of the Zionist leaders who claim to represent the Jewish community and defend and never condemn these crimes.

They are the ones who conflate anti-Israel and anti-Zionism as anti-Jews, accordingly making Jews complicit in Israel's crimes; this is antisemitism. Therefore, we see more and more Jews beginning to open their eyes to the true nature of Israel and Zionism and the danger the Zionist colonial project in Palestine poses to them and their interests in their homeland by inflaming antisemitism around the world; hence they are taking against Israel and raising the slogan 'Not In Our Name'.

In a recent interview with *ABC TV*, former Liberal treasurer Josh Frydenberg said, 'from the get-go, the prime minister should have set red lines that were not to be crossed ... the absence of action, those who hate and those who harm have been emboldened and we've seen daily protests where people are actually calling Jews Nazis, Jews terrorists, Zionists terrorists and we know a Zionist is simply somebody who believes in the existence of the state of Israel.'

These claims are lies. For the last 15 months, weekly demonstrations have been taking place in cities throughout Australia attended by hundreds of thousands of Australians, including Jews, and in the presence of security forces. Everyone knows that Frydenberg's claim is completely false.

Pro-Palestinian demonstrations do not raise slogans against Jews. They distinguish between Jews and Zionists. Those who do not are the ones who are deceived by the Zionist propaganda conflating Jews with Israel and Zionism.

Secondly, a Zionist is actually the one who supports Israel's colonial project in Palestine as it was defined in the 'Basel Program' of the first

Zionist Congress in 1897 and racial discrimination of the indigenous Christian and Muslim Palestinians.

The attempts of Frydenberg and other Zionists to brand pro-Palestinian demonstrations as anti-Jewish are rejected and strongly condemned.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam came from our part of the world and are part of our Arab and Islamic culture. Antisemites who cover up their attack against Jews by using Israel's crimes do not belong to the Palestinian camp and are condemned.

In this regard, it is important to point out that Palestinians and Arabs are Semites. I am certainly more of a Semite than Frydenberg and most Jews in Australia.

Frydenberg defined his 'red lines' saying 'When people are waving the Hamas and Hezbollah flags — terrorist flags, flags of terrorist organisations — they should be punished, arrested, and convicted.'

By that token, the Israeli flag and star of David on Israel's warplanes, tanks, bombs and the uniforms of its soldiers and officers who are committing the most extreme form of state terrorism, ethnic cleansing, massacres, apartheid and waging a war of genocide, butchering tens of thousands of civilians, including children, is a symbol of crime and hate. Therefore, raising this flag is a provocation, confrontational, an affront to the feelings of the Palestinians and all humane Australians; it should be banned, and people raising it should be arrested and convicted.

If antisemitism is escalating in line with Israel's crimes and its oppression and denial of Palestinians' rights, does the solution lie in violation of citizens' rights by suppressing and criminalising people for protesting and expressing their rejection and denunciation of these crimes against humanity or in bringing an end to Israel's crimes?

In his interview, Frydenberg said, 'When people call for the abolition of the state of Israel (saying) 'From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free', that is a very violent statement.'

So I would like to ask him where is Palestine? What does he call the Zionist destruction and occupation of Palestine from the river to the sea and their ethnic cleansing of more than 70% of the Palestinian people?

And why are he and his like against freedom, equality and democracy in the country from the river to the sea?

Any observer will notice that in their media interviews, Frydenberg and the Zionist leaders do not attack and draw attention to the antisemites, but rather to the demonstrators against Israel and its war of genocide, trying to taint them as antisemitic. This is because they consider the enemies of Israel and Zionism to be the antisemites and not the enemies of Jews.

The father of Zionism, Theodor Herzl, did not see any conflict with antisemites, he even asked for their assistance and saw them as allies. He wrote in his diaries, 'The antisemites will become our most dependable friends, the antisemitic countries our allies.' And indeed, as we can see, antisemites and Christian Zionists who advocate for Armageddon, and the killing or conversion of Jews, are the best and most staunch supporters of Israel and Zionism

AUSTRALIA'S SILENCE ON TRUMP'S ICC SANCTIONS IS NOTHING BUT SHAMEFUL

GREG BARNES

11 February 2025



Last Friday, 79 nations signed a statement condemning the announcement 24 hours earlier by genocide enabler United States (US) President Donald Trump, that he was imposing sanctions on

officials of the International Criminal Court because they had issued a warrant for the arrest of architect of genocide of the Palestinian people, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Shamefully, but given this nation's appalling record on human rights and its supine posture on matters Washington perhaps not surprisingly, Australia did not sign this statement. Perhaps the Albanese Government did not want to upset the Americans while Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles was handing over \$800 million of taxpayer funds to Washington as part of the obscene AUKUS deal.

As likely an excuse is that the Australian body politic, with a few principled exceptions such as the Greens and Independent Andrew Wilkie, is completely captured by the Zionist lobby in this country.

According to that lobby the International Criminal Court (ICC) should not have sought a warrant for Netanyahu despite the overwhelming consensus of legal scholarship arguing that this is a leader who has committed serious war crimes. Quoted in the Netanyahu Times, aka *The Australian*, on Saturday was one of the leaders of that relentless lobby group, Executive Council of Australian Jewry co-chief executive Alex Rychin. He thinks Trump is right because, "[t]he lawless behaviour of the ICC threatens every democracy, every member of the armed forces, and every politician who has to make difficult decisions of national security." In other words, if you lead a democracy it's okay to commit atrocities against innocent men, women and children and orchestrate genocide. So why shouldn't everyone else who is on the end of an ICC warrant say, what's good for the goose is good for the gander?

The breathtaking gutlessness by the Albanese Government in not signing Friday's statement should send a shudder down the spine of anyone in this country who believes that human rights crimes should be prosecuted irrespective who it is, who is alleged to have committed them.

Trump's threats, and decision to harbour a politician wanted for war crimes, means one thing. Washington, and any nation that backs its

decision last week, is a rogue state. It, and they, can no longer condemn the West's favourite whipping boys such as Russia, China and Iran.

The ICC is an important global institution. That the Americans and the Israelis don't like it tells you that both nations have long thought they can murder, bomb, and slaughter their enemies and be allowed to get away with it.

Trump's threats should have the Australian Government rethinking its sycophancy towards Washington. After all Canberra loves to trot out the line that Australia is committed to the rule of law and human rights.

So why didn't Marles cancel his visit to Washington, or at the very least make a strong statement condemning his hosts for seeking to destroy the work of the ICC? Or is it that Australia, by its silence, is happy to see the ICC brought down a peg or two for fear of the harassment and bullying of the Zionist lobby being ramped up even further?

And how is it that Australia supports the ICC in issuing an arrest warrant for Vladimir Putin in respect of his actions in Ukraine, but refuses to say anything about Trump and Netanyahu? The latter's evil actions in Gaza make Putin's war in Ukraine pale in comparison.

While the ICC has many flaws and has been accused in the past of a pre-occupation with African countries it is, as Chatham House scholar Elizabeth Wilmshurst KC puts it, "fundamentally sound and that its role is as necessary as when it was first established." She quotes the great South African jurist Richard Goldstone, a former chief prosecutor of the United Nations International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, who has said, 'If there were no ICC in existence today, many people in many countries would be agitating for and demanding one. That we have one is a singular achievement. It behoves us to make it the best possible and to assist it, as states, civil society, and individuals, in the best and most productive way possible.'

Trump's sanctions against officials of the ICC deserve a serious response from Australia. Albanese and Wong either believe in international criminal law being allowed to work, or they do not. They cannot sit on the sidelines because they are scared of supporters of two well-known criminals – Trump and Netanyahu.

LETTER TO THE LEADERS OF THE CIVILISED WORLD

JAFAR RAMINI

12 February 2025



‘Take wisdom from the mouths of mad men’ is an old Arabic proverb. It sprang to mind a couple of days ago, when I heard the

narcissist leader of the ‘civilised’ world, President Donald Trump, openly calling for the ethnic cleansing of Palestine.

Trump clearly said that Gaza is a ‘hell’; Gaza is totally destroyed, Gaza is uninhabitable and that Israel will hand it over to him, ‘when they finish the job’, that is, and that he will turn it into the Riviera of the Middle East.

I agree with Trump. Gaza is hell. Gaza is totally flattened. Gaza is not fit for human habitation.

The irony of all of this is that the ignorant Trump maybe did not notice that the man standing beside him, Benjamin Netanyahu, the prime minister of Israel, was the man responsible for all this death and destruction. Another irony is that Trump appeared not to realise that the instruments of this death and destruction had been supplied by his own country. The Biden administration, during the last 16 months, has supplied Israel with the latest instruments of war to the tune of \$200 billion and Trump himself, so as not to be denied his moment in the limelight, in the first week of his presidency added another \$1 billion worth of 2000-pound bombs and armed caterpillar bulldozers.

Further, Trump has stuffed his new administration with sycophantic supporters of Israel, most of whom deny our very existence. Again, this is not new. What is new, and is getting under my skin, is the feigned indignation of some European, international and Arab leaders. Where was your indignation and rejection during the last 16 months when you stood by, watching the Israeli destructive juggernaut plough through Gaza, killing, according to the latest estimates, more than 60,000 innocent Palestinians, the majority of whom were women and children, and injuring more than 110,00?

Where was the indignation when the Israeli Air Force dropped more than 90,000 tons of bombs on Gaza that flattened homes, schools, universities, churches, mosques, hospitals and infrastructure such as roads, water and electricity and sewage treatment plants that make life possible?

Where is the indignation now when the Israeli destructive juggernaut,

known as the Israel Defence Force (IDF), has turned its attention towards cities and towns in the West Bank?

It's non-existent. Which tells me that the Zionist, colonialist project that started in 1947/48 is entering its final phase. Which is, and has been articulated by Netanyahu, Ben Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, total Israeli sovereignty over the entire land mass of Palestine, with no Palestinians in it, from the river to the sea.

Proof of this is the recent call by the current Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz, ordering the IDF to prepare a plan for the evacuation of Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank. He also called for the Israeli Chief of General Staff, Herzi Halevi, to reprimand the IDF Chief of Army Intelligence, Major-General Shlomi Binder, for saying Trump's plan for Gaza could result in violence in the West Bank.

None of this is new to me. As an 82 year-old Palestinian survivor of the Nakba — a phrase that we are not actually allowed to use — I have seen it all before. The choice that we were given in 1948 and are now offered by Trump, was “leave or die”. I remember as a five-year old picking up the pamphlets in my garden saying the very same thing.

THE LOST GENERATION: GAZA'S CHILDREN AND THEIR STOLEN FUTURES

MEG SCHWARZ

12 February 2025



Rasha was 10 years old when she wrote her will. In simple words, she asked that her belongings be given to those in need if she didn't survive. A child, too young to dream of death,

yet old enough to know it was coming. She was killed soon after.

Her words remain, a haunting testament to a stolen childhood. But she was not the only one. Across Gaza, children have written goodbyes instead of school essays, made burial requests instead of birthday wishes. Their futures were taken before they had the chance to grow into them.

Now, as a ceasefire takes hold, we must ask: will it last long enough for them to reclaim their childhoods?

A childhood shaped by war

For many, war is something found in history books. For Gaza's children, it has been the backdrop of their lives.

They have learned to recognise the hum of drones, the whistle of incoming missiles, the silence before an explosion. Their playgrounds are rubble; their bedtime stories interrupted by air raid sirens.

Since the genocide escalated, thousands of children have been killed or maimed. Others have survived, but with wounds that are harder to see, nightmares, trauma and grief no child should bear.

'My son doesn't ask for toys anymore,' says Leila, a mother of three. 'He asks if we will be bombed tonight.'

Now, there is a fragile pause in the violence. But will it hold long enough for children to dream again?

A future beyond the rubble

Even in war, there are supposed to be safe spaces, hospitals, schools, homes. But in Gaza, nowhere was safe. Families fled from one destroyed neighbourhood to another, searching for shelter that did not exist.

Now, they try to rebuild. But how does one rebuild when everything is gone? The borders remain closed. The sea is a dead end. Humanitarian aid trickles in, but will it be enough to sustain hope?

Before the war, Gaza was home to poets, dreamers and children who wanted to be doctors, teachers, footballers. Now, many of their ambitions lie buried beneath the ruins.

Rami, 12, wanted to be a pilot. 'To fly above Gaza and see the sea,' he once said. He was killed with his entire family when their home was bombed.

Aya, 8, loved to paint. If she has survived, she may now sit in a refugee shelter, sketching memories of a home that no longer exists.

These children had futures. They had dreams. A ceasefire must mean more than a pause in bombing, it must be a commitment to protecting what remains of their childhoods.

Who will remember them?

War destroys, but memory resists. The stories of Gaza's children must not be reduced to statistics in a report. Their voices, their dreams, their lives must be remembered.

Rasha's will should not be just a heartbreaking footnote in history, it should be a call to action. For an end to impunity. For the protection of children. For a peace that does not expire when the world looks away.

A ceasefire has begun. Now, the world must ensure it is not just another pause before more children are forced to write their wills.

TRUMP AND FOOLISH OLD MEN WHO REDRAW MAPS

EUGENE DOYLE

13 February 2025



It generally ends badly. An old tyrant embarks on an ill-considered project that involves redrawing maps. They are

heedless to wise counsel and indifferent to indigenous interests or experience. Before they fail, are killed, deposed or otherwise disposed of, these vicious old men can cause immense harm.

To see Trump through this lens, let's look at a group of men who tested their cartographic skills and failed: King Lear and, of course, Adolf Hitler and Napoleon Bonaparte, and latterly, George W. Bush and Saddam Hussein. I even throw in a Pope. But let's start first with Benjamin Netanyahu and Donald Trump.

Benjamin Netanyahu and a map of 'A New Middle East' – without Palestine

In September 2023, a month before the Hamas attack on Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu spoke to an almost-empty United Nations General Assembly. Few wanted to share the same air as the man. In his speech, he presented a map of a New Middle East – one that contained a Greater Israel, but no Palestine. In a piece in the *Jordan Times* titled: 'Cartography of genocide', Ramzy Baroud explained why Netanyahu erased Palestine from the map figuratively. Hamas leaders also understood the message all too well.

'Generally, there was a consensus in the political bureau: We have to move, we have to take action. If we don't do it, Palestine will be forgotten – totally deleted from the international map,' Dr Bassem Naim, a leading Hamas official said in the outstanding Al Jazeera documentary October 7. Hearing Trump and Netanyahu last week, the Hamas assessment was clear-eyed and prescient.

Donald Trump

In defiance of United Nations (UN) resolutions and international law, Trump recognised Jerusalem as Israel's capital, recognised the Syrian Golan Heights as part of Israel, and now wants to turn Gaza into a United States (US) real estate development, reconquer Panama, turn Canada into the 51st State of the US, rename the Gulf of Mexico and seize Greenland, if necessary by force." And it's only February. It was pointed out to me Greenland isn't technically part of the European Union (EU)! The US spent blood, treasure and decades building the

rules-based international order. Joe Biden and Trump have left it in tatters.

Trump is a fitting avatar for the American state: morally corrupt, narcissistic, burning down all the temples to international law, and generally causing chaos as he flares his way into ignominy. The past week — where ‘Bonkers is the New Normal’ — reminded me of a famous Onion headline: ‘FBI Uncovers Al-Qaeda Plot To Just Sit Back And Enjoy Collapse Of United States’.

The Iranians made a brilliant counter-offer to the US’s plan to ethnically cleanse Gaza and create a US statelet next to Israel: send the Israelis to Greenland! Unlike the genocidal US and Israeli leadership, the Iranians were kidding. Point taken, though.

King Lear: ‘Meantime we will express our darker purpose. Give me the map there.’

Lear makes the list because of Shakespeare’s understanding of tyrants and those who oppose them.

Kent: My life I never held but as a pawn to wage against thy enemies.

Lear: Out of my sight!

Kent and all those who sought to steer the King towards a more prudent course were treated as enemies and traitors. I think of Ambassador Chas Freeman, John Mearsheimer, Colonel Larry Wilkerson, George Beebe and all the other wiser heads who have been pushed to the periphery in much the same way. Trump, like Lear, surrounds himself with a college of schemers, deviants and psychopaths.

Napoleon Bonaparte

I was fortunate to study ‘France on the Eve of Revolution’ with the great French historian Antoine Casanova. His fellow Corsican caused a fair bit of mayhem with his intention to redraw the map of Europe.

British statesman William Pitt the Younger reeled in horror as Napoleon got to work, ‘Roll up that map; it will not be wanted these ten years,’ he presciently said.

Bonaparte was an important historical figure who left a mixed and contested legacy. Before effective resistance could be organised, he abolished the Holy Roman Empire (good job), created the Confederation of the Rhine, invaded Russia and, albeit sometimes for the better, torched many of the traditional power structures. Millions died in his wars.

We appear to be back to all that: a leader who tears up all rule books. Trump endorses the US-Israeli right of conquest, sanctions the International Criminal Court (ICC) for trying to hold Israel and the US to the same standard as others, and hands out the highest offices to his family and confidantes.

Hitler

‘Lebensraum’ (Living space) was the Nazi concept that propelled the German war machine to seize new territories and redraw maps. As they marched, the soldiers often sang ‘Deutschland über alles’ (Germany above all), their ultra-nationalist anthem that expressed a desire to create a Greater Germany – to Make Germany Great Again. All sounds a bit similar to this discussion of Trump and Netanyahu, doesn’t it? Again: whose side should we be on?

Saddam Hussein and George W. Bush

When it comes to doomed bids to remake the Middle East by launching illegal wars, these are two buttocks of the same bum. Now we have the Trump-Netanyahu pair. Will countries like Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom (UK) really sign up for the current US-Israeli land grab? Will they all continue to yawn and look away as massive crimes against humanity are committed? I fear so, and in so doing, they rob their side of all legitimacy.

Pope Alexander VI

There is a smack of the Borgias about the Trumps. They share values — libertinism and nepotism, to name two — and both, through cunning rather than aptitude, managed to achieve great power. Pope Alexander VI, born Rodrigo Borgia, father to Lucretia and Cesare, was Pope in 1492 when Columbus sailed the ocean blue.

He was responsible for the greatest reworking of the map of the world: the Treaty of Tordesillas which divided the 'New World' between the Spanish and Portuguese empires. Millions died; trillions were stolen. We still live with the depravities the Europeans and their heritors unleashed upon the world.

I'm sure the Greenlanders, the Canadians, the Panamanians and whoever else the United States sets their sights on will resist the unwelcome attempt to colour the map of their country in Stars and Stripes.

History is littered with blind map re-makers, foolish old men who draw new maps on old lands. Like Sykes, Picot, Balfour and others, Trump thinks with a flourish of his pen he can whisk away identity and deep roots. Love of country means long-suffering Palestinians will never accept a handful of coins and parcels of land spread across West Asia or Africa as compensation for a stolen homeland. They have earned the right to Palestine, not least because of the blood-spattered identity that they have carved out of every inch of land through their immense courage and steadfastness. We should stand with them.

