

## GAZA WAR, PHASE THREE



Israeli Defence Minister Gallant announces a new “lower intensity” phase of fighting

### GENOCIDE MOCKED

South Africa’s absurd subversion of international law in its ICJ case against Israel .....PAGE 22

### AGENCY WITH AN AGENDA

The problem with channelling Australian aid via UNRWA .....PAGE 27

### A HOUTHİ HOW-TO

Halting attacks on Red Sea shipping requires looking beyond Yemen .....PAGE 26

### “FOOTBALLING WHILE JEWISH”

Gaza war leads to the acceptance of grotesque discrimination against Jews .....PAGE 40

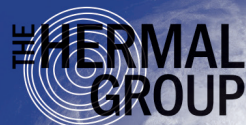




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## EDITOR'S NOTE

The February *AIR* edition delves into what the recently announced “phase three” of Israel’s more than three-month-old war with Hamas is likely to look like.

Israeli analyst Ilan Evyatar explains this new “lower intensity” phase of the fighting and the goals Israel still hopes to achieve, as well as the escalating risk that daily clashes with Hezbollah in Israel’s north could soon explode into a second major war. Ahron Shapiro looks at some lessons from the first 100 days of the war, while US academic Michael Mandelbaum explains why stable post-war arrangements for Gaza are proving so hard to agree on. Plus, former British military commander Col. Richard Kemp offers a detailed refutation of the criticisms being made of IDF conduct in Gaza.

This month’s *AIR* also features key points from Australian-Israeli international law expert Tal Becker’s presentation before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the Hague, refuting South Africa’s absurd contention that Israel’s war of self-defence in Gaza amounts to “genocide”. Also, Yonah Jeremy Bob deconstructs South Africa’s specious and agenda-driven arguments before the ICJ.

Finally, don’t miss Oved Lobel on how to deal with the Houthi threat and Seth Mandel on “footballing while Jewish” and other new “crimes” in the current international climate.

We invite your comments on any aspect of this edition at [editorial@aijac.org.au](mailto:editorial@aijac.org.au).

Tzvi Fleischer

## CONTENTS

### FEATURE STORIES

#### WAR WITH HAMAS, PHASE III



ILAN EVYATAR

On Jan. 14, Israel marked 100 days since the Gaza War began... with an end game remaining far from sight, and a wider war in the north with Hezbollah still very much a possibility .....PAGE 12

#### LESSONS FROM 100 DAYS OF WAR

AHRON SHAPIRO ..... PAGE 14

#### WHY “WINNING THE PEACE” LOOKS SO HARD

MICHAEL MANDELBAUM ..... PAGE 17

#### THE MORALITY OF THE IDF IN GAZA

RICHARD KEMP ..... PAGE 19

#### “SUBVERTING THE GENOCIDE CONVENTION”

Israel’s response to South Africa at the ICJ

TAL BECKER ..... PAGE 22

#### SOUTH AFRICA’S MISERABLE ARGUMENTS

YONAH JEREMY BOB ..... PAGE 25

#### STOPPING THE HOUTHIS

OVED LOBEL ..... PAGE 26

#### EIGHT THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT UNRWA

FOUNDATION FOR DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACIES ..... PAGE 27

#### AMUST AFTER OCTOBER 7: PART 2

RAN PORAT ..... PAGE 29

#### BIBLIO FILE: INNOVATION NATION AT WAR

Lessons from the Israel Defence Forces

JONATHAN SCHANZER ..... PAGE 32

### REGULAR COLUMNS

#### FROM THE EDITORIAL CHAIRMAN

COLIN RUBENSTEIN ..... PAGE 4

WORD FOR WORD ..... PAGE 5

#### SCRIBBLINGS

TZVI FLEISCHER ..... PAGE 6

#### DECONSTRUCTION ZONE

ROI YANOVASKY ..... PAGE 7

#### ASIA WATCH

MICHAEL SHANNON ..... PAGE 8

#### EUROPA EUROPA

ALEX BENJAMIN ..... PAGE 9

BEHIND THE NEWS ..... PAGE 10

NOTED AND QUOTED ..... PAGE 35

IN PARLIAMENT ..... PAGE 36


#### MEDIA MICROSCOPE

ALLON LEE ..... PAGE 39

#### THE LAST WORD

SETH MANDEL ..... PAGE 40

### HOW TO USE OUR INTERACTIVE EDITION

- Tap/click to return to the Contents page 
- All listed articles link to their page.
- Best viewed in your desktop browser or the Books (iOS) or equivalent e-book reader app in portrait mode.



### ON THE COVER

Israel’s Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, wearing a protective vest, speaks with Israeli soldiers in a staging area near the border with the Gaza Strip in southern Israel, Oct. 19, 2023. (Image: AAP/Tsafrir Abayov)

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Print Post Approved – 100007869[www.aijac.org.au](http://www.aijac.org.au)**FROM THE EDITORIAL CHAIRMAN**  
**COLIN RUBENSTEIN****A QUESTION OF SECURITY**

**M**uch is being made of comments articulated by Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu at a January 18 media conference that, regarding the future of the West Bank and Gaza, “in any future arrangement, or in the absence of an arrangement,” Israel must maintain “security control” over all territory west of the Jordan River. He noted this “contradicts with the idea of sovereignty [for the Palestinians].”

Netanyahu is clearly engaged in a significant disagreement with the Biden Administration over the latter’s emphasis on promises to move as rapidly as possible toward Palestinian statehood in post-war arrangements for Gaza. However, many are falsely treating Netanyahu’s statements as the death knell of any two-state resolution – or worse, proof that Israel has always secretly opposed such a resolution.

As Biden himself said in response to Netanyahu’s claims, “There are a number of types of two-state solutions. There’s a number of countries that are members of the UN that... don’t have their own militaries... states that have limitations.” Indeed, there are ways to reconcile ongoing Israeli security control with eventual Palestinian statehood.

Moreover, Netanyahu’s arguments as to why Israel needs such security control make sense. Netanyahu said, “All territory we evacuate, we get terror, terrible terror against us,” citing Gaza, southern Lebanon and parts of the West Bank. It would be hard to argue he is wrong.

He also said the violence is “not about the absence of a state, a Palestinian state, but rather about the existence of a state, a Jewish state.” Again, hard to disagree – Israel has offered the Palestinians a two-state resolution on several occasions, and these offers have not only been rejected, but often met with waves of violence.

Moreover, there is the blisteringly clear example of Gaza. For 17 years, since Israel’s unilateral pullout in 2005, Gaza has been the closest thing to a fully independent Palestinian state that has ever existed, completely controlled by a Palestinian government. Yet Israel has suffered near constant attacks from there and been forced to fight several wars. Finally, the unprecedented wave of mass-murder inside Israel savagely perpetrated on October 7 drove home to almost all Israelis how utterly dangerous to their essential security even a militarily much weaker Palestinian entity next door can be – especially when backed by a hostile foreign power, given Hamas was armed, funded and trained by Iran.

This is why Israeli President Itzhak Herzog – a man of the Israeli centre-left – told the World Economic Forum in Davos on Jan. 18 that in Israel, “Nobody in his right mind is willing now to think about what will be the solution of the peace agreements, because everybody wants to know: Can we be promised real safety in the future?”

Plans for a “reformed” Palestinian Authority (PA) to take over Gaza do nothing to ameliorate these well-founded Israeli concerns. While the PA has often maintained a modicum of security cooperation with Israel, it is corrupt, unpopular, undemocratic and inept – unable to even maintain security control over all the cities of the West Bank. Plus, PA President Mahmoud Abbas is 88 years old with no serious succession plan in place.

Furthermore, both PA officials and PA official media reacted to October 7 by celebrating the murderous violence while claiming to have played a major role in perpetrating it. They then spread ugly conspiracy theories that the rapes, torture, and murder of civilians either did not happen or were actually committed by Israel.

Israelis have every reason to question whether a reformed PA is even possible, and to demand to see the details before agreeing it is the solution for Gaza.

The Biden Administration sees visibly pushing the idea of rapid progress toward



Palestinian statehood as a good way to get buy-in from Arab states toward rebuilding Gaza and helping administer it once Hamas is removed from power – as it must be. However, as Netanyahu’s comments indicated, October 7 inevitably changed Israel’s approach to this issue, with Palestinian statehood now seen as all but synonymous with unendurable Israeli insecurity. Finding convincing ways to address this well-founded Israeli sense of severe insecurity and vulnerability is today absolutely essential to any hopes of advancing Israeli-Palestinian peaceful coexistence.

This is one reason why Australian Foreign Minister Senator Penny Wong’s recent visit to Israel, Jordan and the PA, while welcome, also featured some disappointments – illustrating the Albanese Government has not fully understood the implications of October 7.

Wong refused entreaties to visit southern Israeli communities devastated on October 7, even though so many other world leaders, including British Foreign Secretary David Cameron and Australian Shadow Foreign Minister Simon Birmingham, have made such visits. While not all senior foreign political leaders go south, Wong’s belated visit was the first by a senior Australian minister, so it’s a pity she did not appreciate the view of those who did, who understood the need to see the sites of the October 7 pogrom themselves to fully appreciate the appalling magnitude of those massacres.

Senator Wong also continued the Government’s pre-October 7 policy of constantly emphasising Australia’s criticisms of Israel’s West Bank settlements. She even found time to meet with West Bank Palestinians who had experienced violence by Israeli settlers – violence which has been widely condemned in Israel and across the Jewish world


and is increasingly being tackled by Israel’s security forces. While in itself a reasonable gesture, surely no one would be implying any morally indefensible false equivalence between their plight and the victims of October 7.

Wong, to her credit, did also meet with the families of Israeli hostages and express “solidarity with Israel and with you.” However, in the context of her other actions, troubling questions remain.

The Foreign Minister and her Government have also seriously erred in refusing to join many of our most important allies – including the US, UK, Canada, France, Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic – in publicly criticising South Africa’s non-sensical, grotesque and cynical case in the International Court of Justice, alleging Israel is committing genocide

in its defensive war against Hamas terrorism.

There is simply overwhelming evidence that Israel is going to great lengths to minimise civilian casualties under very difficult circumstances. If anything tells Israelis they won’t be allowed to have genuine security in any future arrangements with the Palestinians, it is this slanderous effort to criminalise Israeli self-defence. This is doubly true when even long-standing friends like Australia refuse to distance themselves from such obscene claims.

Jewish Israelis and Palestinians share a land, and neither is going to either leave or give up their national aspirations, so Australia’s long-standing bipartisan policy of seeking to support an eventual two-state resolution remains appropriate. But the current Australian Government does not seem to have realised that the pre-conditions for such a resolution have inevitably altered significantly since October 7 – making our current approach often counter-productive to achieving that bipartisan national goal. 

against Israel before the International Court of Justice. The accusation has no basis in fact.”

**German Government spokesman Steffen Hebestreit rejects South Africa’s case against Israel and announces it will intervene as a third party in support of Israel (Times of Israel, Jan. 12).**

“If the fate of Hamas is not complete dismantlement, we will not be able to live in the State of Israel. We continue fighting until victory... We have no right to stop the fighting as long as there are hostages in Gaza. The only way and thing that brings hostages [back] is military pressure.”

**Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant (Times of Israel, Jan. 17).**

“This is the battle for Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and not the battle of the Palestinian people... Oh, sons of our Islamic nation... there are very few historic moments like this. Do not let this moment slip away.”

**Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh (MEMRI, Jan. 10).**

**“Finding convincing ways to address this well-founded Israeli sense of severe insecurity and vulnerability is today absolutely essential to any hopes of advancing Israeli-Palestinian peaceful coexistence”**

## “” WORD FOR WORD

“Our nation stands in solidarity with Israel and with you. What’s important to me is not just the solidarity between our countries but... it’s also the personal pledge, the human pledge, and I’m very grateful that you are willing to, I’m sure, (have) a very difficult conversation.”

**Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong meeting in Israel with the families of the hostages in Gaza (Australian, Jan. 17).**

“In light of German history and the crimes against humanity of the Shoah, the German government is particularly committed to the Genocide Convention... The German government decisively and expressly rejects the accusation of genocide brought





# SCRIBBLINGS

Tzvi Fleischer

## PASSPORTS, DELUSIONS AND ETHNIC CLEANSING DREAMS

Every Israeli “has a second nationality and has his bag ready,” Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah said in a televised speech in Lebanon on January 3. “Reverse [Jewish] migration has begun, hundreds of thousands” have already left, he said. “If you are an Israeli with an American passport, go to America, with a British passport, go to England, with a French passport go to France... You Israelis have only this future, the land of Palestine from the sea to the river will be for Palestinians only.”

This statement is a perfect encapsulation of both the “grand strategy” behind the multi-front war on Israel by the Iranian-led “resistance axis” – Hezbollah and Hamas are both key members – and of their intentions towards Israel’s seven million Jews.

Nasrallah, the Iranian leadership and the heads of Hamas really do believe that Israel is not a real country, but some sort of “forward base of imperialism;” that Israelis are not really a people, but just a bunch of bloodthirsty, cowardly and soft foreign imperialists with absolutely no local roots, ready and able to leave whenever things get a bit rough. Therefore, a bit of pressure from the authentic, brave, self-sacrificing and deeply-rooted local people will make them all leave.

Israel, for all its ostensible military power, is a fake country and thus is like a “spider’s web”, easily brushed aside, in the words of a famous speech Nasrallah gave in 2000. All the “resistance forces” have to do is keep up the pressure.

This is the main justification also used by Nasrallah’s patron, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, for his repeated predictions that Israel will not exist in another 25 years.

Hamas also says the same sort of thing. Hamas Political Bureau member Osama Hamdan was asked in an interview with Lebanese TV on Oct. 11 if plans to throw Israel into the sea were not unrealistic and he said, “I am not talking about throwing Israel into the sea. In the past few days, the Israelis wrote in their media: ‘What is the point in having a

country when all its citizens have passports of the countries they have come from?’ Let them return to where they came from. We don’t want to throw anyone into the sea. Let them return to where they came from. We will help them go there safely.”

Of course, the premise of the Nasrallah/Hamdan claim is indisputably false – only 10%-20% of Israeli Jews have second passports, and the overwhelming majority were born in Israel and have never lived anywhere else. The resistance “grand strategy” is simply delusional, based on certain beliefs about Israelis that are matters of faith, and thus cannot be questioned, but are simply not true. But the delusional basis of this belief does not stop it from leading to horrific crimes – like October 7.



Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah: “Every Israeli has a second nationality and a bag ready” (Image: X/ Twitter)

Note also that Nasrallah and Hamdan pull the blanket out from under Western apologists who insist the long-standing Palestinian slogan “From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be free” is not a call for ethnic cleansing, but for a unified democratic state with equality for all. Nasrallah makes it very clear it absolutely is a call for ethnic cleansing. “From the sea to the river will be for Palestinians only” he

says, meaning all of Israel’s more than seven million Jews – many of whose ancestors have been in the area since time immemorial – will have to leave or be expelled.

Similarly, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh followed up October 7 with a message demanding all Zionists “Get out of our land... We do not want to see you on this land. This land is ours, Jerusalem is ours, everything is ours.”

Worse still, this belief in ethnic cleansing the “foreign colonialist” Jews out of all of Palestine is not confined to the Islamist extremists of Hamas, Hezbollah and the Iranian regime. Sadly, it has deep roots in Palestinian nationalism. The father of Palestinian nationalism was Haj Amin al-Husseini, who not only demanded the Jews leave all of Palestine, but also became an ally and paid employee of Nazi Germany as it was carrying out its “final solution” to the “Jewish problem” in Europe. He openly advocated for the Nazis to invade British-mandate Palestine and extend their “final solution” to all the Jews living there.

In the 1960s, the secular PLO also advocated ethnically cleansing Israel of Jews. Its Charter – written in 1964 before Israel ever took control of the West Bank and Gaza – demanded a “secular, democratic state in all of Palestine” – the outcome that apologists claim is the real meaning of the “River to the Sea” chant. But that Charter also had a clause – still operative today since it was never legally



repealed – demanding all “Zionists”, defined as Jews who had not lived in the area in 1917, be expelled.

As academic Michael Mandelbaum notes in this edition, the roots of most of the tragedy suffered in recent decades by both Israelis and Palestinians is the fact that Palestinian nationalism is “the only one of the many nationalist movements that have appeared since the nineteenth century that has as its aim not the creation of its own nation-state but rather the destruction of the state of another people.” Actually, the situation is even worse than that. Many Palestinian nationalists – religious or secular – demand not only Israel’s destruction, but the ethnic cleansing of all its Jews as an absolutely essential precondition for the “liberation” of Palestinians.

These ugly longings are supported by myths and lies about Israeli Jews – such as the assertion that all Israelis are European foreigners with second passports ready to leave for the mythical native countries they do not have.

It should be obvious that peace will never be possible until and unless both these delusional beliefs, and the ugly ideology they support, change.

AIR



## DECONSTRUCTION ZONE

Roi Yanovasky

### INSIGHTS FROM INSIDE GAZA

*[After serving 100 days as a reserve soldier in the Israeli army, most spent inside the Gaza Strip, Israeli reporter Roi Yanovasky has returned with some insights. Ed.]*

1. Perceived by the world as an overcrowded, third-world territory that is constantly besieged, viewing Gaza City with one’s own eyes presents a wholly different picture. It was a modern, well-developed city. Big houses, a big plaza, parks, well-maintained walkways right on the beach and so much more. It looked far more like Tel Aviv than Jenin. The world’s “most crowded” territory? Not by a long shot.

2. If what Gaza experienced over the past decade is considered a siege, then sign me up. People here appeared to live just fine. Homes are loaded with fancy belongings, be it furniture, appliances or anything else. Most places are bigger than my Tel Aviv apartment. Blaming their willingness to fight Israel on Gazans’ poor living conditions does a disservice to the truth.

3. Who knew Gazans had such an affinity for their geography? In most homes, the single most prevalent of objects seems to be a map of Israel. Of course, it doesn’t say Israel – it refers to the entire territory as Palestine.

These maps can be found in almost every home, every

school and every public institution, promoting the goal of the eradication of Israel.

4. Military infrastructure could be found in every single neighbourhood we were in. Weapons, tunnels, explosive charges and launchpads are all conveniently located inside residential buildings, some of which are equipped with holes in the walls between them to make transiting between the various structures seamless.

Palestinian civilians who reside within these combat zones are acutely aware of all this. They received countless warnings to evacuate, long before the first Israel Defence Forces (IDF) soldier set foot inside the enclave. IDF leaflets can be found virtually everywhere. Those who decided to stay in the combat zones either are affiliated with Hamas or are civilians who made the conscious decision to remain.

5. Doing their utmost to remain elusive and unassuming, Hamas operatives hardly ever walk around while visibly armed. They’re fully aware that if they stroll around in civilian clothing, the IDF is highly unlikely to view them as hostile, and therefore will not engage.

This reality transforms combat into a multifaceted operation, far more than in any other military arena that we’ve ever seen. Anyone sitting in their air-conditioned offices or studios, presuming to pass judgment as to why IDF troops were not “careful enough” to avoid civilian casualties, should venture into Gaza for a week or two. We’ll see what they have to say then.

6. Not only is Hamas embedded within the Palestinian population, the population is embedded within Hamas. Its ideology, in one form or another, can be found in practically every home, every picture and every piece of propaganda. Hamas and Gaza appear to be like Maradona and Argentina.

There is no way civilians who lived in the structures where we found munitions and arms were unaware that these places serve as a Hamas launching pad.

7. As well stocked and well trained as Hamas may be, it’s not the physical equipment that makes it so powerful, but rather its lies and propaganda. Those are at the heart of what sustains Hamas as Gaza’s ruling entity. This is what it did for years in order to craft, polish and maintain the lie of the so-called “siege” of Gaza. The pictures of the innocent victims, and the killing of so-called “journalists” who were later discovered to be terror operatives, are part of that mirage.

Gaza is the only place in the world where they’re able to report a supposedly accurate count of 500 casualties within half an hour of an explosion.

Even in the world’s most devastating earthquakes and sites of various natural disasters, accurate reports do not emerge for days after the fact, as it takes that long for rescue operations to establish the number of casualties.

The way global media regurgitates these figures as if





they were written on a stone tablet delivered by Moses himself is nothing short of pathetic.

AIR

*Roi Yanovasky is a reporter for Israel's Channel 13. Previously, he worked as journalist for the Israeli daily Yediot Ahronot. © Yediot Ahronot (www.ynetnews.com), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*

## ASIA WATCH

Michael Shannon

### PERSONALITY AND POPULARITY OVER POLICY

The world's most extensive single-day election will take place on February 14, when up to 204.8 million Indonesian voters will choose both the president and vice president, and select almost 20,000 representatives of national, provincial, and district parliaments from a pool of a quarter-million candidates.

But this presidential election is more about personality than policy. Towering over proceedings is a man who is not a candidate – President Joko Widodo, who after nearly ten years in office retains polling numbers in the low 70s. Elected as an outsider, his delivery of reforms may not have met expectations but he has eschewed divisive rhetoric and retained his common touch.

Such is Jokowi's stature that the two leading candidates – front-running Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto and former Central Java Governor Ganjar Pranowo – have spent the better part of two years pledging to largely continue Jokowi's policies in hopes of gaining some sort of endorsement from him.

In October, Prabowo made a highly strategic move in appointing Gibran Rakabuming Raka, Jokowi's 36-year-old son, as his vice-presidential running-mate in order to capitalise on Jokowi's sky-high poll ratings. Echoing the time-honoured practices of the country's elite political families, Jokowi is creating his own political dynasty by giving support to Prabowo, whom he defeated in the previous two presidential elections.

In doing so, Jokowi appears to have forsaken his PDI-P stablemate and former front-runner Ganjar, who has been diminished by the perception that he is beholden to the meddling PDI-P chairwoman Megawati Sukarnoputri, who in turn appears unable to accept that Jokowi's political success has far surpassed hers.

The only candidate to adopt a more critical view of Jokowi is former Jakarta Governor Anies Beswedan, a technocrat who has courted the conservative religious vote. This has served him well previously, but at a national level this stance has seen him consistently placed a distant third in public polling.

Aside from the focus upon personalities and alliances, debates have largely focused upon domestic issues. Foreign policy has not featured strongly as all the candidates are in broad agreement that Indonesia should maintain an independent path between major powers China and the United States.

Differences between them relate more to emphasis over issues such as defence spending, resolving tensions in the South China Sea and transforming the Southeast Asian giant into a global power. But these are not issues that drive people to march on the streets. The one issue that reliably does is Israel-Palestine.

Hundreds of "Free Palestine" protesters gathered in front of the US Embassy in central Jakarta on Jan. 13 to mark the 100th day of "Israel's ongoing aggression in Gaza." Chanting "Free Palestine", they demanded that Israel cease its military operation.

People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) Deputy Speaker Hidayat Nur Wahid, former leader of the Islamist-oriented Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), urged Indonesians to "keep standing with other nations across the world to show their firm rejection of Israel's acts of crime against humanity to the People of Gaza and Palestine as a whole." He further lauded the Indonesian Government for its ongoing support for the Palestinians.

State news agency *ANTARA* reported earlier that Vice President Ma'ruf Amin, an elderly conservative cleric, asserted that Israel's military campaign in the Gaza Strip is not an act of self-defence but a genocidal campaign against Palestinians. "The world regards what Israel has been doing has gone beyond an act of self-defence. Instead, it has been a genocide," he stated.

No candidate has expressed views at odds with the prevailing sentiment of pro-Palestinian solidarity.


With a foreign policy platform of "values-led diplomacy", Anies told a candidates forum that an Indonesian president should work "to eradicate colonialism on the planet, which is of utmost importance. [A president] should not only give statements in ceremonies. The president and all diplomats should work hard towards that goal, particularly for Palestine."

At the same forum, Ganjar affirmed Indonesia's consistent support for "decolonisation" efforts. "This is our commitment to Palestine," he stated. On the Israel-Hamas conflict, he has expressed pessimism that the United Nations can solve the issue and has encouraged Indonesia to support other nations' initiatives and lobby its international partners to prioritise humanitarian aid.

Prabowo has publicised his involvement in government missions to support the Palestinians, from deploying military aircraft for delivery of humanitarian aid to offering the dispatch of a hospital ship to Gaza.

"From the earliest day, all Indonesian [presidents] support the struggle of the Palestinian people to have their



own state, to have their independence,” Prabowo told a foreign policy dialogue hosted by CSIS Indonesia, a think tank. “We have been colonised. We understand [how it is to be] colonised. I will continue this [support] because that is the policy... demanded and required by our people.” 



Alex Benjamin

## UPSIDE DOWN IN THE HAGUE

From the Jewish prophets of yore to 1930s intellectuals like Joseph Roth and Stefan Zweig, in almost every generation there have been those with the prescience to see where a society was heading and warn their contemporaries about the looming consequences.

Since October 7, watching the news, dipping in and out of social media and watching South Africa drag Israel to the International Court of Justice in the Hague for the crime of “genocide”, I have really felt that, to quote George Orwell, the clocks have been striking 13.

Ruth Wasserman-Lande, a former Member of the Knesset, grew up in South Africa. In an interview with her I witnessed recently, she said the world is upside down. She recalled when Apartheid fell in the early 1990s and seeing the different benches on the streets of South African towns – some marked “whites only”, some “blacks only” and some “coloured only” – she said she couldn’t understand at all how the South Africans could allow the word “Apartheid”, with the weight and import it carries, to be misappropriated by those who level the same word at Israel. They were simply demeaning the importance of the word.

She’s right. All anybody needs to do to refute any such claims is take a flight to Ben Gurion Airport and spend an hour or two anywhere in Israel to see how ridiculous they are.

I remember a speech in the European Parliament by Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) founder Omar Barghouti a few years ago. He studied at Tel Aviv University. He took some questions from the floor, so I asked him about his experience of going through the separate entrances for Arabs, and using the Arabs-only canteens, and drinking at the Arabs only fountains. He fulminated that apartheid means different things.

He appeared to be channelling Humpty Dumpty in Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass*, who famously said, “When I use a word... it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.”

I remember thinking then how dangerous that concept is. “The very concept of objective truth is fading out of the world. Lies will pass into history,” Orwell wrote.

And now “genocide” is getting the Humpty Dumpty treatment. Genocide is an important word. It is a heavy word. It should be used sparingly and precisely. It should be treated with respect – not for the word itself, but for the countless lives of the murdered contained in those three syllables. They represent the Killing Fields of Cambodia, the mass graves of Rwanda, the ravine at Babyn Yar and most infamously the crematoria of Auschwitz.

Caroline Gennez, a Belgian Government Minister, as the South African delegation was stating their case to the judges in the Hague, joined the language demeaners by asking Germany if they were really wanting to find themselves on the “wrong side of history” by backing Israel.

This is a double insult. I am not here to defend Germany, but I will say that its Government appears to have understood well the consequences of language appropriation (of which the Nazis were disturbingly proficient). It has shown itself particularly aware since October 7 of the weight of words, banning some protests and outlawing the use of certain slogans. My answer therefore to Minister Gennez is that it is actually the Germans who have learned the lessons of history and are not foolish enough to repeat them.

The genocide accusation levelled against the world’s only Jewish state is a particularly reckless and destructive inversion of truth. Israelis were the victims of an attempted and meticulously planned genocide attempt. On October 7, the barbarity and violence against the kibbutzim, concertgoers and hundreds of others – children, women, men and the elderly – left us in no doubt of what Jews could expect if Hamas were to win its war against Israel: Genocide. I am giving the word its full, proper respect when I say this.

As Orwell suggested, we appear to live in a time where games played with language are used as a weapon. Where the way we process words and understand them is being shredded to pieces and re-arranged in a way that suits those who want to vandalise meaning for the sake of political power.

“We have now sunk to a depth at which restatement of the obvious is the first duty of intelligent men,” said Orwell.

I suspect no matter how many times we restate the obvious, the obvious has ceased to be obvious, except to us:

“You are a slow learner, Winston.”

“How can I help it? How can I help but see what is in front of my eyes? Two and two are four.”

“Sometimes, Winston. Sometimes they are five. Sometimes they are three. Sometimes they are all of them at once. You must try harder.”

The days Orwell warned us about in *1984* appear to have arrived, 40 years late.



# BEHIND THE NEWS

## ROCKET AND TERROR REPORT

Between the October 7 attacks and Jan. 19, at least 13,000 rockets, drones and other projectiles were fired into Israel, mainly from Gaza, but also including approximately 2,000 from Lebanon and around 30 from Syria. Some rocket attacks from Gaza continued throughout early January. These numbers don't include the more than 2,000 failed launches from Gaza.

In the West Bank, Israel has arrested more than 2,650 wanted Palestinians, including more than 1,300 affiliated with Hamas, and 40 brigade-level raids had been conducted. The Palestinian Authority claimed more than 360 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank since October 7, mostly in clashes with IDF troops.

On Jan. 15, two Hamas terrorists committed a car ramming and stabbing attack in Ra'anana in central Israel, killing a 79-year-old woman and injuring 17 others.

## 100 DAYS OF WAR BY THE NUMBERS

The IDF released a data set on Jan. 14 reviewing the past 100 days of war. It said the IDF had struck around 30,000 targets in Gaza and killed more than 9,000 terrorist operatives, including two Hamas Brigade commanders and dozens of battalion and company commanders.

As of Jan. 19, the IDF had suffered 194 deaths in Gaza, with more than 2,500 wounded.

7,653 trucks carrying 137,920 tons of aid had entered Gaza by then. The IDF also made 79,000 direct phone calls and 15 million recorded calls, dropped 7.2 million leaflets and sent 13.7 million texts warning Palestinian civilians to evacuate combat zones.

Separately, senior Israeli defence officials told the *New York Times* on Jan. 16 that Hamas' tunnel network was now believed to far more extensive than previously estimated, stretching 560-725 km, with some 5,700 entry shafts.

## MEDICINE FOR GAZA HOSTAGES DEAL IMPLEMENTED

A first shipment of medicine entered Gaza from Egypt on Jan. 17 as part of a Qatari and French brokered deal between Israel and Hamas designed to deliver urgently required medication to the 45 Israelis held captive by Hamas in Gaza who require regular treatment. After 100 days without these treatments, there are serious concerns about the health and well-being of these hostages. Israel is relying on Qatar to fulfill a promise that the medicine will reach the hostages. Hamas' conditions for the deal included that Palestinians receive 1,000 boxes of medicine for every box that goes to the hostages.

## HAMAS' INTERNATIONAL TERROR PLOTS EXPOSED

Israel's Mossad and Shin Bet on Jan. 10 unveiled a comprehensive picture of Hamas' plans in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East to launch terror attacks against Israeli and Jewish targets, including Israel's embassy in Sweden. The investigation, in cooperation with European agencies, revealed Hamas operates a European network led by leaders in Lebanon which prepares terror plots and also sought to procure UAVs and enlist European criminal organisations for support.

There were subsequent reports of arrests of Hamas-linked suspects in Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany.

## IDF: SLAIN PALESTINIAN JOURNALISTS HAD TERROR LINKS

The IDF presented documentary evidence on Jan. 10 indicating that two Gazan journalists killed in a car on Jan. 7 – Hamza Al-Dahdouh, son of Al Jazeera's chief correspondent in Gaza, and Mustafa Thuraya – were members of terrorist groups. IDF Chief Spokesman Brig. Gen. Daniel Hagari provided Islamic Jihad documents indicating Hamza's dual role as a terrorist-journalist in the group's electric engineering unit. Similar documents named Thuraya as an officer in Hamas. The IDF asserted that the car both were in when they were killed was being used to operate a drone posing a threat to Israeli forces, leading to the airstrike against them.

## CHINESE AND NORTH KOREAN WEAPONS FOUND IN GAZA

The IDF has discovered large caches of Chinese weapons in Gaza, including assault rifles and grenade launchers, hi-tech equipment such as telescopic sights for rifles and communications equipment capable of working within the terror group's complex tunnel system. It is unclear how the weaponry was obtained.

The IDF also found North Korean-made weaponry being utilised by Hamas in Gaza.

## ISRAEL KILLS HAMAS, HEZBOLLAH LEADERS IN LEBANON

The deputy leader of Hamas outside Gaza, Saleh al-Aroui, was killed in an alleged Israeli drone strike in the southern suburbs of Beirut on Jan. 2.



Arouri was a major planner of Hamas' October 7 attack on southern Israel and also coordinated efforts to attack Jewish targets in Europe.

Israel also confirmed that the IDF had eliminated a Syria-based Hamas official, Hassan Akasha, responsible for launching rockets at northern Israel in recent weeks.

Hezbollah announced the killing of a commander of its elite Radwan Force, Wissam al-Tawil, on Jan. 8, in an Israeli strike confirmed by Israel officials. Ali Hussein Barji, the commander of Hezbollah's drone forces in southern Lebanon, was killed in an airstrike the following day.

## ISRAEL-HEZBOLLAH VIOLENCE ESCALATES FURTHER

Attacks and counterstrikes have increased sharply between the terrorist group Hezbollah and the IDF in southern Lebanon and northern Israel over recent weeks.

Since October 7, approximately 2,000 projectiles have been launched from Lebanon and Hezbollah has carried out more than 600 attacks, including numerous cross-border raid attempts, forcing the evacuations of more than 60,000 people from 42 communities in northern Israel.

Israel has struck approximately 750 targets in Lebanon and killed more than 170 terrorist operatives, mostly Hezbollah members. Fourteen IDF soldiers have been killed during the same time, and three civilians, including a mother and son whose home was struck by a Hezbollah missile on Jan. 14.

## HOUTHII ATTACKS ON SHIPPING DRAW RESPONSE

Following more than 40 attacks on cargo ships in the Red Sea since November by Yemen's Iranian-backed Ansar Allah (Houthi) militia, the US and UK launched a series of strikes against Houthi military targets in Ye-

men on Jan. 11 and 12.

A few days later, the Houthis targeted and damaged a US-owned cargo ship in the Gulf of Aden, leading to further US strikes on Houthi targets.

The Biden Administration announced on Jan. 17 it was re-designating the Houthis as a terrorist group and applying financial sanctions.

## IRANIAN ROLE IN HOUTHII ATTACKS EXPOSED

On Jan. 11, US forces seized a vessel off the Somali coast carrying a shipment of Iranian weapons and components headed to Yemen, including warheads for ballistic and anti-ship cruise missiles as well as anti-aircraft system parts.

Media reports also revealed that some 200 Houthi fighters were trained inside Iran at the Khamenei Academy of Naval Sciences and Technology in Zibakener.

Meanwhile, on Jan. 11, Iranian forces themselves seized an oil tanker near Oman, allegedly in retaliation for the US confiscating the Iranian cargo of that same ship in 2023.

## IRAN RAMPING UP URANIUM ENRICHMENT

The latest report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) concluded that by the end of 2023, Teheran had increased the production of 60% enriched uranium – just below military grade – at its Natanz and Fordow facilities to around 9kg a month. This is a rate of enrichment three times faster than in the IAEA's previous report in September.

Responding to the IAEA findings, a joint statement by the US, UK, France and Germany on Dec. 28 strongly condemned Iran's "reckless behaviour". Experts say Iran now needs only a week to produce enough fissile material for one warhead.

## STRANGER THAN FICTION

### TURKISH BIZARRE

Turkey-Israel relations, generally hostile since current Islamist Turkish President Recep Erdogan became prime minister in 2003, had shown signs of a recent thaw, likely because Turkey's economy was struggling. However, the Erdogan regime reverted to type once Israel was forced into war with Hamas.

In fact, for a country which has repeatedly committed armed attacks on its own neighbours to fight "terrorism", Turkey has become extremely sensitive about anything pro-Israeli, as Israeli footballer Sagiv Jehezkel discovered.

Playing for Antalyaspor in Turkey's top league, Jehezkel celebrated scoring a goal on Jan. 14 by showing the television camera his wristband, on which was written "100 days. October 7" together with a Star of David, expressing solidarity with the Israeli hostages in Gaza. He was then detained by Turkish authorities, sacked by

his club and had his "completely unacceptable behaviour" condemned by the Turkish Football Federation. Turkish Justice Minister Yilmaz Tunc announced Jehezkel would be investigated on charges of "inciting people to hatred and hostility." He was then deported.

On Jan. 17, a second Israeli player in Turkey, Eden Kartsev, was suspended and fined by his club Basaksehir for publishing an Instagram story calling for the release of Israeli hostages, something the club said, "harms sensitive values of our country". Basaksehir has now decided to loan Kartsev to an Israeli club.

Perhaps most bizarrely, TV station TGRT sacked a newsreader and director because the anchor accidentally left a Starbucks coffee cup on her desk during the Dec. 24 bulletin. Furious viewers accused her of endorsing a company perceived as pro-Israel. In reality, Starbucks hasn't even operated in Israel for decades. The only pro-Israel thing about it is that management dissociated the company from an anti-Israel statement made by one of its workers' unions in October.

## COVER STORY

# WAR WITH HAMAS, PHASE THREE

## HEZBOLLAH WAR THREATENS AS INTENSITY OF GAZA WAR DECLINES

Ilan Evyatar

On January 14, Israel marked 100 days since the Gaza War began with the Hamas mass attacks of October 7, with an end game remaining far from sight, and a wider war in the north with Hezbollah still very much a possibility.

In Gaza, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) has begun to thin out its forces in the northern part of the Strip as it transitions to a “lower-intensity phase of fighting” under American pressure. Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said this new phase would include commando raids and operations to destroy Hamas tunnels and infrastructure.

In southern Gaza, Israel continues to fight heavy battles as it targets Hamas leaders who are believed to be hiding out deep under the city of Khan Younis, where the most intense fighting is taking place. The Islamic terror group is still holding 136 Israeli hostages, many of whom are believed to be in the tunnels under Khan Younis, while some are known to have been killed.

Speaking on Jan. 16, Gallant said that Israel would soon transition to a lower-intensity phase in southern Gaza as well. Nevertheless, Israel, for the moment, appears to be still a long way from achieving its goals, defined by Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu in a speech marking 100 days since the October 7 massacre as being “to eliminate Hamas, return our hostages and that Gaza will no longer remain a threat to Israel.”

The IDF issued a slew of statistical data to mark 100 days of fighting: Since October 7, Israeli forces have struck some 30,000 Hamas targets and eliminated an estimated 9,000 of its fighters, with thousands more injured; 50 Hamas company commanders have been killed along with 19 battalion commanders and two brigade commanders.

Despite these numbers, the IDF expects the fighting to continue for most of 2024 as it seeks to slowly grind down Hamas, stripping it of asset after asset and closing in on its underground strongholds. Declaring victory remains a long way off.

Meanwhile, negotiations on a hostage deal have gone nowhere since the initial swap in mid-November. Hamas continues to insist that it will not accept any deal that does not include the release of all Palestinian security prisoners and a complete cessation of hostilities – the latter demand being completely unacceptable to Israel.

Over 100,000 Israelis marked the anniversary with a rally at Hostage Square – the renamed plaza outside the Tel Aviv Museum of Art – to call on the Government to do “everything possible” to bring the hostages back home.

Hamas marked the anniversary with rocket salvos across southern Israel and psychological warfare, including announcing the deaths of two more hostages.

Israeli artist Roni Levavi erected a 30-metre-long claustrophobic, dimly lit, concrete tunnel installation at the plaza, simulating the dire conditions in which the hostages are held, replete with bare electric wiring, eerie echoes and the sound of gunfire and shelling. As visitors emerge, they see the light at the end of the tunnel; will that be the case for the hostages in Gaza?

As the fighting in Gaza moves to a lower-intensity phase, on Israel’s northern border with Lebanon, tensions have spiraled and the risk of a wider war with Hezbollah grows by the day.

For the first three months of the war, Gaza was Israel’s priority, which initially allowed Hezbollah to dictate the tempo as it struck the northern border area daily in sup-

**“As the fighting in Gaza moves to a lower-intensity phase, on Israel’s northern border with Lebanon, tensions have spiraled”**





Hezbollah had been dictating the tempo of clashes on Israel's northern border, but recent events suggest Israel is trying to take the initiative (Image: Shutterstock)

port of Hamas. Now Israel appears to have taken the initiative. On Jan. 2, Israel, according to foreign reports, assassinated the number two in Hamas' political bureau, Saleh al-Arouri, in an air-strike on the Dahiya neighbourhood of Beirut, a Hezbollah stronghold. This was followed up a few days later with a drone strike that eliminated Wissam al-Tawil, a senior Hezbollah commander, while another such strike near al-Tawil's funeral took out the commander of Hezbollah's aerial forces. Israel took responsibility for both hits. Earlier, on Dec. 25, it also assassinated a senior Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) officer, Sayyed Razi Mousavi, who served as a conduit for the transfer of arms between Iran, Syria and Hezbollah.

On Jan. 16, Israel launched the heaviest attacks inside Lebanon since hostilities erupted in the north, launching 16 bombing raids in succession on Hezbollah assets in the Saluki Valley in southern Lebanon.

While senior Israeli military sources insisted in the wake of that attack that war with Hezbollah was not inevitable, it appears that Israel is now more likely to initiate a major conflict with Hezbollah than the other way round. With close to 100,000 people displaced from communities along the northern border, Israel has warned that it will not accept a return to the pre-October 7 situation wherein Hezbollah sits right on the border.

**W**hile it was Hamas that launched an invasion of Israel on October 7, Hezbollah has declared for years that it would attempt to seize Israeli territory and invade Israeli communities in the event of a conflict. Given that fear, Israel is now demanding that Iran's Lebanese proxy pull back beyond the Litani River, a few kilometres north of the border, as required by UN Security Council Resolution 1701, reached after the Second Lebanon War in 2006 but never implemented.

The Biden Administration has dispatched a senior envoy, Amos Hochstein, to the region to try to negotiate a diplomatic settlement that would see Hezbollah pull back in exchange for a settlement of several small border disputes between the Lebanese government and Israel. In 2022, Hochstein successfully brokered a maritime border agreement between the two countries to settle gas drilling rights.

Israel has warned that if these latest diplomatic efforts fail, it could resort to a military operation. "We prefer the path of an agreed-upon diplomatic settlement," said Defence Minister Gallant, "but we are getting close to the point where the hour-glass will turn over." Gallant was reportedly in favour of a pre-emptive strike on Hezbollah in October following Hamas'

incursion into Israel.

Overall, Hezbollah represents a much greater threat to Israel than Hamas; it possesses a far larger and far deadlier and more accurate missile arsenal and has well-trained and battle-hardened ground forces. The question is, does Israel have the stamina for another war in the north as it continues to fight, albeit at a lower tempo, a major conflict in Gaza?

One piece of good news for Israel at this time is that the Abraham Accords have survived their first major test – with both the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain making it clear that peace with Israel was a "strategic decision, and strategic decisions are long-term." Even more importantly, despite the anger on the Arab street and the caustic rhetoric employed against Israel from Riyadh during the current war, normalisation between Israel and Saudi Arabia appears to still be on the table.

If one of the goals of the "Al-Aqsa Flood" – the name given by Hamas to its October 7 operation – was to tank any possibility of normalisation between Israel and Saudi Arabia, as many analysts have speculated, that appears to have failed.

Both American and Saudi officials have said publicly that normalisation can still happen, but both have stressed that a road map to a two-state solution and a political horizon for the Palestinians will be required for it to materialise.

Shortly before the Gaza war, normalisation looked to be pretty much a done deal, even without major concessions by Israel to the Palestinians. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman said in September 2023 that Israel and Saudi Arabia were "moving closer by the day." Israel and the US were pushing hard for a deal to happen by mid-February 2024, before the American election schedule would make a complex trilateral deal all but impossible to complete. That time frame is now out of the question

both because of US domestic considerations and because the Saudis will want to wait for the dust to settle before moving ahead.

In any event, Riyadh has certainly raised its price. Israel's ruling coalition, currently unable to conduct even a meaningful discussion on the "day after" in Gaza due to major internal divisions, will eventually have to decide whether it is willing to pay. AIR

*Ilan Evyatar is a former editor-in-chief of the Jerusalem Report. He is co-author with Yonah Jeremy Bob of Target Tehran: How Israel Is Using Sabotage, Cyberwarfare, Assassination – and Secret Diplomacy – to Stop a Nuclear Iran and Create a New Middle East (Simon & Schuster, 2023).*

## LESSONS FROM 100 DAYS OF WAR FOR THE NEXT 100

Ahron Shapiro

October 7 is a day that, for Israelis, will forever live in infamy. The passing on January 14 of the milestone of 100 days since Hamas' attack provided an opportunity to consider some lessons that will help map the road ahead for a war that is expected to be measured in many months, if not years.

### THE WAR SO FAR

To briefly summarise the events of October 7: Taking advantage of the convergence of the Sabbath and a Jewish holiday, when many soldiers were on furlough, a trained Hamas terror army numbering in the thousands invaded southern Israel through multiple breach points in the barrier surrounding Gaza. Attacking early in the morning under cover of a huge rocket barrage, this terror army took Israeli security forces completely by surprise.

They massacred around 1,200 people in 22 Israeli communities, raping and murdering and taking hundreds of hostages, wounding more than 5,000 men, women and children.

The Nova music festival, held on the grounds of Kibbutz Re'im, became a killing field, accounting for nearly one-third of those murdered. Israeli Arabs and foreign workers were not spared. Entire kibbutzim along the Gaza border were temporarily occupied by armed terrorists for several hours. Using pickup trucks and vans fitted with heavy machine guns, terror cells moved quickly, penetrating also into small cities, like Sderot and the more distant Ofakim (both with a population of about 30,000). Israel Defence Forces (IDF) bases and command centres near the Gaza border were almost completely overrun, with many soldiers killed or taken hostage.

The IDF's response was initially uncoordinated and reflected the chaos on the ground, and it took a few days before the IDF could say with confidence that all of the terrorists involved in the attack remaining inside Israel had been captured or killed.

Next, in stage one of Israel's "Iron Swords" war, the Israeli Air Force began bombing high-value Hamas targets and warned civilians in northern Gaza to evacuate south. Israel drafted 360,000 reservists – the highest number ever activated at one time. After a pause, to refresh training, prepare equipment and weapons and make sure the troops were mentally ready for battle, a second phase began on Oct. 27 – an intense invasion of northern Gaza, coordinating ground, sea and air forces.

In late November, a hostage deal was struck, giving Hamas a week-long temporary ceasefire and a release of some Palestinian prisoners in return for the release of most, but not all, Israeli women and children hostages, together with some foreign citizens. Hamas ended the ceasefire by refusing to release the remaining female hostages and firing rockets.

By the end of 2023, the IDF had completely cut off northern Gaza and cleared most of that territory of Hamas terrorists, while making inroads into the Hamas stronghold city of Khan Yunis in the south.

In the first days of 2024, phase three of the war began. Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said the IDF was changing tactics and would focus on "raids, the destruction of terror tunnels, aerial and ground activities, and special operations," while withdrawing a substantial number of troops and giving many reservists a chance to go home and resume normal lives.

The complete destruction of Hamas, one of the goals initially outlined by Israel's leaders and security agencies, still seems far off. On the other hand, Hamas' ability to wage war has been greatly reduced and it's well within Israel's power to see to it that it stays that way.

Here are five key points to bear in mind as the third

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stage of the Iron Swords war unfolds in Gaza over the coming weeks and months.

**October 7 as Israel's September 11**

As often as Hamas has attacked Israel from Gaza since it seized control in 2007 – mostly with rockets and mortars – it would be natural to view the current war as an extension of previous conflicts, only much more intense.



Palestinians celebrating the capture of an Israeli tank on October 7 – a symbol of Israel's shattered security doctrine for Gaza (Image: X/ Twitter)

It is however, quantitatively different: it is the result of the first mass invasion on Israeli territory since the 1948 War of Independence; the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust; and a mass hostage-taking event on a scale the world has rarely, if ever, known.

For Israelis, October 7 was traumatically cataclysmic, like September 11 was for the US, but many times worse.

October 7 shattered what is popularly referred to as the *conceptzia* (from the word “concept”) that guided Israel’s security strategy *vis-à-vis* the Gaza Strip and its goals in all previous conflicts with Hamas. This was a belief, shared by most Israeli security analysts, that after many war failures, Hamas could be “deterred” from initiating any major conflict and was shifting its focus to governing Gaza, improving its image abroad, and preparing for war sometime in the distant future. Accordingly, if massive monthly cash infusions from Qatar to Hamas were required to keep the border quiet, that was not a problem. In recent years, Israel also sought to provide a further incentive to Hamas to maintain quiet by providing Gazans tens of thousands of monthly permits to work inside Israel.

Israel did fear a ground incursion – but from Hezbollah on the northern border, not from Hamas. Israeli intelligence wrongly believed Hamas was too weak and inexperienced to carry out such an incursion.

Today, it is known that ostensible Hamas efforts to keep the border quiet were a ruse to lull the IDF into a false sense of security – while many of the Gazan workers are believed to have been recruited as spies who provided intelligence for planning the October 7 attack.

Almost no one in Israel believes today than Hamas can be “deterred” or contained within Gaza.

**On casualties, a ‘war of influence’**


Both the IDF and the Hamas-run Gazan Health Ministry agree that Palestinian casualties have been high over the past three months of war. The difference, of course, is that the Hamas-affiliated statistics – which at one point dubiously claimed 97% of one day’s casualties consisted of women and children – serve the Palestinian war propaganda effort, in what Israeli scholar Prof. Kobi Michael has termed the “war of influence”.

By contrast, Michael estimated that combatants account for 40-50 percent of the war’s fatalities. Moreover, claims of disproportionate deaths of “children” fail to take into account that Hamas and other terror groups recruit terrorists in their teens.

As AIJAC’s Oved Lobel noted on Jan. 17, “Israel claims to have killed more than 9,000 operatives of Hamas and other terrorist groups thus far in Gaza. If one believes Hamas that approximately 23,000 Palestinians have been killed overall as well as the Israeli estimate of terrorist casualties – neither number can be verified – that means that, at worst, 60%-65% of casualties to date have been civilians. This is tragic, but by no means excessive” compared to similar conflicts involving extensive urban warfare.

Even Ramesh Rajasingham, Director of Coordination of the UN’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), testified before the UN Security Council on May 25, 2022 – speaking mostly about Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine – that “in densely populated areas... civilians

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accounted for 90% of the casualties when explosive weapons were used, compared to 10% in other areas.”

Yet no serious analysis would suggest the IDF’s combatant to non-combatant fatality ratio in Gaza is anywhere near this bad, despite heavy bombing, because the IDF has gone to extraordinary lengths to warn civilians to evacuate areas it intends to attack.

A Nov. 8 *BBC* report by Alice Cuddy vividly illustrates one such effort, detailing how Gazan dentist Mahmoud Shaheen received a call from Israeli intelligence urging him to go from building to building and door to door to warn nearby residents to evacuate ahead of a planned airstrike.

He did so, and “it is believed that none of his neighbours died that day,” Cuddy noted.

### Tunnel vision

How is it that Israeli forces captured Gaza in a day or two in both 1956 and 1967 but have advanced at a snail’s pace in the current campaign? Simple – Hamas tunnels. According to a Jan. 17 *New York Times* exposé, Israel now estimates that the tunnels extend for up to 725km – well above pre-war estimates of 400km or so. It is also now estimated that 5,700 separate shafts lead down to the tunnels, and Hamas has stocked the tunnels with months of provisions (much of it siphoned off international humanitarian aid, including that supplied during the current conflict).

Throughout the war, Hamas has largely been avoiding open battles in Gaza, preferring to lie in wait underground while the IDF advances into an area and only emerge later and try to catch Israeli troops off guard. For this reason, the IDF may have control on the ground over most of Gaza but Hamas is expected to continue to launch attacks in small groups from within captured territory for months to come.

This means that international demands that Israel allow Gazans to leave tent camps in southern Gaza and return to repopulate the largely evacuated northern parts of the strip simply can’t be acted upon until the tunnels in northern Gaza are fully discovered, searched and destroyed. This is nightmarishly difficult, as Hamas has booby trapped many of them with IEDs and is thought to be hiding hostages in others. No army has ever faced a comparable challenge, so no one knows how long this might take.

Most of the tunnels were built after the 2014 Gaza War using cement that entered the Gaza Strip stolen from aid shipments provided for reconstruction of war-damaged buildings.

Israeli estimates say the tunnels required some 6,000 tons of concrete and 1,800 tons of steel – enough to build many whole neighbourhoods of housing.

### The return of the security zone

Before October 7, Israelis put their faith in the concept that IDF deterrence made it safe to live along Israel’s border fences – the only obstacle between them and armed

terrorist militias, such as Hamas and Hezbollah.

That sense of security has now been shattered, perhaps for an entire generation, and for good reason: it took Hamas a matter of only minutes from breaching the fence to gunning down civilians and taking hostages. Meanwhile, Hezbollah has used anti-tank missiles launched from inside Lebanon as weapons of terror to strike Israeli homes as far as six kilometres away.

Understandably, Israelis are today demanding a no-man’s land in Gaza to allow more warning time in case of a future invasion.

Likewise, northern Israelis are refusing to return home unless the Lebanese Army replaces Hezbollah control along the border in southern Lebanon – an unfulfilled pledge under UN Security Council Resolution 1701 which ended the last Lebanon war. Should diplomacy fail, full-scale war may be inevitable. At least 110,000 Israelis still today remain internally displaced from the multifront war.

### Palestinian extremism remains an obstacle to Gazan self-rule

The desire by the US, Australia and other proponents of the two-state peace paradigm to return the Palestinian Authority (PA) to power in Gaza for the first time since Hamas’ bloody 2007 coup seems logical and understandable.

Unfortunately, this appears to be an unrealistic goal in the short- to mid-term for numerous reasons, as outlined by Michael Mandelbaum in the edition.

It seems more realistic to expect a technocratic government to be formed in Gaza cobbled together from the leadership of Gazan clans not affiliated with the Hamas regime, as Israeli Defence Minister Gallant has proposed. Hopefully, such local powerbrokers might be more willing to serve the needs of post-war Gazans instead of making plotting endless war against Israel their top priority.

Moreover, it must be acknowledged that the sickening jihadist indoctrination of a generation of Gazans over the past 17 years by Hamas is not an obstacle that can be downplayed or wished away.



A pre-school puzzle found in Gaza shows children attacking Israel with machine guns and other weapons (Image: IDF)



A memorable image from the war was taken from an abandoned apartment where a pre-schooler's "Liberate Palestine" puzzle showed cartoon images of children attacking Israel with machine guns and other weapons. Gaza's future depends on the re-education of not only the children of the war, but adults too.

## WHY "WINNING THE PEACE" LOOKS SO HARD

**Michael Mandelbaum**

Two major questions loom over the ongoing Israeli military operation in the Gaza Strip: can the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) achieve its military goals there? And can postwar political arrangements that will make future Israeli military action in Gaza unnecessary be put in place? The answer to the first question is probably yes; the answer to the second is probably no.

As to the first, the IDF will not be able to kill or capture every one of the estimated 30,000 to 40,000 fighters deployed by Hamas, the terrorist organisation responsible for the murderous assault on southern Israel

on October 7, 2023 that killed 1,200 people and took an additional 240 hostage. Nor can it eradicate the ideas that motivate Hamas' leaders and their followers. It can, however, ensure that attacks like those of October 7 will not be repeated. An observation by Aviv Kochavi, a former IDF Chief of Staff, provides a clue to the main requirement for Israeli military success in Gaza. He noted that Hamas had morphed over the years from a terrorist organisation, engaging in guerrilla tactics against Israel, into a full-fledged terrorist army.

Indeed it has. It is organised like an army, with platoons, battalions, and brigades. It has a large arsenal of powerful weapons including rockets and missiles that it has fired at Israel. It has its own defence industry that manufactures its armaments. What is distinctive, and crucial, about this army is that it is based underground, in the hundreds of kilometres of tunnels that Hamas dug and reinforced after seizing power in Gaza in 2007. Before October 7, the tunnels largely protected Hamas from Israeli airstrikes, permitting it to grow increasingly powerful and dangerous.

The most important task of the IDF operation in Gaza is to destroy the tunnels. This is a protracted, arduous, perilous activity; Hamas fighters continue to hide in them to mount attacks on Israeli soldiers. Achieving this goal depends not only on the bravery of Israeli soldiers but also on the skill of Israeli combat engineers, who have the job of blowing up the tunnels or otherwise rendering them uninhabitable. To the extent that Israel can destroy these subterranean redoubts, whatever remains of Hamas will have to operate above ground, where it will be vulnerable to Israeli firepower. An above-ground Hamas, even greatly reduced in strength as a consequence of the Israeli military campaign, will continue to launch isolated attacks on Israeli targets; but it will be transformed from an army back into a terrorist organisation. It will not be able to mount assaults on the scale of October 7.

Of course, the best possible outcome of the war in Gaza would be the cessation of all attacks on Israel from its

south. That, unfortunately, is unlikely: whatever postwar political arrangements are put in place will almost certainly not end them.

The Biden Administration has made known its preference that the Palestinian Authority (PA), now ensconced in the West Bank, take responsibility for governing Gaza after the main fighting concludes. Such an arrangement would relieve Israel of responsibility for the territory, which it tried

to relinquish through unilateral withdrawal in 2005, when it removed more than 8000 Israelis living there. A Palestinian government would bring Gaza into conformity with the widely-held precept that every people ought to govern itself.

The PA is unlikely, however, to be either willing or able to stop attacks on Israel. It is weak, corrupt, ineffective,



Winning the Gaza war is not easy – winning the peace afterwards looks even more difficult, given the state of Palestinian politics (Image: IDF)

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and unpopular with Palestinians. Its President, 88-year-old Mahmoud Abbas, is currently serving the 19th year of what was supposed to be a four-year term. No Palestinian presidential election has taken place since 2005. Moreover, while the PA differs from Hamas in important ways, and the two are rivals for power, their political outlooks have considerable overlap. The PA, too, churns out vile anti-Jewish propaganda. It, too, insists that all those who left Israel when it was created in 1948 – most of them because of the war that the Arabs instigated in an effort to destroy the new Jewish state – and all of their many millions of descendants must be allowed to return to Israel, a demand that not only has no historical or legal basis but is also a formula for the end of the Jewish state.

The PA supports anti-Israel terror, giving money to the families of those who engage in it. Its leaders, first Yasser Arafat and now Abbas, have always refused Israeli offers of a state and have never made any serious counter proposals. In so doing they have been listening to their constituents. A wartime poll of Palestinians found that 72% of respondents believed the attacks of October 7 were “correct,” with 82% of those in the West Bank and 57% in Gaza taking this position. Polls of Palestinian opinion have also shown an overwhelming rejection of the goal, which the international community has embraced, of having two states, Israel and Palestine, living peacefully next to each other. Most Palestinians do not accept the legitimacy or the permanence of Israel.

All this makes Palestinian nationalism the only one of the many nationalist movements that have appeared since the nineteenth century that has as its aim not the creation of its own nation-state but rather the destruction of the state of another people.

Nor will the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza change the Palestinians’ attitudes toward the Jews and their state. To the contrary, it is all too likely to be regarded as a sign of Israeli weakness, thereby fortifying those attitudes. Israel’s withdrawals from parts of the West Bank under the terms of the Oslo Agreement of 1993, from the south of Lebanon in 2000, and from Gaza in 2005, all failed to produce goodwill. Instead, they led to campaigns of terror

against Israel. Palestinian rejection of Israel is the essential, animating cause of the conflict between the two peoples. Israelis do not have the power to change it; they can only respond to its consequences.

Perhaps this time Palestinian attitudes will change. Because Hamas secreted itself deep underground after conducting the massacres of October 7, Israel was obliged to fight the war that those massacres began in a way that has brought more destruction to Gaza than any Arab population has suffered in any previous Arab-Israeli conflict.

Perhaps the Palestinians will draw from this experience the conclusion that their decades-long effort to abolish the Jewish state has become too costly to sustain. Or perhaps new leaders will come forward among the Palestinians, leaders who are prepared to build their own state rather than seek to destroy that of the Israelis. Or perhaps some kind of multinational Arab force will govern and pacify Gaza and clamp down on aggression against Israel.

The likeliest scenario, however, is for an ineffectual PA to have nominal authority in Gaza, with Israel, contrary to the wishes of the majority of its people, reluctantly assuming responsibility for security there.

In that case, and unless and until a fundamental transformation of Palestinian attitudes, or a fundamental transformation in the governance of Gaza, or both, takes place, the decades-long conflict that produced the horrors of October 7 will persist. Under those circumstances, attacks on Israel in some form will continue. The Israelis will have to respond by defending themselves. And the ongoing war in Gaza will turn out to be the latest, but not the last, round of fighting there. AIR

*Michael Mandelbaum is the Christian A. Herter Professor Emeritus of American Foreign Policy at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. His new book, The Titans of the Twentieth Century: How They Made History and the History They Made – a study of Woodrow Wilson, Lenin, Hitler, Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Gandhi, Ben-Gurion, and Mao – will be published in September 2024. © Jerusalem Strategic Tribune (www.jstribune.com), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*

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# THE MORALITY OF IDF MANOEUVRES IN GAZA

Richard Kemp

Other than hardened anti-Israel zealots and supporters of Hamas, few have questioned the need for Israel to take military action to defend its citizens following the depredations of October 7. But the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) has come under intense criticism about the way it is conducting the war in the Gaza Strip, with allegations of excessive force and even indiscriminate attacks.

Amid this growing reproof from afar, I have not yet heard one single realistic proposal for an alternative way of operating that would reduce civilian harm while still achieving the necessary objectives. That tells me that the IDF has no choice but to prosecute this conflict along current lines, despite the terrible loss of civilian life. But given the ill-informed accusations and wide-ranging misunderstanding of how the IDF is actually operating in Gaza, it is worth a closer look at what the IDF has been doing to mitigate harm to civilians.

I have been in Israel since the start of this war in the immediate aftermath of the slaughter, rape, torture and kidnapping spree four months ago. During that time, I have been extensively briefed on the conduct of operations by IDF commanders and staff and visited a wide range of IDF air and ground combat units, including inside the Gaza Strip, on a number of occasions, when I have been able to observe military operations firsthand.

During “Operation Swords of Iron,” the IDF has faced and continues to face one of the most difficult and complex combat environments any armed force has ever had to deal with. Hamas and its fellow Gaza terrorists have, over several years, been preparing the territory with weapons and ammo caches, booby traps, mines, kill zones, and ambush and sniper positions.

They have an armoury that includes sophisticated ground combat systems including thermobaric anti-armour missiles, explosively formed penetrator IEDs, long-range sniper rifles, explosive suicide vests, remote detonation equipment, attack drones, surveillance drones and ground-mounted surveillance cameras. In addition, they have positioned a vast array of mobile rocket launchers that continue to attack Israel’s civilian population, with missile barrages ongoing since the start of the war.

Hamas fighters and their infrastructure are comprehensively embedded in all populated areas of the Gaza Strip, and frequently relocate both above and below ground

according to the movements of the IDF and the civilian population. The terrorists have utilised the predominantly urban areas to afford maximum cover and facilitate concealed approach and escape routes.

Hamas has constructed an extensive network of underground tunnels to gain protection for terrorists, to move fighters and equipment, store weapons, house command and control facilities, as well as to launch attacks and carry out ambushes. Some of these tunnels have been fitted with heavy blast doors to afford greater protection and frustrate assaulting troops. They are booby-trapped and rigged with explosives, early-warning devices and surveillance cameras.

I have been into the tunnels during this conflict and can confirm that this network adds exponentially to the already immense challenges of fighting in urban areas, recognised by military professionals as perhaps the most demanding



In Gaza, “the IDF continues to face one of the most difficult and complex combat environments any armed force has ever had to deal with,” yet has “taken all reasonable measures to achieve its mission while minimising harm to the civilian population.” (Image: IDF)

of all battle environments. Indeed, I am not aware of any comparable purposely-built underground complex that any armed forces have had to tackle in any other conflict.

Hamas’ tactics are based on the exploitation of the civilian population of Gaza. Its above-ground infrastructure utilises protected locations, including a large number of schools, hospitals and mosques for weapons storage, fighting positions, and tunnel access and egress. It has similarly used office and commercial facilities, shops and residential buildings. I have been briefed by combat troops on the ground that in some areas as much as every other house contains elements of terrorist infrastructure. I have been shown, for example, children’s bedrooms used to store grenades, anti-tank missiles and other munitions.

It is a standard Hamas tactic for terrorists to move unarmed, in civilian clothing, among the civilian population, collect weapons stashed in civilian buildings and then carry out attacks against IDF troops. Hamas often compels



civilians to remain in positions that the IDF is likely to attack, seeking to either deter an assault or exploit civilian deaths for international propaganda purposes if an attack is carried out. There are examples of Hamas killing civilians who fail to obey.

In addition to all this, Hamas is holding a large number of hostages in the Gaza Strip, which adds significant complications as the IDF seeks to find and rescue them and to avoid inadvertently killing them. Hamas has used the presence of its captives, including simulated and recorded hostage voices and related markings, to lure IDF soldiers into ambushes. Along with the tunnels, this adds yet another unique dimension to this conflict.

This daunting combination of concurrent and conflicting challenges, coupled with the fact that Hamas systematically uses Gazans as human shields, and operates within and beneath civilian infrastructure, means that it is literally not possible to achieve the objectives of defeating Hamas and rescuing the hostages without the tragic consequence of civilian casualties and the regrettable destruction of civilian property from both ground and air. No army in the world would be able to do so, no matter what tactics they employed, and indeed no other army has ever done so in any comparable conflict.

I have been briefed on IDF techniques and training for mitigating harm to civilians by commanders, staff officers and lawyers. I have also spoken to a large number of air and ground combat troops, and all have shown a clear understanding of the IDF rules of engagement and the laws of armed conflict, as well as the personal and unit dedication to adhere to them. For example, I was present recently at a conference of operational commanders inside the Gaza Strip at which they discussed in great detail measures to avoid harm to civilians while attacking enemy positions in the close vicinity of a school that was being used for refuge by civilians. It was clear to me that the determination to protect civilian life was at the forefront of these commanders' minds, in their planning and in their direction of tactical operations.

Measures that the IDF routinely takes include selection of munitions to achieve the necessary effect on enemy targets while reducing the prospects of civilian casualties, especially in air operations where such calibration is more practicable; calculating proportionality; discriminating between combatants and non-combatants; and warning and enabling civilians to leave areas that are to be targeted.

The latter includes, at the time of writing, airdropping six million leaflets warning civilians to leave specified areas and indicating places of greater safety. In addition, the IDF has made 14 million pre-recorded phone calls and 72,000 personal calls warning civilians to leave targeted areas. The IDF then extensively monitors target areas from the air and ground to confirm the departure of civilians where possible before striking.

With these and other measures, the IDF has done all it is able to warn civilians of impending attacks.

Temporary evacuation of civilians from areas of intense fighting into places of relative safety is the best way to keep civilians as far as possible out of harm's way when fighting an enemy that has no regard for its own population, and, in fact, actively seeks to cause their deaths in order to bring pressure on Israel to cease its defensive operations inside Gaza.

This latter factor may not be unique to this conflict, but for Hamas, it is a top operational priority, which makes it far more challenging for the IDF to minimise the number of civilian casualties. The IDF recognises this and consequently makes efforts beyond those of any other army.

The IDF is also working hard to alleviate civilian suffering by facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid. That includes daily pauses in fighting and the opening of humanitarian corridors and humanitarian relief zones. The IDF enables the supply of hundreds of tonnes of aid each day, and current constraints on aid delivery are due not to IDF-imposed restrictions but to the capacity of UN aid organisations.

The fact is that unilateral humanitarian pauses, and the creation of corridors, provide a military advantage to Hamas. Additionally, there is no doubt that some of the aid delivered into Gaza is appropriated by terrorists.

Information and intelligence shortcomings, operational mistakes, human error, miscalculations and technical malfunctions occur in all wars, and sometimes tragically lead to loss of civilian life and indeed to fratricide ("friendly fire" or "blue on blue"). I have witnessed and been involved in several such events in other conflicts. Inevitably, dreadful incidents of this nature have occurred in this war, too. When errors or unlawful activity are suspected, the IDF uses its Fact-Finding Assessment Mechanism (which I have observed in action) to learn lessons, prevent repetition, and, if appropriate, refer cases to the Military Advocate General for further investigation.

Based on my own military experience in similar types of conflict and on my direct observations throughout the first three months of this war, in my opinion, the IDF has taken all reasonable measures to achieve its mission while minimising harm to the civilian population and maximising humanitarian relief.

Nor are Israel's military objectives optional or negotiable. To eliminate the potential for a recurrence of another October 7-style massacre, which Hamas' leaders have repeatedly threatened, Hamas' fighting capabilities must be destroyed; its ability to continue firing lethal rockets into the Israeli population must be denied; and every possible effort must be made to rescue the hostages.

AIR

*Col. Richard Kemp is a former British Army commander who served in Afghanistan, Iraq, Northern Ireland and the Balkans wars. © Jewish News Syndicate (JNS.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*



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# “Subverting the Genocide Convention”

## Israel’s response to South Africa at the ICJ

Tal Becker

*The text below is selected points excerpted from the opening remarks made by the Israeli legal team on January 12, at the International Court of Justice in the Hague, in response to the “Proceedings instituted by South Africa against the State of Israel” on Dec. 29, 2023 (South Africa v. Israel).*

- The State of Israel is singularly aware of why the Genocide Convention, which has been invoked in these proceedings, was adopted. Seared in our collective memory is the systematic murder of six million Jews as part of a pre-meditated and heinous program for their total annihilation.
- Given the Jewish people’s history, it is not surprising that Israel was among the first States to ratify the Genocide Convention, without reservation, and to incorporate its provisions in its domestic legislation. For some, the promise of “Never Again” for all peoples is a slogan; for Israel, it is the highest moral obligation.
- The Applicant has now sought to invoke this term in the context of Israel’s conduct in a war it did not start and did not want. A war in which Israel is defending itself against Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and other terrorist organisations whose brutality knows no bound.
- The civilian suffering in this war, like in all wars, is tragic. It is heartbreaking. The harsh realities of the current hostilities are made especially agonising for civilians given Hamas’ reprehensible strategy of seeking to maximise civilian harm to both Israelis and Palestinians, even as Israel seeks to minimise it.
- But, as this Court has already made clear, the Genocide Convention was not designed to address the brutal impact of intensive hostilities on the civilian population, even when the use of force raises “very serious issues of international law” and involves “enormous suffering” and “continuing loss of life.” The Convention was set apart to address a malevolent crime of the most exceptional severity.
- The attempt to weaponise the term genocide against Israel in the present context, does more than tell the Court a grossly distorted story, and it does more than

empty the word of its unique force and special meaning. It subverts the object and purpose of the Convention itself – with ramifications for all States seeking to defend themselves against those who demonstrate total disdain for life and for the law.

- On Saturday, October 7, a Jewish religious holiday, thousands of Hamas and other militants breached Israel’s sovereign territory by sea, land, and air, invading over 20 Israeli communities, bases and the site of a music festival. What proceeded, under the cover of thousands of rockets fired indiscriminately into Israel, was the wholesale massacre, mutilation, rape and abduction of as many citizens as the terrorists could find before Israel’s security forces repelled them. Openly displaying elation, they tortured children in front of their parents, and parents in front of their children, burned people, including infants, alive, and systematically raped and mutilated scores of women, men and children. All told, some 1,200 people were butchered that day, more than 5,500 maimed, and some 240 hostages abducted, including infants, entire families, persons with disabilities and Holocaust survivors, some of whom have since been executed; many of whom have been tortured, sexually abused and starved in captivity.
- We know of the brutality of October 7 not only from the harrowing testimonies of the survivors, the unmistakable proof of carnage and sadism left behind, and the forensic evidence taken at the scene. We know it because the assailants proudly filmed and broadcast their barbarism.
- The events of that day are all but ignored in the Applicant’s submissions. But we are compelled to share with the Court some fraction of its horror – the largest calculated mass murder of Jews in a single day since the Holocaust.
- We do so not because these acts – however sadistic and systematic – release Israel of its obligations to uphold the law as it defends its citizens and territory. That is unquestionable. We do so rather because it is impossible to understand the armed conflict in Gaza, without appreciating the nature of the threat Israel is facing, and the brutality and lawlessness of the armed force confronting it.
- As stated, none of these atrocities absolve Israel of its obligations under the law. But they do enable the Court to appreciate three core aspects of the present proceedings, which the Applicant has obscured from view.

**“Astonishingly, the Court has been requested to indicate a provisional measure calling on Israel to suspend its military operations... [denying] Israel its ability to meet its legal obligations to the defence of its citizens”**





Tal Becker before the International Court of Justice on Jan. 12 (Screenshots)

- First, that if there have been acts that may be characterised as genocidal, then they have been perpetrated against Israel. If there is a concern about the obligations of States under the Genocide Convention, then it is in relation to their responsibilities to act against Hamas' proudly declared agenda of annihilation, which is not a secret, and is not in doubt.
- Second, it is in response to the slaughter of October 7 – which Hamas openly vows to repeat – and to the ongoing attacks against it from Gaza, that Israel has the inherent right to take all legitimate measures to defend its citizens and secure the release of the hostages. This right is also not in doubt. It has been acknowledged by States across the world.
- Astonishingly, the Court has been requested to indicate a provisional measure calling on Israel to suspend its military operations. But this amounts to an attempt to deny Israel its ability to meet its legal obligations to the defence of its citizens, to the hostages, and to over 110,000 internally displaced Israelis unable to safely return to their homes.
- Hamas is not party to these proceedings. The Applicant, by its request, seeks to thwart Israel's inherent right to defend itself – to let Hamas not just get away with its murder, literally, but render Israel defenceless as Hamas continues to commit it.
- If the claim of the Applicant now is that in the armed conflict between Israel and Hamas, Israel must be denied the ability to defend its citizens – then the absurd upshot of South Africa's argument is this: Under the guise of the allegation against Israel of genocide, this

Court is asked to call for an end to operations against the ongoing attacks of an organisation that pursues an actual genocidal agenda. An organisation that has violated every past ceasefire and used it to rearm and plan new atrocities. An organisation that declares its unequivocal resolve to advance its genocidal plans. That is an unconscionable request, and it is respectfully submitted that it cannot stand.

- The hostilities between Israel and Hamas have exacted a terrible toll on both Israelis and Palestinians. But any genuine effort to understand the cause of this toll must take account of the horrendous reality created by Hamas within the Gaza Strip.
- When Israel withdrew all its soldiers and civilians from Gaza in 2005 it left a coastal area with the potential to become a political and economic success story. Hamas' violent take-over in 2007 changed all that. Over the past 16 years of its rule, Hamas has smuggled countless weapons into Gaza, and has diverted billions in international aid, not to build schools, hospitals or shelters to protect its population from the dangers of the attacks it launched against Israel over many years, but rather to turn massive swathes of the civilian infrastructure into perhaps the most sophisticated terrorist stronghold in the history of urban warfare.
- Remarkably, counsel for South Africa described the suffering in Gaza as “unparalleled and unprecedented”, as if they are unaware of the utter devastation wrought in wars that have raged just in recent years around the world. Sadly, the civilian suffering in warfare is not unique to Gaza. What is actually “unparalleled and unprecedented” is the degree to which Hamas has entrenched itself within the civilian population and made Palestinian civilian suffering an integral part of its strategy.
- Hamas has systematically and unlawfully embedded its military operations, militants and assets throughout Gaza within and beneath densely populated civilian areas. It has built an extensive warren of underground tunnels for its leaders and fighters several hundred miles in length throughout the Strip, with thousands of access points and terrorist hubs located in homes, mosques, UN facilities, schools and perhaps most shockingly, hospitals.
- This is not an occasional tactic. It is an integrated, pre-planned, extensive and abhorrent method of warfare. Purposely and methodically murdering civilians. Firing rockets indiscriminately. Systematically using civilians, sensitive sites and civilian objects as shields. Stealing and hoarding humanitarian supplies – allowing those under its control to suffer, so that it can fuel its fighters and terrorist campaign.
- The appalling suffering of civilians – both Israeli and Palestinian – is first and foremost the result of this

despicable strategy; the horrible cost of Hamas not only failing to protect its civilians but actively sacrificing them for its own propaganda and military benefit. And if Hamas abandons this strategy, releases the hostages and lays down its arms, the hostilities and suffering would end.

- There are many distortions in the Applicant’s submission to the Court, but as shall be demonstrated by Counsel, there is one that overshadows them all. In the Applicant’s telling, it is almost as if there is no intensive armed conflict taking place between two parties at all, no grave threat to Israel and its citizens, only an Israeli assault against Gaza.
- The Court is told of widespread damage to buildings, but it is not told, for example, how many thousands of these buildings were destroyed because they were booby trapped by Hamas, how many became legitimate targets because of the strategy of using civilian objects and protected sites for military purposes, how many buildings were struck by over 2000 indiscriminate terrorist rockets that misfired and landed in Gaza itself.
- The Court is told of over 23,000 casualties, as the Applicant repeats, as many have, unverified statistics provided by Hamas itself – hardly a reliable source. Every civilian casualty in this conflict is a human tragedy that demands our compassion. But the Court is not told how many thousands of casualties are in fact militants, how many were killed by Hamas fire, how many were civilians taking direct part in hostilities, and just how many are the tragic result of legitimate and proportionate use of force against military targets.
- And the Court is also told of the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, but it is not told of Hamas’ practice of stealing and hoarding aid, it is not told of the extensive Israeli efforts to mitigate civilian harm, of the humanitarian initiatives being undertaken to enable the flow of supplies and provide medical attention to the wounded.
- The nightmarish environment created by Hamas has been concealed by the Applicant, but it is the environment in which Israel is compelled to operate. Israel is committed, as it must be, to comply with the law,

but it does so in the face of Hamas’ utter contempt for the law. It is committed, as it must be, to demonstrate humanity, but it does so in the face of Hamas’ utter inhumanity.

- It is plainly inconceivable – under the terms set by this very Court – that a State conducting itself in this way may be said to be engaged in genocide, not even prima facie.
- The key component of genocide – the intention to destroy a people in whole or in part – is totally lacking. What Israel seeks by operating in Gaza is not to destroy a people, but to protect a people, its people, who are under attack on multiple fronts, and to do so in accordance with the law, even as it faces a heartless enemy determined to use that very commitment against it.
- As will be detailed by Counsel, Israel’s lawful aims in Gaza have been clearly and repeatedly articulated by its Prime Minister, its Defence Minister, and all members of the War Cabinet. As the Prime Minister reiterated yet again just this week “Israel is fighting Hamas terrorists, not the civilian population.”
- Israel aims to ensure that Gaza can never again be used as a launch pad for terrorism. As the Prime Minister reaffirmed, Israel seeks neither to permanently occupy Gaza or to displace its civilian population. It wants to create a better future for Israelis and Palestinians alike, where both can live in peace, thrive and prosper, and where the Palestinian people have all the power to govern themselves, but not the capacity to threaten Israel.
- If there is a threat to that vision – if there is a humanitarian threat to the Palestinian civilians of Gaza – it stems primarily from the fact that they have lived under the control of a genocidal terrorist organisation that has total disregard for their life and well-being. That organisation, Hamas, and its sponsors, seek to deny Israel, Palestinians, and Arab States across the region, the ability to advance a common future of peace, co-existence, security, and prosperity. Israel is in a war of defence against Hamas – not against the Palestinian people – to ensure that they do not succeed.
- In these circumstances, there can hardly be a charge more false or more malevolent than the allegation against Israel of genocide.
- Madame President, Members of the Court, the Genocide Convention was a solemn promise made to the Jewish people, to all peoples, of “Never Again”. The Applicant invites the Court to betray that promise. If the

**“What Israel seeks by operating in Gaza is not to destroy a people, but to protect a people, its people, who are under attack on multiple fronts, and to do so in accordance with the law”**



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term genocide can be so diminished in the way it advocates, if Provisional Measures can be triggered in the way it suggests, the Convention becomes an aggressor's charter. It will reward, indeed encourage, the terrorists who hide behind civilians, at the expense of the States seeking to defend against them. AIR

*Dr Tal Becker serves as the legal adviser of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is a veteran member of successive Israeli peace negotiation teams. He was raised in Australia.*

## SOUTH AFRICA'S MISERABLE ARGUMENTS AT THE ICJ

Yonah Jeremy Bob

South Africa never really had a chance in its genocide claims against Israel if applying the laws of war – the entire “show” before the International Court of Justice is a political stunt designed to blacken Israel's name, using legal-sounding language to launder an anti-Israel agenda.

But many of the arguments that its lawyers made in its presentation to the Court on January 11 were so specious that they removed any veil of seriousness that they might have held onto.



South Africa's case turned into an occasion to launder an anti-Israel agenda (screenshot)

From the start, South Africa really had two arguments to go on that had any remote legal significance – forget about having any chance to actually prove “genocide”.

They were that top Israeli officials had made horrible statements (many of them should not have been said, even if legally insignificant) that could allegedly be used to infer genocidal intent, and that the IDF had allegedly killed 23,000 Palestinians, likely 60% to 70% of them being civilians.

If South Africa had stuck to these arguments, any serious lawyer or judge still would have tossed them out of court because: none of the statements they have pro-

vided from public officials were official policy or legal statements; many were by officials without real influence over the war; those by key officials could easily be read in context as metaphorical; Israel has publicly produced vast amounts of evidence that it has expended enormous resources to avoid killing Palestinian civilians; and it acknowledged and explained errors, which happen in all wars, where errors have occurred.

But South Africa could not help itself. It went down a road of a series of arguments that exposed an anti-Israel world view, which has no connection to the laws of war, let alone the Genocide Convention, and further undermined the foundations of any case it might have tried to make.

It also ignored some critical threshold facts that anyone trying to prove a single war crime, let alone the even higher threshold for the penultimate war crime of systematic genocide, would need to confront.

### SOUTH AFRICA'S DISCONNECTED ARGUMENTS

South Africa did not mention Hamas's systematic use of the Palestinian civilian population and civilian locations, including schools, hospitals, mosques, and UN buildings, as human shields.

The US and other European countries have condemned Hamas for doing this.

Even the International Criminal Court has made statements implicitly acknowledging that Hamas has done this.

South Africa clung to prior arguments from the 2004 ICJ case against the legality of Israel's West Bank security barrier, saying Israel had no self-defence right because it was an occupier acting in Palestinian territory.

But this time, there was an “armed attack” by Hamas on October 7, invading 22 Israeli towns, killing 1,200 Israelis, mostly civilians, and more than 3,000 rockets were fired against Israel's home front.

So putting aside the 2004 ruling that Israel rejected at the time, even according to the logic of the ICJ at the time, in 2023, there is no question that Israel had the right to counter-strike as part of self-defence.

South Africa claimed that Israel is settling Gaza, but it provided no evidence. Of course, it provided no evidence, because there is none. True, there are some ministers who are not part of the critical five-member war cabinet who dream about resettling Gaza, but the war cabinet, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, all official policy and legal positions, and the actual view in the field show that there has not been a single move to settle Jews in Gaza.

**“South Africa claimed that Israel is settling Gaza, but it provided no evidence. Of course, it provided no evidence, because there is none”**

In practically a twilight-zone moment, one South African lawyer said the IDF’s warning to Palestinians in mid-October to evacuate northern Gaza within 24 hours was itself a war crime.

Warning civilians to evacuate is an obligation under the laws of war if one is planning to attack an area.

There is no provision in the laws of war that says more than a 24-hour warning is required, and there are an unlimited number of examples where less time is given as a warning.

This is without even mentioning that the IDF did not actually invade until a week and a half after its initial warning, and it later gave additional warnings and extensions that certainly went beyond the minimal obligations laid out by the laws of war.

In fact, the vast majority of northern Gaza’s 1.4 million or more people successfully evacuated using times and zones provided by the IDF.

Were there mistakes here and there when Hamas engaged the IDF in an area where Palestinian civilians were evacuating, likely in order to try to lead the IDF into fighting with civilians’ lives at risk in the middle of a gunfight? Probably. But mistakes are not a war crime, and certainly not genocide, and a warning to evacuate is the opposite of genocide.

There are some interesting questions about whether it was legal for Israel not to provide water to the Palestinians in the early days of the war, after which Jerusalem did ensure the provision of water.

But these are complex questions since typically, the laws of war refer to allowing a third party to provide water to civilians, not an obligation of one party in hostilities to directly provide water to the other party in hostilities.

Certainly, no one could argue that Israel committed genocide from a short period of days of not directly providing water to Hamas right after the terrorist group had invaded Israel and killed 1,200 Israelis, mostly civilians, when for the vast majority of the war, Israel has facilitated the provision of water.

Likewise, there were a few specific instances where South Africa said Israel had denied the entry of humanitar-

ian assistance to specific hospitals, such as on Jan. 8.

An IDF source said they were unfamiliar with the claims, but there have been instances where the IDF had to delay aid delivery to hospitals or other areas because of fighting in the area with Hamas.

This is not a violation of the laws of war, but rather a standard security precaution. The proof is the enormous number of times that Israel has facilitated aid deliveries.

Even if Israel has fouled up in some individual instances with aid deliveries, these would likely constitute errors in a time of war, not war crimes, and certainly nothing near genocide.

More bizarrely, South Africa claimed that Israel had committed genocide because it did not provide fuel.

There is nothing about an obligation to provide fuel in the laws of war, and most serious international lawyers would recognise that it would be unthinkable to do so when Hamas would have used the fuel to continue firing hundreds of rockets per day on Israel’s home front.

Underneath all of this was an opening statement attacking Israel for crimes against the Palestinians – not just since 1967 but dating back to 1948.

In other words, South Africa implicitly questioned Israel’s right to exist.

That position is probably the only way to make sense of South Africa’s strange performance. AIR

*Yonah Jeremy Bob is the Jerusalem Post’s senior military correspondent, intelligence analyst and literary editor. © Jerusalem Post (jpost.com), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*

## STOPPING THE HOUTHIS REQUIRES THINKING BIGGER

**Oved Lobel**

**U**S President Joe Biden, recently asked by a reporter whether US-led military strikes against the Houthis in Yemen were working, responded, “When you say working, are they stopping the Houthis? No. Are they going to continue? Yes.” He’s likely right on both counts.

On January 11, after 27 Houthi attacks over several months against both US navy ships and international vessels in the crucial shipping bottleneck at the mouth of the Red Sea, the US and UK finally decided to respond. With largely rhetorical “support” from Australia and several other countries, the two nations conducted retaliatory strikes against more than 60 Houthi targets utilising more than 150 munitions.

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The Houthis are an integral part of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps network, so it makes little sense to try to deter them independently (Image: Maad Ali/ZUMA Wire/Alamy Live News)

The US has stated that the purpose of these strikes is to degrade the Houthi capability to continue conducting such attacks, and some officials say 20%-30% of Houthi offensive capabilities had been destroyed.

Yet, predictably, these limited strikes appear to have had little deterrent effect on the group, which has since continued to fire on navy and commercial ships, prompting tit-for-tat US strikes against Houthi missiles, drones and launchers at least four times since the initial wave.

The Biden Administration also relisted the Houthis as a terrorist organisation, a designation imposed in the last days of the Trump Administration and inexplicably lifted almost immediately after taking office by the Biden Administration.

While these strikes are a step in the right direction compared to the months of inaction preceding them, and while immediate threats like missiles and drones about to be launched should be targeted and destroyed as a matter of course, they are unlikely to have much deterrent effect. That can only be achieved by also targeting those actually responsible for these attacks: the Islamic regime ruling Iran and its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

For too long, US policy has been held captive by the IRGC-run shell game, including pretending that the Houthis, more formally known as Ansar Allah (“Supporters of Allah”), were a separate problem rooted in the complex politics of Yemen. The reality is that, like Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Gaza and the West Bank and various militias in Iraq and Syria, Ansar Allah is an IRGC problem.

The US Administration continues to implausibly view the war in Gaza as a contained Israeli-Palestinian issue and the incessant attacks against American forces in Iraq, Syria and off the coast of Yemen as an unrelated issue which must be dealt with independently.

The IRGC, as I’ve written before, “is no ordinary national army but the vanguard of a multinational Islamic revolution – a supranational monolith whose nerve centre

is located in Iran.” Ansar Allah is an organic component of this supranational monolith, and thus cannot be deterred by counterstrikes because it is not an independent decision maker.

Compartmentalising the components of the IRGC network and attempting to deter each one as if it weren’t part of a whole is not going to work. It isn’t working in Iraq and Syria and is very unlikely to work in Yemen.

The Houthis have continued their conquests and attacks through eight years – and really 20 years, as the IRGC officially began the Ansar Allah jihad in Yemen in 2004 – of brutal warfare, including relentless airstrikes from Arab countries. Thus, a few desultory targeted strikes against some missiles and drones are not likely to stop them. Furthermore, Iran can likely produce and deliver missiles and drones at a faster rate than the US can destroy them.

Iran’s Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian recently asserted at the World Economic Forum in Davos that “The security of the Red Sea is tied to the developments in Gaza, and everyone will suffer if Israel’s crimes in Gaza do not stop... All the fronts will remain active.”

This is yet another regime admission that it is controlling this multifront war. The Hamas invasion and pogrom on October 7 was merely one front in this IRGC war; Houthi attacks on international shipping and the US Navy are another. The address for any deterrent response lies neither in Gaza nor in Yemen, but in Iran.

Not until the US and its allies stop participating in this shell game and place the Iranian regime behind all these regional attacks under much firmer financial and, yes, kinetic pressure – to the point that it feels it is jeopardising its existence with attacks on shipping – can there be any hope of genuinely stopping the attacks in the Red Sea, with the huge costs to international commerce they entail. AIR

## EIGHT THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT UNRWA

### Foundation for Defense of Democracies

*[On January 16, while visiting the Middle East, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong announced that Australia would be contributing A\$21.5 million to address “urgent and ongoing humanitarian needs resulting from the Hamas-Israel conflict”. A\$6 million of that money, she added, would go to “the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), to provide urgent lifesaving assistance including food, shelter and emergency health care.” This would be on top of the A\$20 million Australian already contributes annually to UNRWA. UNRWA head Philippe Lazzarini also reportedly told Wong that the agency was going to “commission an independent review, to look at all the allegations regarding*





Among UNRWA's other long-standing problems, there are reports of its aid being seized by Hamas during the current war (Image: Anas Mohammed/ Shutterstock)

*UNRWA and its activities in Gaza.*

*The following factsheet seeks to explain why UNRWA is a controversial outlet for humanitarian aid to the Palestinians – Ed.]*

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) was established in 1949 to serve Palestinian refugees displaced during Israel's War of Independence. UNRWA continues to operate in the Gaza Strip, West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, nearly 75 years later.

### 1. UNRWA perpetuates the Palestinian refugee problem

The United Nations (UN) treats Palestinian refugees differently than refugees from every other conflict or circumstance. Specifically, UNRWA automatically registers the descendants of Palestinian refugees in perpetuity, which has led to explosive growth in its official number of clients. From an original number of around 700,000 refugees, there are now 5.9 million Palestinians registered with UNRWA, even though the vast majority did not flee the 1948 conflict. In 2021, then US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stated that fewer than 5% of UNRWA-registered "refugees" meet the criteria for the designation that the UN applies to refugees from other conflicts. By growing the refugee population and promoting Palestinian claims to Israeli land, UNRWA perpetuates and exacerbates the conflict.

### 2. UNRWA is a bloated agency with no authority to meaningfully solve the refugee issue

With the exception of Palestinian refugees, all other refugees in the world fall under the responsibility of the United Nations Refugee Agency (also known as UNHCR), which has a mandate to assist refugees in "repatriation and resettlement" and "assimilation with new national com-

munities." The UN Refugee Agency has a staff of 18,000 to serve more than 100 million people. By contrast, UNRWA employs 30,000 staff to service 5.9 million Palestinians. UNRWA admits that it "does not have a mandate to resettle Palestine refugees and has no authority to seek lasting durable solutions for refugees."

### 3. Neighbouring governments refused to resettle Arab refugees after Israel's War of Independence

Both Jews and Arabs fled their homes during and after Israel's 1948 War of Independence. Following the war, Israel absorbed hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees from Arab states who faced persecution and expulsion. However, due to the challenges of resettlement and the benefits of wielding the refugees as a future weapon against Israel, these same Arab states did not resettle a similar number of displaced Arabs. In 1949, the United Nations established UNRWA to serve Palestinian refugees. Although most of UNRWA's original beneficiaries are no longer alive, the agency continues to operate in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

### 4. UNRWA does not recognise Hamas as a terrorist organisation

In 1997, the United States designated Hamas as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation, freezing its US-based assets, barring members from entering the country, and banning the provision of "material support or resources." Other countries and international entities that have designated Hamas as a terrorist organisation include Australia, Canada, the European Union, Japan, Israel, the Organization of American States, Paraguay, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. However, UNRWA follows the guidelines of the United Nations Security Council Consolidated List of terrorist groups and individuals, which does not include Hamas. As such, the agency has a history of hiring Hamas affiliates.

### 5. By delivering basic services, UNRWA frees up money for Hamas to spend on terrorism

Despite the poverty experienced by Gaza residents, Hamas spends over half of its budget on military needs and diverts humanitarian resources to its terrorist purposes and the pockets of its senior leadership. By picking up the civilian tab, UNRWA frees up Hamas resources for terror operations. A Hamas official admitted as such on October 30, explaining that Hamas built hundreds of kilometres of tunnels to protect its fighters, while "it is the responsibility of the United Nations to protect [civilians]."

# AMUST’S POST-OCTOBER 7 RAMPAGE (PART 2)

Ran Porat

In the previous *AIR*, I addressed the extreme and sometimes antisemitic content that is being published by the *Australian Muslim Times* (*AMUST*) following the October 7 massacre by Hamas. In this second part of the series, I will review more *AMUST* material published recently.

## ANTI-ISRAEL BUZZWORDS

The buzzwords which are a core part of global anti-Israel messaging – “apartheid”, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, genocide, comparing Israel to Nazi Germany and more – have featured prominently in almost every relevant story published on *AMUST* since October 7. Here is a selection of such content:

**Zia Ahmad**, *AMUST* editor-in-chief (Jan. 9) – “Israel, with its racist, apartheid and colonial ideology, intoxicated by its brutal military power backed by the US with unlimited supplies of armaments and absolute diplomatic support, and with its global lobbying network of Zionist rich and the (sic) powerful, is getting away with its brutal decimation of Palestinians in Gaza and oppression in the West Bank.”

**Fadlullah Wilmot** (Nov. 27) – “In spite of the best efforts of the Israeli and Western propaganda machines, millions of people all over the world are now saying loudly and clearly that the unimaginable atrocities committed by the Israeli military death machine simply cannot continue. There is massive international opposition to the genocide in Gaza and the ethnic cleansing of the West Bank.”

## 6. UNRWA schools radicalise Palestinian children

The curriculum taught in UNRWA schools denies Israel’s legitimacy, incites antisemitism, and encourages violence and jihad. In a study published after the massacre of October 7, IMPACT-se – a research and policy organisation that monitors education around the world – documented statements from more than a dozen UNRWA employees who publicly praised the atrocities. IMPACT-se also identified more than 100 UNRWA employees who promoted hatred and violence on social media prior to the attack.

A study released by UN Watch on Jan. 10 revealed a Telegram group of 3,000 UNRWA teachers in Gaza was replete with posts celebrating the Hamas massacre of October 7 minutes after it began, praising the murderers and rapists as “heroes”, glorifying the “education” the terrorists received, and gleefully sharing photos of dead or captured Israelis. There were reportedly thousands of such posts.

## 7. Hamas manipulates UNRWA’s Gaza operations

Hamas has built tunnels underneath UNRWA schools in Gaza for years, using students as human shields. On Nov. 8, Israeli forces destroyed a Hamas terror tunnel adjacent to an UNRWA-administered school in the Gaza Strip. Further, the group stores rockets inside UNRWA schools and uses school grounds as launchpads for attacks. UNRWA leadership also clamps down on employees whose statements reflect well on Israel or poorly on Hamas. For example, UNRWA recalled its Gaza chief in 2021 after he publicly acknowledged that Israel carried out “precise” and “sophisticated” strikes in order to avoid civilian casualties. Similarly, just weeks after the October 7 massacre, UNRWA reported Hamas officials were removing fuel and medical equipment from an UNRWA facility in Gaza City. Yet the agency quickly deleted the information, likely under pressure from Hamas authorities.

## 8. UNRWA management has a history of scandal

Reports surfaced in 2019 of “credible and corroborated” corruption allegations against senior UNRWA personnel. In an internal review that leaked to the press, UNRWA detailed “sexual misconduct, nepotism, retaliation, discrimination, and other abuses of authority” among its top brass. UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krahenbuhl resigned in the aftermath of an internal investigation. The scandal prompted Switzerland, Belgium, and the Netherlands to suspend their funding. UNRWA has no board of directors to ensure accountability and prevent corruption within the agency.



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AMUST Facebook page (screenshot)



The social media page of *AMUST*’s December 2023 edition (Screenshot)



**Fatima Killeen** (Oct. 27) – “The prolonged terror inflicted on Gaza has exposed the deliberate and systematic targeting of civilians and especially children by Israeli forces... [Israel is] targeting innocent children and their mothers under the pretext of self-defence!... This co-operative blueprint for a genocidal war against the exhausted populace of Gaza, exposes a joint conspiracy [US-Israel] to commit pre-meditated war crimes.”

**Rayana Ajam** (Oct. 31) – “We are witnessing the Israeli apartheid state commit a violent occupation, genocide and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian population... .”

“Disproportionate treatment and institutionalised discrimination cast a shadow on the legitimacy of Israel as an apartheid state, perpetuating Israel’s violent colonial pursuits in Palestine.”

**Daud Batchelor** (Nov. 10) – “In a terrible replay of the Jewish WW2 holocaust, Israeli Zionists are now conducting holocaust massacres against Palestinians, who are fellow Semites... . Israel treats Gaza as a concentration camp, and Palestinians like human animals, similar to genocidal treatment of indigenous Australians by colonial British who killed them in many massacres and took other measures to eradicate them.”

**Kafrawi Abdurrahman Hamzah** (Nov. 28) – “It has now passed more than 40 days of public genocide, ethnic cleansing, apartheid, and bloodshed in Palestine.”

**Ali Kazak**, former head of the Palestinian delegation to Australia (Jan. 8) – Life in Palestine was good until “European Zionists came to our shores, not to live with us, but to colonise our country, ethnically cleanse us from our homeland and racially discriminate against us. With the help of the British colonialists, and through tens of massacres they were able to ethnically cleanse over 70% of our people who were denied their inalienable right to return to their homeland, colonised, oppressed and treated as second-class citizens because they were not Jews.”

**Shakil Ahmad** (Jan. 7) – “If the world could unite against Hitler, why wouldn’t it unite against Israel now? It’s a total deception that Israel is bombing to recover its 240 captives and to eliminate Hamas. It appears that the purpose of bombing hospitals, schools, relief facilities and killing of journalists and relief workers is to kill the Palestinians and to encroach on Gaza for their settlements.”

*AMUST* also ran a very disillusioning article (Nov. 27) by a Muslim school student, Umaima Binte Faroque, who wrote this about the lessons she learnt from her visit to the Sydney Jewish Museum: “Israel’s excuse for its inhumane actions in Palestine parallels that of Nazi Germany’s attempt at excusing the extermination of Jews by claim-

ing they are racially inferior – these are excuses made at the cost of humanity.”

## ANTISEMITISM 101

Zahid Jamil, head of the South Asian Muslim Association of Australia, in his explainer on *AMUST*, “Understanding Jews: Their achievements and hijacking by the Zionists” (Nov. 27), presented an idiosyncratic and rather antisemitic version of Zionist history.

Alluding to the conspiracy that Jews aspire to control the Middle East, Jamil contended that after the 1967 Six-Day War, “The Zionists (sic) movement... became more ambitious promoting the idea of Greater Israel from the Euphrates to the Nile. Using the same tactics of Nazis from whom they had suffered from (sic), Israel and

its supporters ran hate campaigns and demonisation of Muslims in general and Palestinians in particular justifying their occupation of Palestine.”

He then condescendingly ‘lamented’ that, “It is a shame that the majority of this highly intelligent, best educated and rich community [Jews] does not apply the principles of humanity in dealing with Palestinians who they consider as enemies to be eliminated from the land of Palestine.”

His article finished with tropes about Jewish control over world politics, asserting that various pro-Israeli organisations in the US are “embedded in US power structures [and] exert total dominance in favour of US foreign policy in support of the state of Israel.” In Australia, “the highly influential Israeli lobby” has similar power over the government, he claimed.

“Western civilisation extinguishes its underpinning values by failure to denounce Gaza genocide” by Daud Batchelor (Dec. 22) also seemed inspired by antisemitic tropes – “Are you surprised that the US and UK are now under Zionist control, both government and major opposition parties? ... Palestine’s lesson is that Zionists will remove whomever stands in their way, even an ally.”

The metaphor Imam Ali (Dec. 15) used to graphically describe Israel bore a painstaking likeness to Nazi-style propaganda – “The State of Israel resembles a vampire squid on the face of Palestine with blood funnels strategically plugged to the vital organs. Masquerading as a victim itself, Israel is slowly but surely snuffing out life in [the Palestinian Territories].”

Ali concluded by defending Hamas’ October 7 massacre, arguing that it should “be more usefully seen in the context of the fight for freedom from the brutal coloniser— Israel.”

## DISTORTED NARRATIVES

Regular *AMUST* contributor Bilal Cleland boldly

**“The social media page in AMUST’s December edition featured a post praising the Iran-backed Houthi for attacking ships in the Red Sea”**





**Laura Allam**  
@lauraaliam

At today's protest (27/11/23) in Melbourne, this lovely Jewish person gave a very heart-warming speech and was embraced with warm hugs afterwards.

This 'Watermelon Kippah' is more than just a sign of solidarity. It is a message to the world. That Jews stand on the right side of the Palestinian conflict.

Stop trying to divert from the narrative. Stop trying to divide us. This is not a religious battle. It is humans vs monsters.



Left to right: A post by Laura Allam published on AMUST, other social media posts by Laura Allam (screenshots)

claimed (Nov. 25) that “Muslims are not and have never been anti-semitic” – despite all the evidence that some Muslims can be and have been antisemitic in *AMUST* itself.

Based on this misunderstanding of antisemitism and the denial that Muslims can ever be guilty of it, it’s no surprise *AMUST* published an article by Dr Abdullah al-Ahsan (Nov. 2) that relied on the theories of the antisemitic British historian Arnold Toynbee, as well as American anti-Zionist writers John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, to support his own contentions.

In “Unraveling the tapestry: Navigating truth and narrative in the Israel-Palestine conflict” (Nov. 25), Sydney-sider Rashid Siddiqui introduced a warped narrative about October 7.

Hamas’ terror tunnel network in Gaza under schools and hospitals, Siddiqui claimed, is just the “ominous claim of a Global Jihad Conspiracy”. He then falsely asserted that “the Israeli army has said that Hamas eats people’s hearts.” This was a conspiracy theory spread on social media – the IDF never made any such claims. “They [Hamas] put children in ovens and cook them. They have killed old people. But these claims are proving to be false,” said Siddiqui. In fact, there is at least one reported case of a baby being put in an oven, possibly by an Israeli parent who tried to save the baby from invading Hamas killers. And Hamas definitely did kill at least 80 people who were more than 70-years-old on that dark Saturday.

Siddiqui also rehashed a conspiracy theory that was also promoted by the Palestinian Authority, stating that “Now, it is clear that Israeli military killed many Israeli citizens on 7 October. They were not able to understand the situation, shooting blindly.”

Finally, ignoring the clear evidence now available on this issue, he insisted that Israel is lying about “the alleged command and control center under Al Shifa hospital in Gaza.”

### MOCKING THE HOSTAGES

On its Facebook page, which has more than 10,000 followers, *AMUST* ridiculed (Dec. 2) the robust evidence that Hamas terrorists seriously abused Israeli hostages. *AMUST*’s post cynically stated, “If you want a free 5 star luxury inclusive of food holiday just get taken in by Hamas.”

The social media page in *AMUST*’s December edition featured a post praising the Iran-backed Houthi for attacking ships in the Red Sea (“Get you a friend that loves you the way Yemen loves Palestine”) and a ‘coded’ version of the antisemitic slogan “From the river to the sea” hidden in watermelon slices (increasingly used as a pro-Palestinian symbol because the fruit has the same colours as the Palestinian flag).

Another post highlighted on *AMUST* is by Laura Allam, allegedly promoting coexistence with Jews. Yet on her private X (formerly Twitter) account, Allam has been suggesting Israel is worse than Nazi Germany and Prime Minister Netanyahu worse than Hitler, and boosting Hamas propaganda falsely claiming the Israeli hostages the terrorists kidnapped and took to Gaza ‘loved’ their captors.

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# THE BIBLIO FILE

## Innovation Nation at War

**The Art of Military Innovation: Lessons from the Israel Defence Forces**

by **Edward N. Luttwak and Eitan Shamir**

Harvard University Press, Dec. 2023, 288 pp., A\$61.95



**Jonathan Schanzer**

It was not easy to read a book about Israel's military excellence in the wake of the worst military and intelligence failure in the country's history since the 1973 Yom Kippur War. It was also hard to ignore that the book was published by Harvard University, which has been at the centre of an antisemitism scandal that drags on to this day.

But in the wake of the October 7 slaughter perpetrated by the Iran-backed Hamas terrorist organisation, the story of Israel's military innovations must not be forgotten. This is the country that made unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) a staple on every battlefield. It's the country that developed the rear-engine Merkava tank that has forever changed armoured warfare. Israel developed the Trophy active protection system that has protected those tanks, as well as

tanks operated by the United States' soldiers. Similarly, the Israelis developed the helmet-mounted display used in the F-35 multirole fighter flown by the US and other Western allies. The Israelis also developed the remarkable Iron Dome missile defence system that has knocked thousands of threatening rockets out of the sky and away from innocent civilians.

In a sense, it is the success of these and other systems that paved the way for the Hamas assault. The Israelis had negated the group's threat from the skies with Iron Dome. They negated the group's ability to dig commando tunnels into Israel through technology deployed deep beneath the Gaza border. The complex yet streamlined system for gathering signals and geospatial intelligence in Gaza gave Israel yet another edge. But in the end, it was brute force and a long disinformation operation that enabled Hamas to invade southern Israel, slaughter more than 1,200 Israelis, and take another 240 of them

hostage.

This does not mean that Israel's culture of military innovation is now no longer relevant. The opposite is true. The challenges and failures that Israel has endured are what historically inspired some of Israel's most remarkable innovations.

The small population of Israel forced the country to adopt a reserve-centred military force that continues to draw upon the human resources of men and women committed to Israel's defence in ways not seen among other countries. The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) is truly the "people's army". And the morale of that army right now is soaring, despite the tough war it is fighting.

As Edward Luttwak and Eitan Shamir note in *The Art of Military Innovation: Lessons from the Israel Defence Forces*, the agile nature of Israel's armed forces derives from the fact that "large responsibilities are often assigned to low-ranking officers because of the chronic shortage of

**"The small population of Israel forced the country to adopt a reserve-centred military force that continues to draw upon the human resources of men and women committed to Israel's defence in ways not seen among other countries"**

senior officers." This has led inexorably to rapid and innovative problem-solving on the battlefield in real time, including right now in Gaza.

The necessary reliance upon younger commanders to solve problems in battle fed into the *Start-Up Nation* phenomenon, first made famous by authors Dan Senor and Saul Singer. As Luttwak and Shamir observe, it

all comes down to a "mentality that tolerates insubordinate applications of the principle of officer responsibility, and positively encourages the seizing of the initiative, must also favor innovation—even disruptive innovation that forces uncomfortable changes."

Such changes occur rapidly in

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Israel's Iron Dome is an illustration of how rapidly Israel is able to develop and deploy cutting edge military systems compared to other nations (Image: Shutterstock)

Israel. The authors correctly observe that the timetable from concept to production in Israel is almost alarmingly quick. Iron Dome went from concept in 2006 to successful interception in 2011. As we know, the system has since downed thousands of rockets in the subsequent Hamas wars of 2012, 2014, 2021, and the current war. Indeed, it's hard to remember a time when Israel was not able to defend its skies.

Israel, however, lacks the ability to scale that the United States enjoys. The country is simply too small with too few financial resources (despite the 4.5% of GDP it spends on defence). This gave birth to the Operations Technology Working Group, now enshrined in American law. This laudable initiative pairs Israeli innovation with America's ability to produce the systems that help the Pentagon prepare for the challenges ahead.

The working group is now just one element of the "special relationship" between Washington and Jerusalem, which is both wide and deep. The relationship transcends partisanship, even as political tensions have flared in recent years. Indeed, the Biden Administration has voiced its support for Israel, despite a well-organised campaign by the progressive left and its international allies to weaken US backing for the war that Israel calls "Swords of Iron".

The challenging optics of this

war, however, have started to have an impact. The United States is calling for Israel to dial back on its intensity. And that could be a sign of tension to come. It could also be the impetus for domestic production of weapons that Washington may soon be reluctant to provide over the long haul.

Here it is informative to remember the IDF slogan, "plans are merely a basis for changes." This is not just a refrain. It is a philosophy for a military that was forged under fire in 1948 and has not stopped innovating since. Indeed, the IDF is prepared to adapt, whatever comes next.

Of course, Israel's culture of innovation can sometimes backfire. Some weapons ultimately find their way into the hands of Israel's enemies.

Israel was the pioneer of the UAV, having deployed it for the first time in combat in 1980 in the Sinai Peninsula (by then-Brigadier General Ehud Barak). This technology is now being used by Iranian terrorist groups like Hezbollah to attack Israel. This means Israel must not only constantly create new weapons of war. There must also be solutions for when those weapons fall into the wrong hands.

As the Jewish state fights yet another tough battle for the safety and security of its citizens, the innovation is constant. Reports from officers and private sector technologists suggest that we will soon see the unveiling of new systems that were developed within the first three months of the war, with timelines that shattered even some of the country's most impressive records in years past.

As Luttwak and Shamir point out, it's all about the ability to "remove the most obvious obstacle to innovation, the authority of the old over the new." AIR

*Jonathan Schanzer, a former terrorism finance analyst at the United States Department of the Treasury, is senior vice president for research at the nonpartisan think tank the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD). Reprinted from the Washington Free Beacon (freebeacon.com). © FDD, reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*



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# NOTED AND QUOTED

## THE MONTH IN MEDIA

### UNSTATED TRUTHS

An ABC online video report (Jan. 6) and article (Jan. 12) on the history of the two-state solution by former ABC Middle East correspondent Ben Knight omitted key facts.

Knight acknowledged Arab leaders rejected the 1947 UN Partition Plan that would've created an Arab state alongside Israel and went to war instead, resulting in Israel surviving and "Egypt controll[ing] Gaza, while Jordan controlled the West Bank and half of Jerusalem." The obvious missing point was that Egypt and Jordan had 19 years to create a Palestinian state but did not.

His claim that, after Israel won control of the two territories in the 1967 war, "it took until 1991 for everyone to get in the same room" to try to make peace, ignored Arab leaders' vociferous rejection of Israel's offer immediately after the 1967 war to discuss land for peace.

Israeli PM Barak's offer at the 2000 Camp David peace summit to create a Palestinian state – which PLO leader Yasser Arafat rejected – was mentioned.

But Knight then asked, "were there other attempts after Oslo?" and noted only the 2002 "Arab Peace Initiative", which offered "full recognition of Israel in exchange for a Palestinian state, with its capital in east Jerusalem... It's still on the table."

That plan was rejected because, among other things, it insisted on a Palestinian "right of return" to Israel, which would've ended the country's Jewish majority, and was presented as the Second Intifada was raging.

Missing from Knight's story was Israeli PM Ehud Olmert's 2008 peace offer that largely mirrored the Arab plan (without the unconditional right of return), which Palestinian Presi-

dent Mahmoud Abbas admitted he rejected "out of hand".

The 2013-14 negotiations during Barack Obama's presidency when, according to US Middle East envoy Martin Indyk, Israeli PM Netanyahu "sweated bullets" to reach a two-state deal, while Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas had "checked out", were also overlooked.

Knight dubiously claimed peacemaking today is harder because there are "far more religious [Israelis] who believe God gave them the land."

Israelis overwhelmingly support a Palestinian state if it would bring an end to the conflict. Meanwhile, surveys show 75% of Palestinians supported the October 7 massacre of Israelis, revealing the true impediments to peacemaking.

### ROGER, RODGER

Analyst Rodger Shanahan was another who failed to recognise the actual roadblocks to peace, arguing in *Nine Newspapers* (Dec. 29) that while "Palestinians have squandered previous [peace making] opportunities..." also culpable are "successive Israeli governments... encouraging land grabs and illegal settlements."

The Israeli factors are overstated – settlements take up minimal land and have not been significantly expanding geographically, while dismantling some settlements has featured in past Israeli peace plans.

Shanahan also said Israel's war against Hamas involves only sticks and no carrots, which "many Palestinians will see as justifying future attacks." Apparently, he feels Israel should have responded to the October 7 mass terror attack and mass kidnappings by offering the Palestinians "carrots" or rewards.

### SEEING THE LIGHT?

ABC reporter Nicole Johnston, formerly of Al Jazeera, whose past reporting on the Gaza war has often been one-sided and incomplete, was atypically balanced on *ABC News Radio* (Dec. 28) when discussing an Israeli organised media tour of an "extraordinary" four kilometre-long tunnel in Gaza near the border with Israel.

"It's been well known that... no part of Gaza is not ridden with [Hamas'] tunnels," Johnston said.

A rail line inside the tunnel was "clearly" used for "dragging weapons, moving fighters... and we know during the current conflict, they're also hiding hostages under there," she said.

The media tour also visited the Erez Crossing, the main people crossing into Gaza from Israel, which Hamas attacked on Oct. 7, "allowing it to breach the border and then carry out its rampage in southern Israel... large parts of that, of course, were destroyed... they're now being rebuilt by the Israelis," she said.

However, Johnston incorrectly said Israel and Egypt's blockade on Gaza imposed in 2007 was a "siege".

Meanwhile, on *ABC TV* "The World" (Dec. 21), global affairs editor John Lyons' report began with IDF footage of another Hamas tunnel, of which he said, "From outside, everything looks normal. Everything looks like a regular city. Under the heart of Gaza City, according to the Israeli army, lies Hamas' centre of power... These newly discovered tunnels, says Israel, connect the offices and residences of Hamas leaders high on Israel's wanted list."





## FACTUAL FREELANCING

On news.com.au (Dec. 16), freelancer Jamie Seidel's analysis of a statement co-signed by Australia, New Zealand and Canada condemning Israeli settler violence claimed that "Illegal Jewish settlers have killed hundreds of Palestinians... in the occupied West Bank since the October 7 terror attack."

As the ABC website correctly noted (Dec. 17), settlers stand accused of killing eight Palestinians – some in circumstances that appear to be clear self-defence – not hundreds.

## BELABOURING THE POINT

On *Sky News*' website (Jan. 17),

former ALP Senator Stephen Loosley criticised the Albanese Government for rejecting a US request to deploy an Australian warship to repulse Houthi attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea.

Loosley made the telling point that "It's a curious reality that the critics of Western intervention in the Red Sea almost never offer an alternative. Calls for a ceasefire in Gaza are supposed to persuade the Houthis to cease their attacks in the Red Sea. Just as easily, the reverse impact may occur, with the Houthis being emboldened and the attacks escalating."

Meanwhile, in the *Australian Financial Review* (Jan. 17), former trade union leader Michael Easson wrote

that the PA sees Israel "as if the country was another Algeria, with Israelis like the French bound to depart. How can an enduring agreement be possible with this mindset?"

## SEEING RED

In the *Australian* (Jan. 3), Professor Greg Rose and analyst Anthony Bergin called out the West for not confronting Iran's bellicose behaviour in the Red Sea and elsewhere via the use of proxy terror groups, including Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis.

They noted several ways to target the rogue state, including coordinated financial sanctions and a "covert military operation" against Iran's spy



## IN PARLIAMENT

Foreign Minister Senator **Penny Wong** (ALP, SA) – Jan. 18 media conference in Jerusalem: "[Issues discussed] include, obviously, the October 7 attacks and I have repeated Australia's condemnation of those attacks. We have called for the immediate and unconditional release of hostages. We have spoken about a pathway to peace. We have spoken about the importance of a humanitarian ceasefire, which obviously cannot be one-sided, and that we want to see steps towards a sustainable ceasefire. I've spoken about Australians' concerns... Australians are increasingly concerned about the civilian toll and are increasingly concerned about the urgent need for humanitarian access... We have said, as a government, we believe settlements are contrary to international law. We have also consistently said that they are an impediment to peace... We believe that Hamas has no place in the future governance of Gaza. We believe that Hamas is a terrorist organisation which have engaged in atrocities and terrorist acts."

The following speeches were among the many in support of the Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Prohibited Hate Symbols and Other Measures) Bill 2023, introduced earlier that year:

Shadow Minister for Government Services **Paul Fletcher** (Lib., Bradfield) – Nov. 28 – "The Nazi regime's industrialised extermination resulted in the Holocaust, one of the worst crimes committed in history, and the Nazi regime is one of the greatest evils ever visited on humanity. Because of what they represent—this evil, this terror—Nazi symbols are no ordinary symbols. The public display of Nazi symbols is abhorrent to the Australian way of life and has no part in our political discourse. We must condemn Nazi symbols in any form that they are found or are displayed."

Attorney-General **Mark Dreyfus** (ALP, Isaacs) – Nov. 29 – "I find it unthinkable that in this country, which provided refuge to my father, my grandparents and thousands more who fled the Holocaust, some continue to celebrate the ideology of Nazism. Sadly, antisemitism is on the rise... Criminalising the performance of the Nazi salute will complement the other measures in the bill relating to Nazi symbols. Like those symbols, the Nazi salute is widely recognised and used to promote hateful ideologies, recruit followers and convey messages of hatred and violence. It represents the vile ideology of Nazism and conjures fear in many sectors of the Australian community whose predecessors suffered through some of the worst atrocities in history."

**Julian Leeser** (Lib., Berowra) – Nov. 29 – "Antisemitism has been rising in our country for some time. We have witnessed the emergence of ultranationalists on the far right, who use the Nazi symbol and invoke Nazi catchphrases and salutes, and on the far left we see those who think Jewish people are an embodiment of power and privilege. The far left believe their antisemitic arguments are somehow novel, but their arguments are as old as time itself."

**Josh Burns** (ALP, Macnamara) – Nov. 29 – "I think it is important that we... come together in a bipartisan way and send a clear message... that it will never be acceptable in our country to glorify the Nazi regime. Australia stands for tolerance, Australia stands for diversity and Australia stands to protect people's right to hold whatever religion or faith they want."

**Andrew Wallace** (Lib., Fisher) – Nov. 29 – "Terrorist symbols, the Nazi *hakenkreuz*, the *sig rune* and the Nazi salute represent an extreme hate which has inspired some of the worst atrocities in human history. It is a hate which has fed genocide, terrorism, slavery and crimes against humanity. It is a hate which on 7 October inspired one of the most egregious and evil terror attacks in modern history against the people of Israel."



ship, the *Behshad*, which is currently supplying intelligence and weapons to Houthi terrorists attacking commercial shipping in the Red Sea.

Meanwhile, the *Australian Financial Review* (Jan. 5) warned of the urgent need to neutralise the Houthi threat hanging over shipping, pointing out that China is the main beneficiary, and could respond to Western weakness by adopting similar standover tactics in the contested South China Sea.

## TICKED OFF

On Dec. 23, News Corp columnist James Campbell condemned a “report” on the ABC’s Tik Tok account that was “nothing less than a straight-out ad for the boycott of Israeli businesses and businesses that do business in Israel, produced by a reporter holding a big ABC microphone.”

The report by Amal Wehbe – a pro-Palestinian activist before joining the ABC – featured no balance, he said, only restaurant-owner “Oz” who told her, “I worked out I was spending close to 40 to 50 grand a year on Israeli and American product. I’ve been in the boycotting of those products for just under two months.”

After widespread complaints, the ABC removed the clip before reuploading it with added “context”.

Campbell wrote “the reworked version claims – falsely – that [BDS is] a movement ‘that’s campaigning for Israel to leave Occupied Palestinian Territory’ and discourages buying from businesses ‘operating in the West Bank or East Jerusalem’.”

In fact, the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement calls for boycotting all Israel-linked businesses, while its co-founders admit the movement’s real goal is Israel’s elimination and replacement by an Arab majority Palestinian state.

The *Australian*’s Dec. 21 report by Sophie Elsworth quoted the Executive Council of Australian Jewry’s Alex Rychin saying, “Publishing promotional content for the anti-Israel BDS

movement is reckless and grossly unprofessional, particularly at a time when Jewish businesses are facing vandalism and black-listing.”

## WHO’S COUNTING?

In the *Australian* (Jan. 2), Wollongong University’s Professor Greg Rose and RMIT’s Professor of Mathematics Lewi Stone investigated factors affecting “the reliability of information on fatality rates” coming out of Gaza.

They noted that Gaza’s Ministry of Health (MOH) answers only to Hamas and its daily statistics don’t differentiate between combatants and civilians “leaving the impression that nearly all Gazans killed were civilians.”

UN reports also “cannot be trusted”, because they rely on the Gaza MOH, while an analysis of UN reports in October showed many inconsistencies and contradictions, including “More women and children died than there were total fatalities on several days, such as on October 26,” while on “October 29, no males at all” are supposed to have died.

## HISTORY LESSONS

AIJAC’s Colin Rubenstein explained in the *Canberra Times* (Jan. 15), “the Israel Defense Forces have had to fight to gain control over a densely populated terror statelet that Hamas assiduously built up over the past 16 years, with extensive military infrastructure found in every civilian neighbourhood and refugee camp... It has also meant a devastatingly costly conflict for the Gazan civilians who live and work in the neighbourhoods interwoven and undermined by Hamas’ terror tunnel network and other military infrastructure.”

In the *Daily Telegraph* on Dec. 19, Rubenstein addressed the question of aid, noting, “The IDF is already routinely announcing humanitarian pauses of several hours at a time not

dependent on Hamas concessions, as well as providing safe corridors for both evacuations and entry of aid convoys.”

Meanwhile, in the *Australian Financial Review* (Jan. 3), *New York Times* columnist Tom Friedman noted that “in 2005, Israel “unilateral[ly] withdr[ew]. . . all Israeli forces and settlements from Gaza,” meaning that for the first time “Palestinians were left. . . with total control over a piece of land.”

Hamas could’ve “embraced [the] Oslo [peace process] and chosen to build its own Dubai,” said Friedman, but the terrorist organisation “has never wavered from being more interested in destroying the Jewish state than in building a Palestinian one.”

## QUOTABLE

On Dec. 26, the News Corp papers quoted AIJAC’s Colin Rubenstein’s expression of “deep. . . disappoint[ment]” at two protesters, one armed with a box cutter, who stormed the stage during the Melbourne Carols by Candlelight on Christmas Eve.

In the *Australian* (Jan. 2), Rubenstein was quoted welcoming a proposed federal religious discrimination bill, saying, “sadly, there have been recent examples of such hate speech from religious figures, against Jews and other minorities.”

The previous day in the *Australian*, Rubenstein said vandals who graffitied and smashed the doors of Melbourne’s US Consulate have aligned themselves with terrorists.

The *Australian* website (Jan. 6) noted Rubenstein’s criticism of a Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras committee statement that called for a ceasefire but ignored Hamas’ October 7 massacre.

## NO JOY

On Dec. 28, on the Gaza-Egyptian border, ABC Middle East correspon-

dent Tom Joyner filed a one-sided report for *ABC TV*.

Joyner said, “this gate has been a symbol of why so many people in Gaza are suffering. It’s the only way out for people trying to escape. At the same time, it’s really the main way in for trucks trying to deliver life-saving aid. On average, about 100 trucks carrying essential supplies are allowed through here each day, a fraction of what’s required. The UN says Israel’s total siege of the territory has driven hunger to levels it’s previously not seen anywhere in the world.”

What Joyner omitted was that Egypt refuses to let Palestinians without foreign passports exit Gaza, the delays are on the Egyptian side of the border and Israel says it will admit as many aid trucks as agencies are able to bring in. He didn’t even inform viewers about Israeli concerns – proven by video footage and the testimony of Gazans themselves – that Hamas steals incoming aid.

## WINGING IT

In the *Canberra Times* (Dec. 9), analyst Clive Williams attacked Australia’s decision last year to proscribe the political wing of Hamas as part of that terrorist organisation, arguing it was damaging to “the urgent need for political progress on the Israel/Palestine issue.”

But as AIJAC’s Oved Lobel noted in his article published by the *Canberra Times* (Dec. 16), “Hamas... cannot ever be part of any diplomatic solution... it has made clear in word and deed since the 1980s... its *raison d’être* [is] to block any territorial compromise that could see a Palestinian state established alongside Israel – in pursuit of its goal of destroying Israel and replacing it with an Islamist state.” Furthermore, Lobel explained, “Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the founder of Hamas, rejected any distinction between the so-called ‘wings’ of Hamas.”

On Jan. 16, Williams absurdly claimed in the same paper that “Israel

wants to replace Hamas in Gaza with the Palestinian Authority because it is easier for Israel and the US to control.”

First of all, Israel has actually been sceptical of US plans to put the PA in charge of Gaza. But more importantly, surely the October 7 massacre gave Israel good reasons to prefer the PA over Hamas.

## FELLOWSHIP ON DISPLAY

A bipartisan group of Labor and Liberal Federal MPs who visited Israel including the October 7 massacre sites on an AIJAC organised Rambam Israel Fellowship Program study tour in December – where they also met Palestinian Authority officials – received widespread media coverage.

In the *West Australian* and the *Advertiser* (Dec. 12) and the *Australian* (Dec. 18), Shadow Foreign Minister Simon Birmingham wrote of the importance of the visit: “Israel has an inherent right to self-defence, which requires the removal of Hamas as an ever-present terrorist threat. No country could live with such a nearby threat after such an atrocity. Israel needs to hear not just words of support, but to see that fellow liberal democracies like Australia demonstrate support for its existence, security and rights.”

In the *Courier Mail* (Dec. 20), Liberal MP Andrew Wallace wrote, “Every drop of civilian blood is on the hands of Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran, and their allies. Yet [from] the UN to the schools and streets of Australia... [they are]... blaming Israel for the lives lost... Ask yourself who celebrated the attacks on October 7: Iran, Islamic extremists, white supremacists, Russia.”

In a *West Australian* newspaper report (Dec. 17), Labor MP Josh Burns was quoted saying “after seeing what (Hamas) did to... peaceful civilians living on the border... what Israel wants from the international community is time... to try and finish the removal of Hamas from power.”

## SAVAGE CRITICISM

Meanwhile, on Jan. 16, former Victorian Liberal Party President Michael Kroger pointed out on *Sky News Australia* approximately 2,000 rockets have been fired at Israel from Lebanon since October 7. On Jan. 18, after Australian FM Penny Wong’s announcement of a further \$21 million in aid to the Palestinians, Kroger told *Sky* it “will go straight to Hamas.” On Jan. 21, Kroger – who visited the Oct. 7 massacre sites in Israel – referred to Hamas terrorists as “savages” on *Sky News’* “Outsiders”.

## YOU DON’T KNOW JACK

*Canberra Times* columnist Jack Waterford (Dec. 30) spouted a litany of false claims that misrepresented Zionism, held the Jewish state solely responsible for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and even likened Israeli soldiers to the Hamas terrorists who carried out the October 7 massacre.

Waterford ignored the Arab responsibility for sparking the 1948 war and spoke of how many “Palestinians... were hunted out of their homes, never to be allowed to return, when Israel was created.”

Zionism – the right of Jews to a state where they became a people and have lived for 3,500 years – was based on the claim that “the Jewish people have a special Biblically based right to Palestine” he said, and insisted opposing it “is not antisemitic, despite the efforts of a powerful lobby to say so.”

Waterford claimed Hamas “is not a state actor” and Israel has no “right to fire indiscriminately into a crowd, a street, a school or a hospital which may contain some member of Hamas” or withhold “vital supplies needed to sustain the civilian population, even if there is a risk that some of it may feed Hamas members.”

Israel does none of those things.

Allon Lee

## COURTING PUBLICITY

Even if South Africa’s pernicious referral of Israel to the International Court of Justice in the Hague, falsely accusing the Jewish state of carrying out genocide in Gaza, ultimately fails, it will have succeeded in ensuring much negative publicity for Israel.

In the *Canberra Times* (Jan. 10), Professor of International Law Greg Rose condemned South Africa’s case against Israel as “law-fare”, saying it belonged in *Alice in Wonderland*.

Rose wrote that it is “Jews [who] are to be exterminated but Israel is accused of genocide. Any informed person knows that the fantasy of genocide is formally embedded in the Hamas Charter.” He accused South Africa of “seem[ing] to support the Hamas acts and conspiracy to commit genocide against Jews. It hosted Hamas leaders, Khaled Mashal and Abu Marzouk, 10 days after Hamas launched its October 7 war on Israel.”

In contrast, an online article (Jan. 15) by ABC Global Affairs Editor John Lyons was more credulous about Pretoria’s motives, writing, “having lived under apartheid for decades, South Africans know what it is to be oppressed without the rights of the ruling power.”

Earlier, in the *Canberra Times* (Jan. 13), Medical Association for Prevention of War President Sue Wareham one-sidedly insisted, “South Africa has provided substantial evidence of... statements of genocidal intent from Israeli leaders.”

ABC online analyses relied on academics. Journalist Audrey Courty’s online feature (Jan. 11) quoted University of South Australia lecturer Juliette McIntyre explaining proving genocide requires showing intent, “it’s not enough to simply kill enormous numbers of people.”

McIntyre noted that, in the opinion of Wollongong University’s Markus Wagner, who used to work for former Israeli Supreme Court justice Aharon Barak, “South Africa ‘goes a long way’ toward proving intent” [but] “it’s ultimately ‘a weak case’.”

ABC *Radio* “World Today” (Jan. 12) quoted University of Western Australia academic Dr Melanie O’Brien saying South Africa is accusing Israel “not just about what has happened since the 7th of October, but” over “many years of what has been termed by many human rights organisations as apartheid... and regular attacks against... Palestinian[s].”

**“Professor of International Law Greg Rose condemned South Africa’s case against Israel as ‘law-fare’, saying it belonged in *Alice in Wonderland*”**

On ABC *Radio National* “Breakfast” (Jan. 17), former Human Rights Watch chief Ken Roth did not directly say Israel was guilty of genocide, but implied it, accusing it of not letting in sufficient amounts of food and asking “why are they using 2,000 pound bombs over and over?”

The *Guardian Australia* ran Roth’s op-ed (Jan. 14), which said, “Israel, understandably, thinks of genocide in terms of the Holocaust, but the ‘final solution’ is not the only version. Genocide can be a means, not only an end.”

*Pedestrian* (Jan. 15) absurdly claimed that “Israel’s attacks on Palestine have now become the deadliest conflict in the 21st Century.”

In the *Australian Financial Review* (Jan. 20), *New York Times* columnist Bret Stephens warned against accepting South Africa’s claims, saying, “It’s obscene because it perverts the definition of genocide, which is precise: ‘acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such.’ Notice two key features of this definition: It speaks of *acts* whereas part of the genocide case against Israel involves the misinterpretation of quotes from Israeli officials who have vowed Hamas’s elimination... And it uses the term *as such* – meaning the acts are genocidal only if they are directed at Palestinians *as* Palestinians, not as members of Hamas or, heartbreakingly, as collateral deaths in attempts to destroy Hamas.”

On Jan. 16, the *Australian Financial Review* quoted AIJAC’s Colin Rubenstein questioning why the Albanese Government refused to publicly reject the premise of the case, saying, “the government is claiming that it cannot comment on an ICJ case currently being considered when, not only have several of our allies done so, but this Australian government itself commented repeatedly on Ukraine’s ongoing ICJ case against Russia.”

On Jan. 15, three days after Israel and South Africa had both presented their cases, *SBS TV* “News in Arabic” reported on South Africa’s presentation at the ICJ, but not Israel’s. *SBS TV* “World News” ran reports on Jan. 12 and 13 covering both presentations.

In the *Australian* (Jan. 19), Henry Ergas reviewed the history of the charge of genocide since the word was invented in 1944 by Polish Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin. Ergas blamed the former Soviet Union for beginning the trend of weaponising the term against Israel and “watering down the evidentiary requirements” to do so.



# THE LAST WORD

Seth Mandel

## “FOOTBALLING WHILE JEWISH” AND OTHER CRIMES

The aftermath of October 7 has cured the Jewish community of any expectation of “solidarity”. Yet even by our new and extremely low standards, the fact that the world is retaliating against all things Jewish or Israeli ought to elicit a *bit* more outrage.

In mid-January, the International Ice Hockey Federation announced that Israel’s under-20 men’s team would be barred from its upcoming tournament in Bulgaria over “security concerns”. Meaning: The IIHF knows that Jews are targets and it does not have the desire to protect them or other players from potential attacks. All that cost, paperwork, you know how it is. *[After legal action was launched against the IIHF, the decision to bar the Israeli team was reversed on Jan. 17 – Ed.]*

The NHL, North America’s pro league, had some concerns: “As we understand it, the decision is intended to be temporary in nature and rests solely on the IIHF’s overriding concern for the safety and security of all of its stakeholders... Importantly, we also have been assured that the decision is not intended to be a sanction against the Israeli Federation.”

Ah, well, in that case, gee, how wonderful. I mean, if it’s not *intended* to be a sanction, and banning the Jews is *only* temporary, we can all rest easy.

A few days later, Israeli-born soccer star Sagiv Jehezkel returned home to Israel to great fanfare. He had been playing for a Turkish professional team before he suddenly had to flee the country after scoring a goal. Usually scoring a goal is a good thing in soccer. But Jehezkel showed the camera that he had written “100 days” with a Star of David on his wrist, to let the Gaza hostages know he hasn’t forgotten them. He was immediately arrested, had his contract cancelled, and was sent back to Israel.



Israeli soccer player Sagiv Jehezkel: Fired, arrested and deported for calling attention to the Israeli hostages in Gaza (Image: X/ Twitter)

David Teeger wasn’t arrested or deported. But the under-19 captain of South Africa’s cricket team is no longer the captain. Cricket South Africa “decided that David should

be relieved of the captaincy for the tournament.” Why? Because he’s Jewish, and you know how people can be about the Jews: “We have been advised that protests related to the war in Gaza can be anticipated at the venues for the tournament. We have also been advised that they are likely to focus on ... David Teeger.” *[Ed. Note: Controversy had originally arisen after Teeger made comments supportive of Israeli soldiers at a Jewish awards ceremony.]*

South Africa, you’ll note, is the country currently prosecuting Israel for “genocide”.

You’d be surprised how sensitive people can be about the possibility they will accidentally see or hear a Jewish person. In December, the UK *Telegraph* reported that British Airways had decided to “pause” a plan to include the Jewish-themed sitcom *Hapless* in its in-flight entertainment offerings after October 7. The airline said it didn’t want to “take sides”.

The series it chose not to show is about a Jewish newspaper in London. I don’t know how to pretend this decision isn’t completely insane.

“Pause” is a word that comes up a lot these days in the post-October 7 entertainment industry. *Haaretz* reports that “Netflix has hit the pause button on broadcasting several Israeli series. One of them is the action drama “Border Patrol”, which it acquired in September. Another is the original Israeli comedy drama “Through Fire and Water,” which was scheduled to premiere on Netflix in early November but was postponed.

Netflix employees reportedly told Israeli producers, “we have to stop and wait for better days.”

Perhaps after some time has gone by, everyone will be more comfortable watching actors portray Jewish characters, or playing hockey or soccer or cricket with Jewish athletes. I don’t think we have much to worry about, though: No one seems particularly bothered by it all. AIR

*Seth Mandel is senior editor of Commentary. © Commentary (commentarymagazine.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*



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