

DISARMING HEZBOLLAH

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Israel fights to enable its northern
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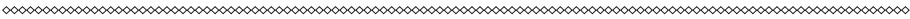
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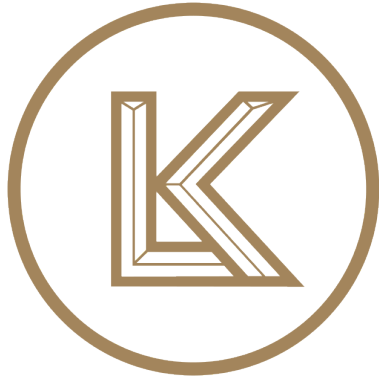
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WITH COMPLIMENTS



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Robert and Ruth Magid



EDITOR'S NOTE

November's *AIR* focuses on Israel's current war with Hezbollah in Lebanon – a conflict long predicted, given Hezbollah's unrelenting daily missile, rocket and drone fire on northern Israel since October 8, 2023.

Ilan Evyatar explains why this conflict appears to represent a major change in Israel's strategic approach, not only to Hezbollah, but to the Iranian axis' entire "Ring of Fire", assembled to target Israel, while top US-based expert Matthew Levitt assesses the extent of the damage done to Hezbollah so far. Plus, Lebanon specialist Hanin Ghaddar explores how this conflict could be an opportunity to free Lebanon from Hezbollah's yoke, and Oved Lobel assesses what polls tell us about the attitudes of the Lebanese toward Hezbollah, Israel and Iran.

Also featured this month is antisemitism expert Dave Rich's take on what we have learned about the anti-Israel activist movement after a year of protests sparked by October 7, while Calev Ben-Dor reviews the literature sparked by that massacre. Finally, don't miss Allon Lee's review of an important documentary on the Nova Festival massacre, Ran Porat's exposé of some Sydney clerics who lionised slain terrorist kingpin Hassan Nasrallah, and our interview with top military expert John Spencer on Israel's tactics and policies in Gaza and Lebanon.

Let us know what you think of any aspect of this edition at editorial@aijac.org.au.

Tzvi Fleischer

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An Israeli soldier from an EOD (explosive ordnance disposal) unit poses with a weapon used by Hezbollah seized during combat operations in Lebanon at a base in southern Israel, Oct.

9, 2024. (Image: AP Photo/Maya Alleruzzo)

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Print Post Approved – 100007869www.aijac.org.au**FROM THE EDITORIAL CHAIRMAN**
COLIN RUBENSTEIN**ENDING THE “RING OF FIRE”**

Lessons must be drawn from Iran’s launching of some 200 ballistic missiles against Israel on October 3, Teheran’s second such attack since April, as well as what Israel has discovered about Hezbollah’s plans and preparations for war during its so-far highly successful recent campaign against this Lebanese proxy of Iran.

Before the current war, Iran had a vast regional war plan against Israel in place, based on a “Ring of Fire” built of proxy armies. This plan had taken decades and hundreds of billions of dollars of military investment to establish. Its primary purpose was very clear and Iran did not hide it – surrounding, slowly overwhelming and ultimately destroying Israel. The Iranians even set up a clock in one of Teheran’s main squares constantly counting down to Israel’s supposed demise in 2040, as predicted by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

While the “Ring of Fire” strategy was mostly complete by last year, Iran had been holding off on its war plans, likely in order to protect its nuclear weapons program, which is currently in an advanced yet still vulnerable stage. Completing its atomic weapons capabilities would make the “ring” all but impregnable by giving Iran the ability to deter any possible counterattack through nuclear threats.

According to most analysts, on October 7, 2023, Hamas jumped the gun and activated its part of the plan on its own initiative, hoping the rest of the axis would also be drawn into the war.

Hezbollah, a much stronger terror army than Hamas with even more ambitious invasion plans, was caught unprepared and ultimately chose not to attempt a ground attack – though it reportedly made preparations to do so late last year.

Nonetheless, heeding Hamas’ call, from Oct. 8, Hezbollah began attacking Israel’s northern towns with rockets, missiles and drones on a daily basis, displacing more than 60,000 Israelis. Over time, Iran mobilised the rest of its proxy axis into the war through missile and drone attacks on Israel, as well as attacks on merchant shipping.

Israel had a very rude awakening – not only on October 7, but also following Oct. 8, as Iran encouraged its other proxies to begin a low-intensity regional war. The West, including Australia, should now also wake up from its slumber-like complacency vis-à-vis Iran, its proxies and what they are attempting to do via the “Ring of Fire”.

Under the Albanese Government, Australia’s policies with respect to the Middle East have been based on some dangerous fallacies.

One misconception is that, once war breaks out, ceasefires are the best tool to de-escalate and restore stability. War is always horrible and almost never desirable – but it is simplistic indeed to believe the solution to the horrors of war is to, in effect, shout “stop fighting right now!” rather than deal with the actual causes.

Ceasefires were in place with both Hamas and Hezbollah before October 7. They did not create stability because the forces of “resistance” have no interest in stability, only preparation for the next phase of war.

The Iranian Islamist-jihadist “axis of resistance” views war as part of its religious obligation to erase any non-Muslim control over what it considers “Muslim” land. Periods of calm only provide opportunities to regroup and rearm to reignite the eternal war at a more opportune time.

Moreover, calling for a ceasefire with such groups and imagining it will lead to the negotiation of stable diplomatic arrangements is a pipe dream. For example, the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah war ended with one such hopeful diplomatic arrangement – UN Secu-



rity Council Resolution 1701. It was impressive on paper, but Hezbollah and Iran completely disregarded their obligations under it from day one, and no international effort was made to enforce compliance. The result has been Hezbollah dominance of Lebanon, inexorably leading to the current conflict.

Thus, when our Foreign Minister calls for an end to the “cycle of violence”, she not only undermines the essential principle of self-defence, but inadvertently assists the Iranian strategy of patiently wearing down Israel’s will to fight through a long war of attrition.

Another fallacy is the claim that the lack of a Palestinian state is the main cause of strife and unrest in the Middle East.

None of the actors in the Iranian axis attacking Israel on seven fronts see the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza alongside Israel as their goal – only the destruction of Israel. Should the Palestinian leadership finally listen to reason and stop rejecting Israel’s repeated peace offers based on two states for two peoples, Iran and its jihadist proxies would seek to exploit such a development by empowering extremist elements inside that state to continue the fight to eradicate Israel.

This happened after Israel withdrew completely from Gaza in 2005, and it is happening now in the West Bank, where Iran has been smuggling large amounts of arms and funding through Jordan to build up terror groups that openly flout Palestinian Authority rule.

The two-state paradigm remains the most promising long-term goal, but it can’t actually be achieved if the violent Palestinian rejectionists and their Iranian patrons


aren’t physically and politically thwarted before, during and after its implementation.

Israel’s bold and highly effective moves against Hezbollah, Iran’s most important proxy, have damaged the Iranian “Ring of Fire” plan severely in a way the Islamic regime never expected. There is now a chance that Lebanon can be rescued from being a de facto Iranian satellite under Hezbollah’s thumb – as well as a failed state thanks to that Hezbollah domination.

Hamas is on the ropes in Gaza, with all its brigades now dismantled and almost all its leadership dead. Unless a premature ceasefire allows it to regroup, it can likely be pre-

vented from again turning the enclave into a vast terror base. Reconstruction will be a huge task, but could create a better future for Palestinians and could be an important first step towards eventual statehood. Yet this is only true if Hamas is not allowed to access and divert the resources that need to flow into Gaza to rebuild, in terms of both infrastructure and a more open political culture.

Anyone who cares about either regional stability or a two-state peace – or the welfare of Palestinians and Lebanese – should thus desperately want Israel’s increasingly successful war against the Iranian “Ring of Fire” to fully achieve its aims in both Gaza and Lebanon.

Furthermore, Iran’s naked aggression against Israel should be the occasion for the institution of long-overdue, serious international efforts to force Iran to verifiably end its nearly completed drive to create nuclear weapons – which again can only destroy any hopes of regional stability or a two-state peace. 

“Anyone who cares about either regional stability or a two-state peace... should want Israel’s increasingly successful war against the Iranian ‘Ring of Fire’ to fully achieve its aims”

“” WORD FOR WORD

“I say to you, the people of Lebanon: Free your country from Hezbollah so that this war can end... We have degraded Hezbollah’s capabilities; we took out thousands of terrorists, including Nasrallah himself, and Nasrallah’s replacement, and the replacement of his replacement.”

Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu (BBC, Oct. 9).

“The Muslim world have lost... a prominent standard-bearer, and a remarkable leader... The path of this blessed martyr in the struggle against the tyrants and oppressors... will endure and bear fruit, and the vile entity of the Zionist regime will not remain triumphant.”

Iranian Ambassador to Australia Ahmad Sadeghi on the death of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah (Twitter/X, Sept. 28).

“The Iranian attack was aggressive but inaccurate. In contrast,

our attack will be deadly, pinpoint accurate, and most importantly, surprising – they will not know what happened or how it happened. They will just see the results.”

Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant (Jerusalem Post, Oct. 9).

“Palestinian history is made of cycles. We go through phases where we lose martyrs and we lose part of our military capabilities, but then the Palestinian spirit rises again, like the phoenix, thanks to God.”

Senior Hamas official Khaled Meshaal (Reuters, Oct. 8).

“It has already been a year – a full year of heartbreak and pain. A year since the morning of Simchat Torah, which turned into the day of our disaster... A year since a murderous enemy entered our homes, burned and tortured, raped and wounded, slaughtered and kidnapped; all with monstrous and cruel glee. Until my last day, I will be haunted by the smell of burnt bodies and the sight of pools of blood, alongside family photos and children’s books – in the paradise that turned into Hell.”

Israeli President Isaac Herzog (Jerusalem Post, Oct. 7).





SCRIBBLINGS

Tzvi Fleischer

RECALLING HEZBOLLAH ANTISEMITISM

Hezbollah is hopefully on the ropes in the wake of Israel's apparently successful campaign against it, and especially the elimination of key leaders, starting first and foremost with Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah, killed on September 29. There has been a lot of public comment on what Hezbollah is, and who Nasrallah was, some of it informative, other examples less so.

Yet one aspect that is almost never talked about is the blatant antisemitism that Hezbollah and Nasrallah spread – just as Hezbollah's patron, the Iranian regime does, as this column has previously documented. Indeed, the *New York Times*' obituary of Nasrallah falsely claimed he supported a "Palestine with equality for Muslims, Jews, and Christians." In fact, Nasrallah has repeatedly made it clear he loathes Jews, not just "Zionists", and demands the Jews of Israel be either killed or ethnically cleansed.

Quotes from Nasrallah illustrate this – and symbolise the antisemitic sewage coming out of Hezbollah and its outlets such as *al-Manar* TV, on a regular basis.

Quotes from Nasrallah illustrate this – and symbolise the antisemitic sewage coming out of Hezbollah and its outlets such as *al-Manar* TV, on a regular basis.

Nasrallah himself emphasised he was targeting Jews, not just Israelis, in one of his speeches on Sept. 13, 1997:

If we search the entire globe for a more cowardly, lowly, weak and frail individual in his spirit, mind, ideology and religion, we will never find anyone like the Jew – and I am not saying the Israeli: we have to know the enemy we are fighting.

A few years later, in October 2002, he made it clear that he believes God had a plan for all the Jews to gather in Israel so that Muslims can destroy them:

But I tell you, there are signs to guide us in the Islamic prophecies and not just the Jewish prophecies indicating that this Israeli state will be established and that the Jews from the entire world will come to occupied Palestine. But this will not be done for their antichrist to rule. God Almighty wanted to save you the trouble of finding them all over the world. They will gather up in one place and there will be a decisive battle...

In a previous speech, on April 9, 2000, while calling Israel a "cancerous tumour" responsible for all the "major disasters of the region," he also said he was open to the mere ethnic cleansing of Israel's Jews:

Let the Yemenite Jews return to Yemen, the Moroccan Jews to Morocco, the Ethiopian Jews to Ethiopia, the European Jews to

Europe, and the American Jews to America.

He also said coexistence with Jews was impossible because scripture says they are evil:

Anyone who reads the Koran and the holy writings of the monotheistic religions sees what they did to the prophets, and what acts of madness and slaughter the Jews carried out throughout history... Anyone who reads these texts cannot think of co-existence with them.

The same speech made it clear that Holocaust denial was also part of Nasrallah and Hezbollah's worldview:

The Jews invented the legend of the Nazi atrocities... They can speak of fabricated or exaggerated massacres that occurred during the Second World War, but we must not forget the massacres that they committed against us and the peoples of the region which are documented and proven...

But of course, we do not need speeches to prove the essential antisemitism of Nasrallah and Hezbollah, because there is concrete

proof – in 1994, Hezbollah, led by Nasrallah, bombed the AMIA building in Buenos Aires, the main Jewish community centre in Argentina, killing 85 people and injuring more than 300. It doesn't get more antisemitic than that.

This antisemitism needs to be acknowledged, because it shows why those who assume diplomatic compromise and peaceful coexistence could occur if only Israel showed more good will and "restraint" are ignoring the reality of Hezbollah's – and Hamas', and the Iranian regime's – entrenched beliefs that make this impossible.

THE PA'S CONTRADICTIONARY TAKE ON THE OCTOBER 7 ANNIVERSARY

A theme this column has pursued over recent months is documenting how the rhetoric coming out of the supposedly more moderate Palestinian Authority (PA) in Ramallah appears all but indistinguishable from what Hamas has been saying. So here are a couple of examples of some rather contradictory things official PA sources had to say about October 7 in the lead up to the first anniversary of Hamas' murderous attacks.

A ruling party official spoke on official PA-TV to present October 7 as a memorial day to commemorate how Palestinians, not Israelis, were victimised. Fatah Revolutionary Council member Tayseer Nasrallah told PA-TV (Sept. 22):

"[On October 7] we will commemorate the anniversary of the massacre, the new Nakba, the disaster that befell the Palestinian people, on the first anniversary. The Palestinians worldwide... need to be the spearhead of the global activity to aid the Pal-



Nasrallah's speeches show he was not only a terrorist leader but an explicitly antisemitic one (Image: Mohammad Kassir/ Shutterstock)

estinian people and of the effort to commemorate this massacre, this Nakba.” (Source: Palestinian Media Watch).

By contrast, another official from the same Fatah party, led by PA President Mahmoud Abbas, called to celebrate October 7 as a great victory that united Palestinians in “resistance” in an interview with a pro-Hezbollah Lebanese outlet, adding “God bless it”. Fatah Central Committee member Abbas Zaki on *al-Manar* TV (Sept. 14):

October 7 has shuffled the cards, God bless it... Those who are abroad are taking part in demonstrations, and the people here are taking part in this glorious feat, either with weapons or without... It used to be forbidden to carry weapons, or even a knife. But now, Allah be praised, we hear that young people are erupting – despite decisions from above – and they are acting as if we had the resources to fight that country [Israel]... I thank Allah that our people are steadfast, and that our people have faith in victory, no matter how great the losses are.

AIR



DECONSTRUCTION ZONE

Jamie Hyams

QUESTIONS I CAN'T ANSWER

In the immediate aftermath of the October 7 Hamas atrocities, two questions were predominant – how did it happen, and how could people treat others so horrifically and barbarically? However, in the months that followed, as Israel carried out its war of self-defence to ensure Hamas could not carry out its vows to conduct similar attacks “again and again”, and to stop Hezbollah’s rockets keeping Israel’s northern residents homeless, the conduct of others raised other, equally baffling questions.

The ratio of combatants to civilians killed in Gaza is reportedly somewhere around one to one, far better than other examples of modern urban warfare, because Israel takes unprecedented measures to evacuate civilians away from the fighting. So why harshly condemn Israel for civilian casualties yet ignore the Hamas human shield tactics responsible for those casualties?

Why do so many treat claims from the Hamas terrorists as gospel truth, even after they’ve been repeatedly proven to be liars, yet treat Israeli statements as unverified claims?

Why continue to parrot the Hamas lie that 70% of the Gaza casualties are women and children when the UN abandoned that statistic in April?

Why, having rightly demanded Hamas have no role in Gaza’s future, demand a ceasefire that would leave it in power?

Why, in all the footage from Gaza, do we never see any armed Palestinians?

Israeli statistics show more than enough food is entering Gaza, the UN-linked Integrated Food Security Phase

Classification organisation, which assesses famine, found there is no famine in Gaza, and there is overwhelming evidence Hamas steals more than half of all aid. So why keep accusing Israel of deliberately causing famine in Gaza?

Jewish communal groups have made it clear they agree with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism where it states that criticism of Israel that is similar to that made against any other country is not antisemitism. So why do papers like the *Age*, *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Canberra Times* insist on running columns, opinion pieces and letters belittling antisemitism by claiming Zionists always label all criticism of Israel as antisemitism? And why do so many critics of the IHRA working definition insist it labels all criticism of Israel as antisemitism despite it saying the exact opposite?

In fact, why are people who would never dream of telling women what constitutes misogyny, or defining homophobia for members of the LGBTQI community, or indeed explaining to any minority the boundaries of bigotry they suffer, so keen to tell Jews what is and isn’t antisemitism?

Why are some media outlets so much more interested in the views of a tiny fringe of anti-Israel Jews than those of the Jewish mainstream?

Why keep claiming the International Court of Justice said it was plausible Israel is committing genocide after the Court’s former President clarified the Court said only that the Palestinians had a plausible right to be protected from genocide?

If the anti-Israel demonstrators are really peace protestors, as they claim, why don’t they ever demand Hamas or Hezbollah cease fire, or Hamas release the hostages?

Why insist only UNRWA can meet the needs of Gazans, when all other refugees are catered for by UNHCR, which is not thoroughly infiltrated by terrorists as UNRWA is?

How can International Criminal Court Chief Prosecutor Karim Khan defend seeking arrest warrants for Israeli leaders by saying it’s important to hold all countries to the same standard, when the ICC’s jurisdiction only covers leaders of states whose legal systems can’t hold them to account, as Israel’s clearly can? In other words, his whole request is about holding Israel to a different standard.

Why did those who insisted on focussing “All eyes on Rafah” when Israel was preparing to attack Hamas’ last stronghold there, suddenly take their eyes off Rafah when Israel successfully evacuated its civilians, and when Hamas terrorists murdered six hostages there?

Why is it only an “escalation” in Lebanon when Israel hits back after nearly 12 months of unprovoked (mainly Hezbollah) rocket, missile and drone attacks?

Why is it cause for celebration when the US kills terrorist leaders such as al-Qaeda and ISIS heads, but cause for concern when Israel kills their Hezbollah and Hamas equivalents?



Why call Israel's pagers attack a war crime when only Hezbollah terrorists were given pagers? Are those making this claim really just disappointed with Israel's success against Hezbollah?

There's really one question that covers all this: Why is Israel subjected to different standards from every other country?

AIR

ASIA WATCH

Michael Shannon

SAME OLD PROBLEM

While Thai politics over the past two decades has been marked by instability, with two military coups, plus royalist and judicial interventions, one issue remains a constant – the ongoing insurgency in the country's largely Muslim Malay southernmost provinces.

The region has seen over 7,500 violent deaths since 2004, when the insurgency ignited, through to 2023, according to the Deep South Watch, a local monitoring group. It reported over 22,200 incidents of unrest that led to 14,000 injuries during that period.

Peace talks between the Thai government and separatist groups began in 2013 but have made painstakingly slow and limited progress, amid various changes of government. The current dialogue, which began in 2020, involves direct, Malaysia-brokered negotiations between Thai representatives and the Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN), the region's major separatist group.

The abrupt change in prime minister in August, which saw PM Srettha Thavisin removed from office for what the Constitutional Court deemed was a gross ethical violation in appointing a convicted felon to his cabinet, is unlikely to impact the southern peace talks, observers say. The current Pheu Thai-led government elected in September 2023 campaigned on populist economic policies, including promised cash handouts.

Srettha has been succeeded by Paetongtarn "Ung Ing" Shinawatra, the third member of the Shinawatra family to hold Thailand's top political office – her father Thaksin and aunt Yingluck were both removed by military coups.

So far, the only indication of the Government's intentions lies in the 5.78 billion baht (A\$254.9 million) in the 2025 fiscal year budget to address issues in the southern border provinces, with the declared goal of reducing violence and loss of life by 80%.

The appointment of Chatchai Bangchud as the first civilian head of the Thai negotiating panel in late 2023 was seen as a positive step. While concurrently serving as deputy secretary-general of the National Security Council, Chatchai succeeded in getting the BRN to agree to a frame-

work for the peace process, known officially as the Joint Comprehensive Plan towards Peace (JCPP). However, the removal of Srettha and his ministers means the JCPP will have to wait until the new cabinet reinstates Chatchai or appoints a new chief negotiator.

Then the focus turns to harder issues – the details of achieving a cessation of hostilities; a public consultation process; and discussions toward finding a political solution in settling the conflict.

A parliamentary ad hoc committee tasked with coming up with recommendations on how to improve the peace talks is said to be taking a very progressive approach, with suggestions for the government to open up social, cultural, and political space for the Malays in the far south as a way to win hearts and minds of a people who continue to reject identifying with the Thai nation-state.

The long-standing default policy of assimilation – encouraging 'Thai' characteristics among the ethnic Malays – has not borne fruit. The four provinces in this historically contested region – Pattani, Narathiwat and Yala, as well as four districts in Songkhla province – lie adjacent to the Malaysian states of Perlis, Kedah, Perak and Kelantan, which form an integral part of the conservative Malay heartland. For the Muslims of this region, their religion and their Malay identity are inseparable.

Any call for substantial changes will likely face resistance, as Thai bureaucrats are generally reluctant to tamper with the country's highly centralised governing structure, and wary of granting the far south any special status that could set a precedent for other regions.

Likewise, hardliners in the government and military see the peace talks as conferring undeserved legitimacy upon the BRN and still believe they can end the conflict via force of arms, without making any concessions to the BRN or Muslims in the far south.

On the other side, some within the BRN umbrella are questioning whether independence is still part of the movement's goal given that their political leaders agreed to negotiate under the Thai constitution. Meanwhile, their campaign of violence has continued, with several coordinated, simultaneous attacks involving scores of fighters and sometimes lasting up to 30 minutes. Targets include security units patrolling the region and government installations in towns and cities.

Critics of the dialogue insist that any talks with the rebels must include a demand for an end to violence, something that the BRN is unwilling to agree to. For them, negotiations on reducing violence and rules of engagement are fine in principle but a formal agreement on cessation of hostilities, in the BRN's view, is tantamount to surrender.

It appears those in the government who believe that improving the provision of goods and services, along with minor administrative changes, will be enough for the Muslims in the far south to come to terms with the Thai state are likely to be disappointed.

AIR

Alex Benjamin

“NEVER AGAIN” HAS BECOME CONDITIONAL

Last Rosh Hashana (“Jewish New Year”, September 16-17, 2023), Jews across Europe gathered, unaware of the imminent evil lurking beyond the horizon, beyond all understanding in its cruelty and barbarism.

Sound familiar? It is. Two generations ago, we were faced with unfathomable and unimaginable horror. A horror that we say of today: “never again”.

Yet, here we are, again.

Jewish communities across Europe are under daily threat, hiding their identities, creating nicknames when shopping online, hiding their *kippot* (skull caps) under hats, tucking their Star of David necklaces into their clothing, removing their mezuzahs from their front doors. That is, those who have decided to stay in Europe.

Recently, I was training activists from across Europe. Our room was packed with around 90 dedicated individuals. I was delighted to see this.

That is, until I walked past a larger conference room in the same venue, with well over 400 people in it. Mostly young families. They were getting application forms stamped and ready for moving to Israel. It was a sobering moment. Our future is leaving.

The Jewish Agency – the organisation that arranges for families and individuals to make *aliyah* (emigrate to Israel) is reporting record numbers of families applying across Europe. In France, since October 7, the agency has seen an almost 400% rise in applications.

Think about that for a minute. Increasing numbers of Jews are happier moving their families to an Israel at war than staying in a supposedly peaceful Europe.

Little wonder then that a palpable anger is present in our communities. We have all watched as antisemitism has been given free rein on campus, at protests, in the media and outside synagogues. And we have often been met with silence and equivocation from those in positions of power.

These same voices who proclaim ‘never again’ – who signed up to the IHRA working definition of antisemitism – are, by and large, the same people who have largely been absent when it matters most.

Three quick examples: At anti-Israel protests in London, people were flying Nazi swastika flags. When concerned Jews approached the police and said it was antisemitic – which it was – the police replied that flying a swastika was “context dependent”.

Can you imagine the police ever saying this to a mem-

ber of any other ethnic minority? But once you get over the anger, you begin to understand the police don’t know what the IHRA definition is, let alone how to deal with antisemitism in plain sight.

Meanwhile in Belgium, in *Humo* magazine, a shock-jock writer, Herman Brusselmans, writing about the Gaza war, says he gets so angry at the war that he wants to stick a knife in the throat of every Jew he comes across. We are taking him, his editors and the publishers to court.

It seems an obvious case, doesn’t it? But after debates in national papers, and a political class which has largely avoided talking about the magazine and writer, we can’t be sure of even this outcome.

Lastly, in Antwerp, a city council-supported theatre refused to rent the hall to a Jewish school for an event – non-Israel-related – because the artists using the theatre were appalled at what is going on in Gaza.

That’s just three. Every day across the continent, in countries that have adopted the IHRA definition, there are equally bad cases.

The day-to-day experience of European Jews is nothing short of heartbreaking. Equally heartbreaking is the ambiguity and lip-service shown towards us by governments and institutions. The guardrails to protect Jews are in danger of collapsing as the antisemites shake them violently.

Those in power stand and watch, making excuses about context and freedom of speech, despite the IHRA definition that they signed up to telling them the anti-semitism is clear-cut.

Regarding Israel, there isn’t even the pretence of erecting a guardrail. It is open season on the world’s only Jewish state. Those who assassinated Bin Laden, who flattened Mosul, who caused hundreds of thousands of civilian casualties in Iraq in their collective fight against ISIS, tell Israel to de-escalate, to ceasefire, to accept.

Israelis are pilloried in public opinion for doing what anybody else would do. Nicolas Sarkozy understands: “*Israël a été agressé et a le devoir de se défendre*” (Israel was assaulted and has the duty to defend itself). Macron doesn’t, deciding instead to call for an embargo on arms sales to Israel.

And the Jewish people in Europe? We are told that the hate against us isn’t as clear cut as homophobia, or racism against other groups.

In this upside-down world, it is not up to the Jews to decide what antisemitism is. It is instead up to the antisemites themselves to set the terms of reference and decide if they are being antisemitic or not.

This Rosh Hashana, October 3 and 4, Europe’s Jews gathered again, battered, bruised, but also wiser.

“Never again” is conditional. We didn’t know that before October 7.

BEHIND THE NEWS

ROCKET AND TERROR REPORT

As of Oct. 9, 350 IDF soldiers had been killed in Gaza since October 2023. From Sept. 14 to Oct. 9, Hamas fired around nine rockets at Israel.

A shooting and stabbing attack in Jaffa by two Hamas operatives from Hebron on Oct. 1 killed seven people and wounded 16. On Oct. 6, a border police officer was killed and ten people wounded in Beersheva in an attack by a member of the Israeli Bedouin community. On Oct. 9, six people were wounded in a stabbing attack in Hadera.

Counterterrorism raids and airstrikes continue throughout the West Bank. On Oct. 3, at least 12 terrorist operatives were killed in an airstrike in Tulkarem targeting a senior Hamas leader said to be planning an imminent attack.

The IDF also launched a fresh ground operation in Jabaliya, northern Gaza, in early October following intelligence reports that Hamas was attempting to re-establish itself in the area. It's the third time the IDF has had to engage in the neighbourhood since the war started. Several hundred terrorists were reportedly killed in this campaign.

HAMAS BELIEVED NOT INTERESTED IN CEASEFIRE NEGOTIATIONS

US officials have reportedly concluded that Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar has no actual interest in reaching a ceasefire deal with Israel. It was reported in early October that the US believes Sinwar, thought hiding within Gaza's vast tunnel network, had become increasingly "fatalistic", does not believe he will survive the war and is interested primarily in drawing Israel into a wider regional conflict. US officials say Hamas had expressed

no interest in taking part in further ceasefire negotiations over the previous few weeks. Hamas still holds 101 Israelis hostage, including children, though many are likely deceased.

IRANIAN PROXIES' PROJECTILE ATTACKS

Since Israel launched Operation Northern Arrows on Sept. 23, Hezbollah has launched approximately 3,000 projectiles at Israel, according to the IDF. From Sept. 23 to 30, at least 860 rockets and missiles were launched. From Sept. 30 to Oct. 6, at least 500 rockets and missiles were launched.

Hezbollah has killed 67 Israelis since Oct. 8, 2023 – 27 civilians and 40 soldiers, including 11 in Lebanon. Two civilians were killed in a rocket attack on Kiryat Shmona on Oct. 9.

Four soldiers were killed and more than 60 people wounded in a drone strike at an Israeli military base near Binyamina on Oct. 13.

On Oct. 8, Yemen's Houthis fired two ballistic missiles at Jaffa.

On Oct. 3, two Israeli soldiers were killed and dozens wounded by a drone attack from Iraq. On Sept. 25, a drone launched from Iraq struck Eilat, injuring two people.

From October 7, 2023 to Oct. 7, 2024, about 12,000 projectiles were fired at Israel from Lebanon, 60 from Syria and 180 from Yemen.

IDF'S LIMITED GROUND ATTACKS IN LEBANON

On Sept. 30, Israel initiated a limited ground offensive in southern Lebanon to clear the area near the border of Hezbollah infrastructure and allow Israeli residents near the border to return home. The IDF described the offensive as "limited, localised, and targeted raids." The



IDF soldiers active in southern Lebanon (Image: Globe Eye News/ X)

IDF estimated on Oct. 5 that it had already killed at least 440 Hezbollah operatives. Hezbollah has admitted to more than 720 deaths since Oct. 7, 2023. Eleven Israeli soldiers had been killed in Lebanon as of Oct. 13.

It was also recently revealed that, even before launching these operations, the IDF had conducted over 70 secret raids into Lebanon since late October 2023, destroying Hezbollah tunnels, weapon sites and positions. These raids allegedly thwarted a planned October 7-style mass invasion by 3,000 terrorists into Israel's Galilee late last year.

Following an incident in which two UNIFIL peacekeepers were lightly injured by IDF fire on Oct. 11 – Israel said the IDF was operating against an "immediate threat" from nearby Hezbollah forces – Israeli PM Netanyahu on Oct. 13 reiterated Israeli calls for UNIFIL to be withdrawn from the combat zone in southern Lebanon.

ISRAEL ELIMINATES NASRALLAH'S SUCCESSOR

An Israeli airstrike on Oct. 4 killed Hashem Safieddine, who was reportedly in line to succeed his cousin, Hassan Nasrallah, as the leader of Hezbollah. Safieddine was meeting with Hezbollah commanders and Iranian officials in the Dahiya district of Beirut when Israeli bombs struck the compound.

One of the Iranian officials rumoured to have been present at the meeting was Esmail Qaani, commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). He has not been seen in public since the attack, but Iranian media reports claim he is safe and well. Recent unconfirmed reports allege Qaani had a heart attack while being interrogated by Iranian security forces investigating Nasrallah's assassination.

IRAN ATTACKS ISRAEL

On Oct. 1, Iran launched close to 200 ballistic missiles at Israel, sending millions into bomb shelters.



Disposing of a spent Iranian missile that hit Israel (Image: IDF)

It was reportedly the largest single ballistic missile barrage ever launched by one country against another. Israel's missile defence system, supported by

the US and Jordan, intercepted most of the missiles, though some caused damage, hitting a school and at least one airbase. Two Israelis were injured, while a Palestinian in the West Bank was killed. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu called it a "big mistake" and warned Teheran of retaliation. The missiles were reportedly fired in response to Israel's killing of top Hezbollah and Hamas leaders.

FEARING RETALIATION, IRAN THREATENS NEIGHBOURS

Messages circulated on Oct. 3 in media channels affiliated with the IRGC threatened Iranian attacks on oil facilities in neighbouring Muslim countries if Israel attacks strategic Iranian oil infrastructure in retribution for the Iranian attack on Oct. 1. Teheran sent similar threatening messages to countries whose airspace might

be crossed by Israeli aircraft in any Israeli attack. In 2019, Iranian drones and missiles hit Saudi Arabia's Abqaiq refineries and Khurais oil fields.

ISRAEL STRIKES HOUTHIS

On Sept. 29, the IDF launched a significant airstrike on Houthi-held ports of Hodeidah and Ras Issa in Yemen, targeting oil reserves and military supplies. The attack, which involved dozens of Israeli aircraft, was the strongest since July and followed recent Houthi missile strikes on Tel Aviv. The Houthi Health Ministry reported four deaths and 29 injuries.

TOP HAMAS OFFICIAL KILLED IN LEBANON WAS UNRWA EMPLOYEE

Fateh al-Sharif, Hamas' top leader in Lebanon, was killed in an Israeli airstrike on the al-Bass refugee camp in Tyre on Sept. 30. Sharif also held a high-ranking position within the UN

Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), serving as a school principal at Deir Yassin Secondary School and head of the UNRWA teacher's union. He had been placed on "administrative leave" in March after the UN initiated an investigation into his political activities.

YAZIDI ISIS CAPTIVE RESCUED IN GAZA

Fawzia Amin Sido, a 21-year-old Yazidi woman abducted from northern Iraq by ISIS in 2014 when she was 11, was freed from Gaza on Oct. 1 in a coordinated rescue mission by the IDF, the US Embassy in Jerusalem and others. Sido had been trafficked to Gaza from Iraq via Syria, Turkey and Egypt after being sold by ISIS to a Gazan man in 2014. The IDF said that her captor, a Palestinian Hamas member, was likely killed during IDF strikes, enabling Sido to escape to a hiding place from which she was rescued. She has since been reunited with her family in Iraq.

STRANGER THAN FICTION

THE JEWISH WAKANDA?

In news that will bring joy to Jews everywhere, there are actually far, far more of us than anyone previously realised – at least according to Lebanese politician Shaker al-Berjawi, leader of the country's Arab Movement Party which, although Sunni, supports Hezbollah. Jews also apparently have a whole other secret country!

In a September 2 interview, al-Berjawi claimed, "The Jews are lying when they say that they number 12 million worldwide... There are 200 to 300 million Jews. They try to draw the world's sympathy by saying that they are a small group and need a place where they can protect themselves. They can be found in each and every country... In America, there are 4 to 5 million of them, in the [Israeli] entity 7 million – that's already 12 million.

"It's a lie that they are 12 million... This is part of the Zionist propaganda. The media must shed light on this. In addition, a Jewish country [already] exists in the world – in one of the [former] USSR republics. There is a Jewish republic there. The Jews do not talk about it, so that they can claim they have nowhere to go. Go there. Why are you coming to my land?" (*Translation by the Middle East Media Research Institute*).

Perhaps those dastardly Jews are using a cloaking field made of "Vibranium", like Wakanda in the "Avengers" movies, to make sure no one knows about the unnamed secret Jewish country!

What's more, in another comic book twist, these hidden Jews may not even all be human. According to Iran Watch, Hojjatolislam Mostafa Karami, a seminary lecturer at the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting University, claimed in late September that "Given the Zionists' history of capturing goblins, they carry out many missions in this way, and devils are their secret army."

COVER STORY

BATTLE FOR THE NORTH

ISRAEL ON THE OFFENSIVE

Ilan Evyatar

Israel's military strategy shifted dramatically in September 2024. After nearly a year of caution in the north while focussing on Hamas in Gaza, Jerusalem suddenly launched a bold assault against Hezbollah in Lebanon that has changed the dynamic of its conflict with not only Hezbollah, but all of Iran's regional proxies.

On October 8, 2023, one day after the Hamas assault that left around 1,200 Israelis dead, Hezbollah opened a second front on Israel's northern border with Lebanon. Hezbollah's objective was to show solidarity with Hamas and force Israel to divert combat resources from the Gaza Strip. Northern communities were bombarded with rocket, drone and anti-tank missile fire daily, displacing more than 60,000 Israelis.

For nearly a year, Israel responded to the daily Hezbollah provocations with only limited, targeted strikes on Hezbollah assets in Lebanon, while prioritising its efforts in Gaza. However, as Hezbollah gradually escalated its attacks over recent months, it became clear that Israel's tit-for-tat approach would no longer suffice.

On Sept. 23, the Israel Defence Force (IDF) launched Operation Northern Arrows, officially marking a dramatic shift in strategy. This offensive aimed to reduce Hezbollah's military capabilities, particularly its arsenal of long-range and precision-guided missiles. The Israel Air Force struck over 2,000 Hezbollah targets across southern, central and northern Lebanon. The operation targeted terrorist operatives, rocket launchers, ammunition depots, UAVs and cruise missiles, many of which were hidden in civilian areas. Hezbollah's intelligence network also suffered significant blows, with command centres and information-gathering facilities destroyed. Israeli officials claim that



The site of the attack that killed Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in Beirut (Image: Mohamad Safa/ X)

over 50% of Hezbollah's missile and rocket arsenal had been destroyed by Oct. 7.

The IDF's offensive approach had been foreshadowed days earlier when, on Sept. 17, thousands of pagers used by Hezbollah operatives exploded, killing at least 12 people and injuring thousands, almost all Hezbollah operatives, in Lebanon and Syria. The following day, Hezbollah walkie-talkies exploded, causing additional casualties. Within a 48-hour period, Hezbollah reported the deaths of at least 42 operatives with a further 3,500 wounded due to the audacious booby traps, which it attributed to Israeli sabotage.

Hezbollah's leadership has not been spared. On Sept. 20, the IDF eliminated Ibrahim Aqil, the head of Hezbollah's military operations and commander of its elite Radwan commando force, in an airstrike in Beirut. Aqil was one of Hezbollah's top military strategists, and his death, along with 14 other senior commanders of Radwan, dealt a severe blow to Hezbollah's ability to conduct military operations.

The climax of Israel's offensive came on Sept. 27, when the IDF targeted Hezbollah's Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah. An airstrike on Hezbollah's underground headquarters in Beirut, using multiple bombs targeted at the same spot to penetrate some 20 metres of earth and concrete, killed Nasrallah and other senior figures – including Ali Karaki, the commander of Hezbollah's "southern front". A senior Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) adviser to Hezbollah, Major General Abbas Nilforoushan, was also killed in the strike. This strike marked a significant turning point in the conflict.

Israel's relentless offensive continued over the following days, targeting other top Hezbollah operatives responsible for overseeing rocket and missile attacks against Israel, as well as missile storage, production and launch sites. By Sept. 29, Hezbollah had lost most of its senior leadership.

On Oct. 1, Iran raised the stakes by launching a massive attack on Israel in what it said was revenge for Nasrallah's killing. Teheran labelled its assault True Promise 2 – a follow-up operation to its previous attack on Israel on the night of April 13-14. However, unlike True Promise 1, which was telegraphed well in advance and mostly employed slow-moving drones and cruise missiles, True Promise 2 involved around 200 fast-travelling ballistic missiles. Dozens of these penetrated Israel's defences and caused damage to the Nevatim airbase – but the only fatality was a Palestinian man near Jericho.

Earlier that day, Israel had launched what it described as a limited ground offensive into southern Lebanon, sending in the elite 98th Division to seize ground, thus denying Hezbollah a direct line of fire on Israeli communities. Within a week, four IDF divisions were involved in the fighting inside Lebanon.

Although 11 Israeli soldiers have been killed in the fighting at the time of publication, the ground invasion has progressed far more smoothly than the 2006 Lebanon war, with very few successful Hezbollah ambushes of the sort seen in that conflict.

Symbolically, Israel has taken the Shi'ite village of Maroun al-Ras, less than a kilometre from the border and the site of heavy fighting in 2006. The village overlooks the Israeli community of Avivim. Teheran had funded a promenade called "Iran Park" on the outskirts of Maroun al-Ras. This became a pilgrimage site for Iranian officials who would use it to look out over Israel and make statements about its imminent demise. The park also featured a large cut-out image of Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the former IRGC Quds Force commander who spearheaded Iran's "Ring of Fire" strategy against Israel.

Soleimani was assassinated by the United States in 2020. IDF troops demolished the "park" and the statue of

Soleimani and raised the Israeli flag.

On Oct. 3, Israel dealt another blow to Hezbollah by apparently eliminating Nasrallah's cousin and presumed successor, Hashem Safieddine. However, at the time of writing, Hezbollah had yet to confirm his death, although Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said in a speech to the Lebanese people on Oct. 8 that Israel had eliminated "Nasrallah's replacement, and his replacement's replacement."

Even more dramatically, there were reports that Soleimani's successor as head of the Quds Force, Esmail Qaani, might also have been injured or killed in the same strike.

Qaani had travelled to Lebanon after Nasrallah's death, and as of writing, he has not been seen in public or heard from since the strike, though Iran denies he is dead.

Regardless of Qaani's fate, Israel has clearly gained considerable momentum in its conflict with Hezbollah. While the Iranian proxy has expanded the range of its rocket fire, hitting the Haifa area and the Carmel and launching a couple of cruise missiles at Tel Aviv, it has not achieved anything like the apocalyptic scenarios that were predicted for an Israeli war with Hezbollah. These had predicted thousands of missiles per day for weeks, overwhelming Israeli defences, which were expected to bring down entire buildings and cause mass Israeli civilian casualties.

In fact, Hezbollah has begun showing definite signs of strain, with Naim Qassem, who served as Nasrallah's deputy until his assassination, calling for a ceasefire in a speech on Oct. 8, saying, "We support the political efforts led by [Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih] Berri under the banner of achieving a ceasefire. Once the ceasefire is firmly established and diplomacy can reach it, all other details will be discussed, and decisions will be made collaboratively."

This statement was a far cry from the bluster Nasrallah traditionally deployed and appeared to be the first time the group has agreed to decouple itself from the Gaza conflict, having previously stated it would only halt its attacks when a ceasefire was reached in Gaza.

"Hezbollah has begun showing definite signs of strain, with Naim Qassem, who served as Nasrallah's deputy until his assassination, calling for a ceasefire"

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Israel has not responded to this overture, viewing it as a desperate plea resulting from the heavy blows being inflicted upon Hezbollah by Israeli forces.

The question now is what Israel's endgame in Lebanon will be.

Will it demand the enforcement of UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which ended the 2006 war and called for Hezbollah to withdraw north of the Litani River, 20 to 30 kilometres from the Israel-Lebanon border – something never implemented? Will it demand the provisions of both 1701 and the earlier Resolution 1559, which call for the dismantling of all armed groups in Lebanon (except for the national armed forces) including Hezbollah, finally be implemented? Will it seek to establish a buffer zone in southern Lebanon if this is not done, as existed before 2000?

In a recent column, Zohar Palti, the influential former head of the Mossad's intelligence directorate and the Political-Military Bureau at the Ministry of Defence, wrote that Hezbollah as we knew it "no longer exists" and that there is now a golden opportunity for Lebanon to regain its sovereignty under "one flag and one army." However, he noted that without extensive involvement and assistance from the US, Europe and the Gulf states, this is unlikely to happen, and thus Israel may feel it has no choice but to adopt the post-Second Intifada strategic model of continuously taking action against any force build-up, as it has done in the West Bank and is expected to do in Gaza after mostly dismantling Hamas' military capabilities there.

Looming over everything is the shadow of Iran. The Islamic Republic has been humiliated and humbled over recent weeks. Its primary asset in the region, Hezbollah, into which it invested billions of dollars, has seen its capabilities drastically reduced. Iran's "Ring of Fire" strategy to surround, constantly harass and deter Israel, leading to its eventual destruction, has been severely damaged, with Hamas almost entirely dismantled as well.

And amidst all of this, Israel must decide how to respond to the Iranian ballistic missile attack of Oct. 1. Some voices, such as former Israeli Prime Minister Naftali

Bennett, have called for seizing the opportunity to strike sites employed in Iran's nuclear program, which is rapidly approaching full weapons capabilities. However, the US, while supporting some form of Israeli retaliation, opposes this, fearing it could lead to all-out regional war.

Other options include attacks on Iranian military, air defence and intelligence targets, on symbols of the regime, or on its oil refineries and export terminals, which are crucial to its economy. The latter option would likely draw global ire as it could cause a spike in oil prices. Meanwhile, Iran is threatening to target its neighbours' oil production facilities in retaliation, which would further spike prices.

Israel's response is expected any day, and the only question appears to be what will be targeted.

On Oct. 9, Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said, "The Iranian attack was aggressive but inaccurate. In contrast, our attack will be deadly, pinpoint accurate, and most importantly, surprising – they will not know what happened or how it happened. They will just see the results."

It is not only Israelis and the Iranians who are awaiting those "results" and where they will take the Israel-Iran conflict – so are governments around the world.

AIR

HOW WEAKENED IS HEZBOLLAH?

Matthew Levitt

Even Iranian ballistic missile strikes targeting Israel cannot mask the fact that Hezbollah, the jewel in the crown of Teheran's "Axis of Resistance", no longer exists as we knew it. And since Hezbollah was the backbone of this network of militant proxies, Iran's strategy of arming and deploying these groups throughout the region is suddenly at risk.

And yet, while its leadership has been decimated and its military capabilities severely degraded, Hezbollah still

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The Military Chain of Command of the Hezbollah Terrorist Organization



An IDF graphic of the targeted Hezbollah leadership (IDF)

maintains an arsenal of rockets and a cadre of several thousand fighters. It will continue to pose potent military threats for Israel, Lebanon and the wider region. Hezbollah is surely eager to exact revenge upon Israel for the death of its leader of three decades, Hassan Nasrallah, in an airstrike, but it is less capable of doing so militarily today. As a result, Hezbollah may resort to plotting acts of international terrorism targeting Israeli interests or Jews abroad, as it has repeatedly over the years. In one case, a Hezbollah operative was reportedly caught storing three metric tons of explosive material in four northwest London properties.

The story of how Hezbollah was depleted reads like the plot of a paperback thriller. Within a span of a few days, Israeli forces attacked Hezbollah's communication systems, disabled hundreds of fighters whose operational pagers and radios exploded, and killed a significant number of senior Hezbollah commanders, decimating the group's command structure. An Israeli airstrike destroyed Hezbollah's operational headquarters located deep below a residential apartment building in southern Beirut, killing Secretary-General Nasrallah, along with other Hezbollah and Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps commanders.

Israeli airstrikes targeted Hezbollah rockets and launchers and Israeli commandos led dozens of secret raids into Lebanon, where they disabled Iranian-supplied weapons and mapped out and destroyed Hezbollah attack tunnels, launching areas and other infrastructure in villages on the Lebanese side of the border. On October 1, Israeli forces crossed into Lebanon, dismantling more infrastructure in order to prevent an October 7-style cross-border raid by Hezbollah into northern Israel.

Israel's quick success against Hezbollah is the result of a dominance of intelligence. This follows a sea-change in Israeli intelligence collection methods after its last war with Hezbollah in 2006. American and Israeli officials assess that Israel has destroyed about half of Hezbollah's stockpile of rockets and missiles in recent weeks, but the group still maintains an arsenal of surveillance and attack drones

and some 60,000 to 100,000 rockets and missiles, which it remains capable of firing deep into the country.

Most of these projectiles are either shot down by Israeli air defences or miss their mark, and sometimes Hezbollah claims attacks that never happened. For example, on Oct. 1, Hezbollah announced that it had fired rockets at an Israeli Air Force base at Sde Dov, just north of Tel Aviv. But that base was decommissioned several years ago and is now an empty sandlot awaiting residential development.

These rockets are still very dangerous, however. After one Israeli strike killed a senior Hezbollah commander, on Sept. 22 the group launched about 100 rockets at Israel, some targeting the city of Haifa. More recently, in the middle of the Israeli air campaign against Hezbollah, the group fired a rocket at Tel Aviv for the first time, and it launched rockets at the city again a few days later.

But American officials say that, with so many of its key leaders killed in such a short span of time, Hezbollah's command and control structure is severely damaged. Few commanders remain who can issue orders to fire missiles, which helps explain why the group has not launched larger rocket salvos at Israel. This may also explain why, despite Hezbollah deputy chief Naim Qassem's televised pledge to engage the Israeli military if it entered southern Lebanon, Hezbollah's actual response was to withdraw from the area and deny that Israeli forces had entered Lebanon at all.

Meanwhile, with Israeli soldiers dismantling Hezbollah attack infrastructure in southern Lebanon, and with a significant military presence defending the border, it would be much more difficult today for Hezbollah to carry out a cross-border attack. Indeed, according to the Israeli authorities, when they killed Hezbollah commander Ibrahim Aqil in an airstrike shortly after Hezbollah pagers and radios exploded, he and the commanders he was meeting with were planning just such an incursion into Israeli territory.

How will the group seek to avenge Nasrallah's death amid these military setbacks? Hezbollah is likely to resort to acts of international terrorism, which are overseen by one of the few elements of the group that has not yet lost key leaders. Unit 910, also known as the Islamic Jihad Organisation or the External Security Organisation, is responsible for global terrorist plots. Led by Talal Hamiyah and his deputy, Khaled Kassem, Unit 910 maintains networks of operatives around the world who carry out surveillance of potential targets and stand by to enact plots if and when instructed to do so by Hezbollah in Lebanon.



Having off-the-shelf pre-operational planning at the ready, US intelligence officials assess, is “a critical component of [Hezbollah’s] terrorism playbook.” Ali Kourani, a Hezbollah operative who was arrested in New York in 2017 and ultimately convicted on terrorism charges, described himself as “a member of 910, also known as Islamic Jihad or the black ops of Hezbollah.” Asked by FBI agents under what circumstances he envisioned being ordered to carry out an attack in the US, Kourani outlined two scenarios: the assassination of Hassan Nasrallah or a war between Israel and Iran. In other words, a situation just like the one we are experiencing.

Hezbollah is not dead, but it is not likely to ever be the same organisation it was just a few weeks ago. Younger fighters will be promoted, but it will take time for them to accumulate the experience their predecessors possessed. Someone will succeed Nasrallah, but he will almost certainly pale in comparison with the charisma and skill of the deceased leader. The tunnels and other infrastructure Hezbollah built over many years, and at tremendous cost, will not be easily replaced.

But the true measure of whether the group will be able to reconstitute itself, even over many years, is whether Iran can restock Hezbollah’s sophisticated arsenal. Teheran’s network of proxy groups – from Hezbollah to Hamas to the Houthis – is only as dangerous as it is today because of Iran’s provision of weapons and money. Whatever Hezbollah does next, Western governments must prioritise cutting off Teheran’s ability to arm and fund its proxies. AIR

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SECURING A BETTER POST-WAR FUTURE FOR LEBANON

Hanin Ghaddar

After more than two weeks of intensive Israeli military and intelligence operations in Lebanon, Hezbollah has lost something even more important than leaders and weapons – it has lost legitimacy. By failing to protect its top political and military figures, safeguard its core Shi’ite constituency, or secure its promised victory for the Iran-led “axis of resistance”, the group surrendered

its claimed right to bear arms under the increasingly dubious pretence of protecting the country. To the contrary, linking Lebanon’s fate to the Gaza war only dragged the nation into a destructive conflict that has already displaced more than a million Lebanese citizens.

As the myth of Hezbollah invincibility swiftly collapsed, a massive void opened before Lebanon’s Shi’ite community and the group’s patrons in Iran. To avoid giving hostile actors the time and capacity to close this void and build a new version of Hezbollah, Beirut and its international partners must quickly fill the vacuum with a strong, independent political structure. Much of this needs to be done even before achieving a ceasefire in south Lebanon, securing the border with Israel, or proceeding with the long-delayed implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701. The roadmap to this goal includes four main steps:

Rebuilding local trust in the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF).

Before the LAF can effectively implement the most crucial provisions of UNSCR 1701 – securing the southern frontier and ensuring that all Hezbollah forces move northward across the Litani River – the force must regain the people’s trust, especially the Shi’ites who constitute the majority of the southern population. This community is currently in shock. Not only did they lose loved ones and property, they also lost their perceived protector and provider. For many Shi’ites, the late Hassan Nasrallah was their national leader and father figure, while Hezbollah was both their shield and their sectarian state-within-the-state. Thousands now find themselves abandoned in war-torn streets without any assurance or support from the Lebanese state or what is left of Hezbollah.



The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) need clear orders from a new Lebanese president if they are to enforce UN resolutions and thus enable a ceasefire (Image: Shutterstock)

This is where the LAF comes in – as the institution that can fill the vacuum and reassure Shi’ites that they will be protected. This message needs to be communicated now, before a ceasefire is brokered in the south. If the LAF succeeds in this confidence-building campaign, the Shi’ites will be more likely to come back to the true Lebanese state. Only then will the LAF have the popular legitimacy

for phase two: redeploying south of the Litani and securing the country once a ceasefire is reached and Israeli forces withdraw. In the meantime, the LAF should deploy in communities outside the main southern war zone as soon as possible, especially in places where sectarian violence is on the rise and armed gangs seem likely to form.

Restoring state sovereignty. The LAF cannot do much without clear orders from the Lebanese Government. Yet with no sitting president in Beirut and a weak caretaker government at the helm, there is no one to make the necessary tough decisions. If left to their own devices, Hezbollah partners, such as Prime Minister Najib Mikati and Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri, will simply work together to maintain the status quo and help the group make a comeback. Their recent statements show a willingness to select a president after months of delay, yet they are still negotiating as though the past few weeks did not happen, ignoring the steady destruction of Hezbollah's leadership.

In this environment, only external pressure can compel Berri to convene the parliamentary sessions required to choose a president with no prior agreement or conditions. And Mikati will need prodding before he feels compelled to publicly order the LAF to facilitate these sessions – namely, by opening a protected route for legislators to actually reach the parliament building safely to exercise their democratic responsibility without fear of violent reprisals. If these steps are carried out promptly, a legislative majority could emerge behind a new president who is empowered to appoint an independent prime minister. In turn, the new premier could expeditiously form a stronger government capable of dealing with the security, political, and economic challenges that will need urgent attention once a ceasefire is in place, including reconstruction, humanitarian aid, structural reforms, and efforts to implement international resolutions (see below).

Distributing aid. The dislocation of war and the long-running collapse of the Lebanese state have left huge numbers of civilians in dire need of food, shelter and medical support. Until a new government is in place, the best option is for international organisations and foreign donors to channel such support through local Shi'ite groups that are not affiliated with Hezbollah. This way, aid deliveries can empower a reformist alternative to the militia while still filling the void left by its mounting leadership losses.

These alternative groups already exist and have substantial credibility within their individual communities. Many also have the capabilities and access needed to work directly with displaced Shi'ites.

Ensuring that the narrative on Israel focuses on incursion, not invasion. For the most part, filling the void left by Hezbollah's disarray is a Lebanese responsibility, but Israel still has a vital role to play by ensuring that its military incursions into Lebanese territory do not morph into an occupation. Many Shi'ites vividly remember the 1982 occupation, which

empowered Hezbollah's "resistance" narrative and legitimised its military operations for decades afterward. If Israeli forces advance too deeply into Lebanon or decide to stay after completing their current operations in the south, they will likely fuel a new resistance narrative and help resuscitate Hezbollah, which will eagerly reclaim its political legitimacy and its "right" to maintain a military arsenal.

HEZBOLLAH 2.0?

Of course, Hezbollah may use its arms and allies to hamper every element of the above roadmap.

For now, however, it is still reeling from Israel's continuous strikes, opening a major opportunity to kickstart the diplomatic and political process before the group wakes up from the shock. Hezbollah rightly worries that losing its arsenal would further erode its political hegemony, but even in that case, it would not be completely eliminated from the Lebanese scene. Three scenarios are most likely for "Hezbollah 2.0":

1. The remnants of Hezbollah's military evolve into street gangs with thousands of armed fighters, backed by a community that is afraid, humiliated, and impoverished. This would be the perfect recipe for sectarian violence, potentially making Lebanon fertile ground for all sorts of



Despite its losses, Hezbollah will not disappear, but it can be largely disarmed and marginalised (Image: Shutterstock)

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international jihadist factions that thrive on such conflicts, especially in the absence of state institutions.

2. The Iranian regime refuses to let go of Hezbollah and orders the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to focus more intently on rebuilding the militia. The IRGC does not want to get involved in the current fighting inside Lebanon, but it may adopt a more hands-on approach by deploying Iranian officers on the ground – at least until a new class of Hezbollah commanders is trained and appointed. This would likely create even more volatility with Israel, as seen when IRGC elements have deployed to neighbouring Syria.
3. Iran leaves Hezbollah on its own to figure out its new identity and mission, while the LAF proves willing and able to contain armed gangs and prevent widespread sectarian violence. This is the ideal option, and also the least likely, but it is worth pursuing in the hope of avoiding the other two scenarios (or some combination of both).

INTERNATIONAL RESOLUTIONS AND DIPLOMATIC TOOLS

It is now commonplace to talk about implementing UNSCR 1701 as the primary means of establishing a new arrangement along the Israel-Lebanon border. Indeed, with Hezbollah battered, this goal seems reachable if the international community pushes for a new political order in Lebanon and provides support to non-Hezbollah Shi’ite groups.

Yet while 1701 is necessary, it is not sufficient. At its core, border security is a matter of state sovereignty. Lebanon’s post-ceasefire political dynamics must therefore be rooted in the implementation of other key documents, toward the goal of preventing Hezbollah’s resurrection:

The Taif Accord. Despite its flaws, this 1989 accord – originally brokered by Saudi Arabia to help end Lebanon’s civil war – has several elements worth highlighting by US officials, particularly if they want Riyadh to resume its past diplomatic and financial support for Beirut. These include provisions on judicial independence, administrative decentralisation, a non-sectarian electoral law, and the formation of a senate. Updating the accord’s language is vital – for example, the document affirmed that all militias

would be disarmed, but Hezbollah was exempted under a vaguely worded requirement about “Taking all the necessary measures to liberate all Lebanese territories from the Israeli occupation.” Even before such revisions are debated, however, authorities can start implementing more of Taif’s existing provisions immediately.

UNSCR 1559. This 2004 resolution calls for “the strict respect of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity, and political independence of Lebanon.” It also calls for the “disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias” and the extension of government control “over all Lebanese territory.”

Disarming Hezbollah has long been the greatest challenge for Lebanon and the international community. Yet the group is losing a great deal of its arsenal in the current conflict. Once the fighting stops, the state may have a one-time opportunity to wrest control of the remaining arsenal and hand it over to the LAF. Such a move would no doubt meet resistance, but it is the only way to set the stage for a weaker, illegitimate Hezbollah 2.0.

The first step is to make the tough political decision to disarm the group. The next government would then need to make sure that the inaugural ministerial statement laying out its policies does not legitimise Hezbollah by including language like “the army, the people, and the resistance” – a formulation that has appeared in such documents since at least 2008 and essentially gives the group carte blanche to define “resistance” activities however it likes.

UNSCR 1680. This resolution – adopted before the start of the 2006 Hezbollah-Israel war – calls for “Syria to respond positively to Lebanon’s request to delineate borders and establish diplomatic relations.” This provision is crucial today because Hezbollah cannot rebuild its arsenal without the continued flow of arms and resources from Iran via Iraq and Syria. Halting this flow requires international support for tougher border initiatives like the British effort to help the LAF safeguard the frontier with Syria. In this sense, the border with Israel cannot be fully secured until Lebanon’s other borders are secured as well. AIR

Once the fighting stops, the state may have a one-time opportunity to wrest control of the remaining arsenal and hand it over to the LAF... it is the only way to set the stage for a weaker, illegitimate Hezbollah 2.0



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Hanin Ghaddar is the Friedmann Senior Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and the longtime managing editor of Lebanon’s NOW news website. Previously, Ghaddar wrote for the Lebanese newspapers and also worked as a researcher for the United Nations Development Program. © Washington Institute (washingtontinstitute.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

WHAT DO THE LEBANESE THINK?

Oved Lobel

As Israel officially undertakes “limited, localised, and targeted ground raids” into Lebanon to destroy Hezbollah military infrastructure along the border, while also conducting widespread airstrikes against Hezbollah leaders, operatives, ammunition depots and other military targets across the country, what do the Lebanese think of the players involved?

With some necessary caveats about the quality of polls, the polling questions, the fact that the Shi’ite community in Lebanon is partially dependent on Hezbollah for social welfare and the reality that Hezbollah intimidates and sometimes murders critics, there are several polls since 2007, including three since October 7, 2023, that shed some important light on Lebanese attitudes.

It is also important to note that no fully reliable estimates about Lebanese demographics exist. The 2020 estimate in the *CIA World Factbook* breaks the official population down along religious lines as 31.9% Sunni, 31.2% Shi’ite, 32.4% Christian and 4.5% Druze. There is little evidence, despite oft-repeated contemporary claims, that Shi’ites are now a majority in the country.

ANTISEMITISM

First and foremost, the Lebanese, like many Arab societies, are overwhelmingly antisemitic, regardless of their religious background. According to the ADL’s 2014 Global 100 survey, which asks questions based on classic antisemitic tropes rather than anything related to Israel, fully 78% of the population harbour conspiratorial antisemitic attitudes, including large majorities of Christians.

Rating statements like “Jews have too much control over the global media,” “Jews are responsible for most of the world’s wars,” “Jews have too much control over global affairs” or “Jews have too much power in international financial markets,” the survey found that a minimum of more than 60% and in some cases more than 80%, depending on the question and religious background, believe such tropes are at least “probably true”. A Pew survey from 2009 found that 98% of Lebanese had an unfavour-

able opinion of Jews, including 97% of Lebanese Christians. There’s little reason to believe these attitudes have changed, and they no doubt colour views of Israel.

HAMAS AND HEZBOLLAH

Pew surveys found that Shi’ite support for Hamas had grown from 64% in 2008 to 91% in 2009, while Sunni support for the group dropped from 9% in 2008 to just 1% in 2009. This might seem odd to those who try to explain everything in the region through the lens of a sectarian Sunni-Shi’ite divide, but the likely explanation is that Hamas is considered part of Iran’s “Axis of Resistance” and an “external army” of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). It thus attracts high support among those beholden to the 1979 Islamic Revolution and its leadership, mostly Shi’ite. Eighty-eight per cent of Lebanese Christians also held unfavourable views of Hamas in 2009.

Pew also found almost overwhelming support among Shi’ite Lebanese for Hezbollah, at 97%, and almost universal unfavourable attitudes towards it among the rest of the population, with 98% of Sunnis and 80% of Christians not supporting the group.

More recent polls, including one conducted by The Washington Institute (TWI) from Nov. 14 to Dec. 6, 2023, and another by the Arab Barometer from February to April 2024, show similar breakdowns in terms of support for Hezbollah.

The TWI poll found that “Whereas 34% of Sunnis and



The Lebanese: Largely anti-Hezbollah, yet also often antisemitic (Image: Paul Saad/ Shutterstock)

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29% of Christians express even a somewhat positive view of Hezbollah, 93% of Shi'ites do so." However, since the previous time TWI had polled on this question in 2020, there has been a rise in support for Hezbollah among all groups. Furthermore, in contrast to the Pew polls more than a decade ago, positive views of Hamas were far higher among all religious groups, including 59% of Christians. Overall, "79% of Lebanese express a positive opinion of Hamas," it found.

The Arab Barometer poll also found near universal support for Hezbollah among Shi'ites, with 83% having a great deal or quite a lot of trust in the group and only 9% of Sunnis and Druze and 6% of Christians sharing that attitude.

Similarly, the poll found that Hezbollah's role in regional affairs was rated positively by 78% of Shi'ites, but only 16% among Druze, 13% among Sunnis and 12% among Christians, although those agreeing that Hezbollah is good for the Arab world rose nine points among the latter three groups since 2022.

These attitudes do not reflect internal support for Hezbollah as a domestic political party, only as an enemy of Israel. Hence:

At the national level, only 12 percent of citizens feel closest to Hezbollah as a political party. Shiites are the only Lebanese sect in which more than one percent of members say that, among all the countries parties, they feel closest to Hezbollah. And even among Shiites, only 39 percent say they feel closest to Hezbollah, roughly the same percentage (37 percent) who say they do not feel close to any political party.

OCTOBER 7 AND WAR WITH ISRAEL

Lebanese of all religious backgrounds overwhelmingly supported the October 7 attacks by Hamas, and a significant minority supported Lebanon going to war with Israel in their wake.

One poll conducted immediately after October 7 by the Consultative Centre for Studies and Documentation (CCSD) found that 80% of Lebanese supported the attacks, including 98% of Shi'ites, 86% of Sunnis and Druze and 60% of Christians.

The same poll found that 32% of those surveyed favoured opening up a fully-fledged northern front immediately: "This option was supported by half of the Shi'ites, roughly a third of the Sunni, 40% of the Druze, and around 13% of the Christian respondents." Only 5% of respondents blamed Hamas for the escalation of the conflict, with 13% blaming Iran, 34% blaming Israel and a staggering 47% blaming the United States.

When asked by TWI in its poll whether they agreed with the statement that "Right now, internal political and economic reform is more important for our country than any foreign policy issue, so we should stay out of foreign

war," 66% of Sunnis and 74% of Christians agreed, but only 27% of Shi'ites answered affirmatively.

TWI also asked respondents to agree or disagree with the fact that there's no military solution to the conflict with Israel and there would therefore have to eventually be negotiations on a Palestinian-Israeli agreement. Only 25% of Shi'ites agreed, as opposed to 56% of Sunnis and 75% of Christians. Unfortunately, overwhelming majorities of Christians and Druze, not to mention Shi'ites and Sunnis, agreed in the same poll that Israel is "so weak and divided that it can be defeated someday." Only about 15% in the former two groups disagreed.

The most recent poll by the Arab Barometer found that only 11% of Lebanese respondents view Hezbollah's incessant attacks on Israel as "terrorism", while 78% believe Israel's attacks on Hamas in Gaza are terrorist acts. Given a choice of seven terms ranging from "conflict" to "genocide" to describe Israel's war against Hamas, 36% described it as "genocide" while 25% called it a "massacre".

However, when asked by TWI last year whether they viewed the war in Gaza, despite the death and destruction, as a victory for Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims, 97% of Shi'ites, 88% of Sunnis and 54% of Christians said it was.

IRAN

Attitudes towards Iran and its role in the Middle East fall along a similar sectarian divide as those towards Hezbollah itself, according to the Arab Barometer poll, with 80% of Shi'ites, 26% of Druze and 15% among both Sunnis and Christians having a favourable attitude.

CONCLUSION

While it's unclear how attitudes on any of these issues will shift following Israel's operations and the destruction, death and displacement that inevitably accompany urban warfare against an embedded enemy like Hezbollah, it's already clear that most of the Lebanese population does not support Hezbollah. This potentially leaves room for some sort of political arrangement with Israel in the future should Hezbollah be destroyed or sufficiently degraded.

Unfortunately, it's also clear that the Shi'ites, who comprise perhaps a third of the population, are almost universally radicalised and embrace total war with Israel, as do sizeable minorities among Druze, Sunnis and Christians.

Understanding how the current war is changing these general attitudes will have to wait until new polls are conducted. Beyond the weak support for Hezbollah, however, there is little room for optimism, given overwhelming support for Hamas and October 7; a widely held belief that Israel can be destroyed militarily; a significant minority of the population that actively wanted to go to war after October 7 despite Lebanon's severe economic and political dysfunction; and widespread antisemitic attitudes among all sectors.

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End of “The Occupation”

Lessons from a year of protests

Dave Rich

In the year since October 7, 2023, much has changed in the world of antisemitism, anti-Zionism, and the blurry zone of ideas and feelings where the two meet and interact.

We can count the hate crimes and look in horror at the shameless return of medieval anti-Jewish tropes, but perhaps more significant is the shift in the language of the anti-Israel movement from occupation to colonialism, and the associated change in its focus from reversing Israel’s conquests in 1967 to erasing its foundation in 1948.



Protesters are now clear that their demands have nothing to do with Israel’s presence in the West Bank, but its existence in any part of the land (Image: Richard Milnes/ Alamy Live News)

This has brought with it a radicalisation of intent, from campaigning to remove the Israeli presence from the West Bank and Gaza to calling for it to be removed from the Middle East entirely. Most troubling of all, it is accompanied by a hostile attempt to rewrite Jewish history.

The change is audible in the chants: “We don’t want two states, we want 1948” is the most explicit, putting this movement at odds with the settled position of Western governments, the international community, and the United Nations. It’s visible in the academics’ letters that were penned as soon as Hamas smashed through Israel’s border fence on that terrible October morning. It is implied in every social media post that rails against 76 years of settler colonialism, rather than 57 years of occupation. And it is

tangible as the emotional driving force of this movement, which is in no mood for compromise.

Indeed, it is difficult to find any prominent pro-Palestinian activist in the mainstream of this movement who is still campaigning “only” against the occupation of 1967. When people do talk about this it seems almost quaint; like the politics of a bygone age.

There are several factors that explain why this has happened, and various reasons why it is such a problem.

The argument that Israel is a settler colonial state has been around for a long time. It was a staple of Soviet and Arab propaganda from at least the 1960s onwards, and by the 1970s it had started to become commonplace in radical left wing thinking. One of the most influential books on the subject was *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?*, written by French Jewish Marxist and Middle East expert Maxime Rodinson and first published in English in 1973. Rodinson pointed out that the Zionist movement had cooperated extensively with European colonial powers, which, he wrote, was unremarkable at the time given the ubiquity of colonial thinking and practice, even amongst socialists.

He argued that it was inevitable now, in a period of anti-colonial politics, that Zionism’s colonial practices would bring into question Israel’s existence as a state.

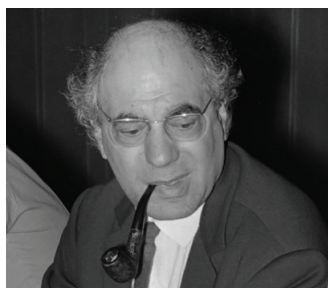
This has found new resonance in today’s anti-racist politics, which blends together colonialism, racism and white supremacy as the great evils of the modern world. One legacy of the “Black Lives Matter” movement is that progressive politics tends to view, and explain, everything through that lens. If you believe that every significant problem in society is due to the pernicious impact of structural racism and white supremacy, then on a global level its equivalent is colonialism and the legacy of Western conquest and domination. So much easier and more satisfying to assume that the problem of Israel and Palestine fits

this framing, than to do the hard work of understanding its distinctive features and coming up with an analysis that actually fits the facts.

Because colonialism is now seen not as a historical feature but as an unforgiveable moral sin, any product of colonialism – which in this thinking includes the State of Israel – can never be accepted as legitimate. You cannot compromise with racism, after all. Just as the old campaigns against the occupation implied that Israel would remain within its pre-1967 borders, so the switch in the anti-Israel movement from anti-occupation to decolonisation implies that anything short of erasing Israel and replacing it entirely with Palestine would be an injustice.

This is not inevitable. Ironically, Rodinson himself did

not go along with the idea that Israel’s creation should be reversed, even though it was his own work that would lay the foundation of this view today. By 1975, he was arguing that whatever the colonial circumstances of its creation,



French intellectual Maxime Rodinson in 1970 (Image: Wikipedia)

Israeli Jews had by then formed a nation and needed “some political structure through which they can defend themselves as a group, their interests and their aspirations.” He also dismissed the self-righteous condemnation of Zionists found on parts of the left, writing:

Colonists and colonisers are

not monsters with human faces whose behavior defies rational explanation, as one might think from reading left-wing intellectuals... Belonging to a colonising group is not the unspeakable and unpardonable crime it is thought to be in cafes along Saint-Germain and Saint-Michel boulevards. Who is innocent of this charge? The only variable lies in the time that has elapsed since the usurping was done. The human conscience sooner or later accepts the idea that long-time use establishes a valid claim.

Rodinson would probably get cancelled for writing this nowadays.

By shaping their campaigning in a way that challenges Israel’s very existence – sometimes explicitly so – Western pro-Palestine activists have conveniently brought their solidarity movement into line with the actual campaign against Israel in the Middle East.

On the ground where it matters, in the place where the real action occurs and the outcome of this struggle will be determined, the campaign against Israel is led by Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and behind them Iran. Those groups are not interested in a two-state solution or in merely recovering the territories conquered by Israel in the Six Day War of 1967: they want Israel gone for good and are happy to say so. It would be pointless for the solidarity movement expending all that energy on the streets and campuses of Western cities to do so in support of a goal that was completely different from that pursued by the sharp end of this movement in Palestine itself. The leaders of Hamas and the Islamic Republic of Iran recognise this, even if those Western campaigners don’t realise it themselves.

In that respect, it is striking that just as the Palestine Authority, which officially supports two states and does not back a full boycott of Israel, is a relatively powerless onlooker in the struggle between Israel and Hamas, so the representatives of the Authority in the West are similarly marginal in the protest movement here. The Head of the Palestinian Mission to the UK, Husam Zomlot, speaks at

rallies and is interviewed on the news, but his office is not an official organiser of the marches, nor does he set its slogans and goals. Instead, the defining slogan of this protest movement – ‘From the River to the Sea, Palestine Will Be Free’ – appears almost word for word in Hamas’ official policy document of 2017 (which is regularly, but wrongly, referred to as an updated Charter).

The narrative that Israel is simply an invention of modern colonialism, dreamed up by Victorian imperialists in the backrooms of Whitehall, inevitably involves an effort to re-write Jewish history – and this is where it becomes much more troubling, because it encourages the denial that there ever was a Jewish connection to the land of Israel, either in ancient times or through to the modern period.

“Europeans wanted to bring the Jews here to preserve their interests in the region... Israel is a colonial project that has nothing to do with Jews”, said Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, quite wrongly, in 2018. The argument that Israel is a European implant in the Middle East implies that all Israelis are white Europeans, erasing the experiences of hundreds of thousands of Mizrahi and Maghrebi [North African] Jews who emigrated to Israel from across the Middle East and north Africa. In short, it involves the imposition onto Jews of a false account of our own history and a restrictive, unwanted definition of

Jewish identity, designed to support a politics that most Jews would consider hostile, even dangerous. Whether this is the intention or not is beside the point: this is how it works in practice.

When we look back at the past year, there is much that is obviously antisemitic. Some of the justifications and excuses made for the brutality of October 7 are utterly nauseating, matched only in their disgrace by those who deny that the Hamas atrocities of that day happened at all. But I fear that more long-lasting damage will be done by this pernicious invention of a false version of Jewish history, that deliberately denies or ignores all that makes

“The narrative that Israel is simply an invention of modern colonialism, dreamed up by Victorian imperialists in the backrooms of Whitehall, inevitably involves an effort to re-write Jewish history”

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the Jews a people, as part of a project to reverse the single greatest political achievement of the Jewish people in the post-Shoah (Holocaust) years. Those who wish to remove the Jewish state from the world seek to do so by first erasing the Jewish people from history. And this, ultimately, is the deepest antisemitism of all.

AIR

Dr Dave Rich is Director of Policy at the UK's Community Security Trust and author of Everyday Hate: How Antisemitism Is Built into our World and How You Can Change It (Biteback Publishing, May 2023). Reprinted from "Everyday Hate", his substack blog. © Dave Rich, reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

HAMAS' COMMAND CENTRES IN SCHOOLS

Seth J. Frantzman

Hamas has moved its terrorist command and control centres into numerous schools in Gaza. Over the past two months, the IDF has carried out almost 20 airstrikes on these Hamas command centres. The decision by Hamas to exploit the former schools of Gaza comes after it also sought to embed itself in hospitals.

The Israel Defence Force (IDF) began a new operation in Gaza in the second week of October, directed at Hamas activity in Jabaliya, in northern Gaza. The operation is the latest attempt to uproot Hamas from areas within Gaza. The IDF is operating in other areas of northern Gaza and controls the Netzarim corridor south of Gaza City and the Philadelphi corridor in southern Gaza.

In general, the IDF has reduced its operations in Gaza to low intensity over the last several months. With the Hamas Rafah brigades defeated, the theory was that Hamas didn't have many organised units in Gaza.

However, where Hamas does have organised units, it has often set up command and control centres in schools.



Graphic showing Hamas use of a school as a base – an increasingly common pattern in northern Gaza (Image: IDF)

This might be a long-term tactic Hamas has used. However, it appears more pronounced in recent months.

Here is what is known about Hamas and its use of schools in Gaza during the last month-and-a-half.

On September 1, the IDF reported that it carried out a strike on a Hamas “command and control center embedded inside the area that previously served as the Safad School in Gaza City.” The IDF said Hamas used this centre to plan and carry out terror attacks against the IDF and the State of Israel.

“Prior to the strike, numerous steps were taken to mitigate the risk of harming civilians, including the use of precise munitions, aerial surveillance, and additional intelligence,” it reported.

The IDF added that “the Hamas terrorist organisation systematically violates international law and operates from within civilian infrastructure and shelters in the Gaza Strip, brutally exploiting the Gazan civilian population for its terrorist activities.”

In all the cases reviewed, the IDF used similar language regarding attempts to mitigate the risk of harming civilians and also noted that Hamas violates international law.

On Sept. 7, the IDF struck another command and control centre in the Halima al-Sa'diyya School in the northern Gaza Strip. In addition, the Israel Air Force struck terrorists who had set up shop inside what was previously the Amr Ibn al-As School in the northern Gaza Strip.

Four days later, another Hamas command and control centre was found in a building that had been al-Jaouni School in Nuseirat in central Gaza.

The Sept. 11 strike on this former school eliminated a number of key terrorists, including Aysar Karadia, a terrorist in Hamas brigades who also worked for Hamas internal security forces, and a number of Hamas members who the IDF accused of moonlighting as UNRWA employees.

The next day, the Israel Air Force also targeted the former Raazi al-Shua School in Beit Hanoun.

On Sept. 18, the IDF targeted a building that had been the Ibn al-Haytam School in Gaza City.

Three days later, another strike hit al-Falah School in

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Gaza City, and soon after, another Hamas command centre was found in the Kafr Qasem School in northern Gaza.

Throughout the rest of September, the IDF identified four more former schools used by Hamas as command and control centres.

In the first week of October, the IDF appears to have found more Hamas command and control centres in schools and has increased the number of missions against these sites.

For instance, on Oct. 2 the IDF targeted Hamas centres inside compounds that had been the Muscat and Rimal Schools in northern Gaza. In central Gaza, Hamas used al-Bureij Preparatory School and also the Nuseirat Girls' School.

There were other attacks on command and control centres in other former schools on Oct. 5, 6 and 8.

The pattern of Hamas using schools in Gaza is clear. Most of the schools are in northern Gaza, with some in central Gaza.

It appears Hamas has not been able to use as many schools in Khan Younis or southern Gaza, either because of previous IDF operations or because of the IDF's presence nearby. AIR

Seth J. Frantzman is the senior Middle East Correspondent and analyst at the Jerusalem Post. © Jerusalem Post (jpost.com), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

INTERVIEW: GETTING GAZA WRONG

Ariel Kahana

As we began our Zoom call, John Spencer made a statement that should resonate globally. "Everything that the world has heard about Gaza has actually been counterfactual. It has been wrong. What Israel has done to protect civilians, and despite what Hamas has wanted, has been an amazing achievement that I didn't even, personally as an urban warfare scholar, think was possible."

Major John Spencer speaks from extensive experience. After a long combat career in the US Army, including two tours in Iraq as both soldier and commander, Spencer emerged as one of the world's foremost experts in urban warfare. Many consider him the top authority in the field.

Currently, he leads Urban Warfare Studies at West Point, the US Military Academy, regularly advising top brass in the US military and other armies. Spencer also co-founded the "International Working Group on Subterranean Warfare" and has authored three books in these fields.

Recently, he visited Israel for the annual Shabtai Shavit

International Conference on October 6 & 7, organised by the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) at Reichman University.

He claims the war Israel has waged since October 7 defies comparison to any previous military conflict. "I wrote an article explaining that it's like comparing apples to oranges," Spencer said.

"Israel has once again proven that when attacked, it can achieve the impossible.

Its actions in Gaza since October 7, despite Hamas' 15 years of fortification and preparation, 385 miles of tunnels, a strategy of human shields, the hostage crisis, and simultaneous attacks from Hezbollah, Iran, and the Houthis – are unprecedented. No other army in the world has done this, and I believe none is capable of it. Some might interpret this as Israeli weakness. As a military analyst, I see it as a testament to Israel's unique capabilities."

He adds, "I acknowledge Hamas' planning for October 7, likely supported by another state. But the attack wasn't worse only because the Israelis have been fighting back ever since."



Retired US Major John Spencer
(Image: X/ @SpencerGuard)

October 7 dealt a severe blow to Israeli deterrence, a cornerstone of regional stability that had kept both adversaries and allies in check across the Middle East for decades. Have Israel's recent actions, including the alleged pager attack, restored this deterrent image?

"October 7 was catastrophic for Israel's regional security perception, reflecting accumulated threats and global miscalculations about the hierarchy of threats, including existential ones to Israel. But October 7 has been transformative – for Israel, the Middle East, and hopefully, the world. The Iranian regime's grand strategy aims to destroy Israel, and then target the US, using proxy armies. The approach to these terrorist proxies was misguided, not just by Israel but globally. Israel's security paradigm, internal defences, military size, technological reliance, and assumptions about Hamas' true intentions all proved problematic. Yet, as in past crises, Israel has demonstrated its ability to achieve the seemingly impossible when attacked. Moreover, Israel's allies have shown it doesn't stand alone. As an American, I take pride in US military efforts to intercept Iranian rockets, missiles, and drones, with support from Arab nations like Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

"Personally, I'm disheartened by the global disinformation campaign against Israel. It exploits very old antisemitic beliefs about Israel and its actions. But I think Israel has also demonstrated its strength through this – not just to the US, but to many regional allies. You've had to navigate an incredibly complex strategic environment, unparal-



The Hamas tunnel network is one of many factors making Gaza an “incredibly complex strategic environment” with no military parallel (Image: AAP)

leled outside of Israel. Israel must fight these existential wars, yet still finds a way to achieve the unthinkable. I believe that’s what we’ve witnessed since October 7. Oct. 6 can never recur in any domain.”

Do you think our region shares this view? In other words, do the countries that have made peace with us, and even those that haven’t, believe Israel has restored its deterrence?

“That’s a crucial question. Whether we’re talking about proxy terrorist armies or the Islamic regime itself – I believe Israel’s strength has been proven. I think Hamas and Hezbollah expected to inflict much more damage, but Israel’s power has been displayed to the world. The question is whether the Islamic regime in Iran will change its approach.”

That’s precisely the question. In Teheran’s eyes, do you think Israel appears stronger or weaker than on October 6?

“I believe they think they struck Israel when it was vulnerable, causing multi-year damage in many areas that Israel will need to recover from. But this also exposed Israel’s strengths. They had one opportunity. It revealed Israel’s weaknesses, but also the truth – that the US doesn’t abandon Israel under direct attack from the Islamic regime, and the fact that someone eliminated a very important terrorist

under the Islamic regime’s protection [Ismail Haniyeh]. So all these are signals of strength. Not absolute power. I don’t think the Iranians will abandon their strategy to destroy Israel, but they’ll need to recalculate their approach now that their ‘hands’ have been exposed. So they’ll be more cautious about Israel’s strength now, but they still believe they can achieve their long-term goal.”

Let’s return to Lebanon. What does international law permit our soldiers to do in southern Lebanon?

“Well, under international law, especially Article 51 of the UN Charter, Israel can do what’s necessary to defend itself against attack. There’s a significant difference from Gaza, as in Lebanon there’s a place where civilians can be safely evacuated. In Gaza, due to Egypt, civilians had no exit point from the combat zone. In Lebanon, it’s different. So soldiers can operate within all the laws of war, proportionality, necessity, to do what’s needed to remove the threat that has persisted for 11 months.”

THE WORLD’S HYPOCRISY

“The international courts, the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ), risk making their own true objectives very irrelevant in the international community,” Spencer says. “The reason is that both cases against Israel, especially in the ICC, lack foundation. They’re not based on any evidence – not on field investigations, nor complementary investigations. These are cases based on accusations and statements, usually relying on what we call ‘outcome-based analysis’. That’s not how the laws of war work.”

Please explain.

“The investigation shouldn’t examine the results of military action, but rather the decisions that a military commander or leader makes in real-time, based on military necessity, or the measures taken to evacuate civilians from the area. An investigation can’t be based on numbers, certainly not on numbers and statistics from a terrorist organisation, which are inaccurate. These institutions were established for genuine humanitarian goals so that individuals and nations would comply with international law, as Israel does. But they’re becoming irrelevant and undermining their own real legitimacy because they’re deviating from the purposes for which they were established. They shouldn’t have allowed these cases to proceed at all. Everyone can have their own opinions about the number of civilians killed in Gaza, but not their own facts. This shows they’re a political organisation. Therefore, the fact is they’re becoming less relevant. That’s my opinion.”

Their main claim, and that of others against Israel, is the allegedly high number of civilian or non-combatant casualties. They compare the war in Gaza to Mosul, for example.

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“There’s actually no comparison. I wrote an article about that showing that that’s apples to oranges. Yes, the Battle of Mosul in 2016 against ISIS was a really big, the biggest battle since World War II, because just 3,000 ISIS fighters were able to hold a city for two years and prepare it for battle, whereas in Gaza, Hamas had two decades almost to prepare every inch of Gaza for war, to have the 400 miles of tunnels, to weaponise the laws of war and what’s called lawfare. There actually is no comparison, especially when they try to compare a single battle to a war. There are ten battles of Mosul in Gaza. There are two Stalingrads there. There’s just no comparison at the scale or the intensity or the preparedness of the urban defender, which means that it’s going to take a lot to get to the urban defender who has built his entire cities for the sole purpose of war, the underground networks, the caches, and buildings. I can’t find a historical example.”

So what would you say to an ambassador who told me that the destruction in Gaza is worse than in Dresden in 1945?

“Tell him to do his homework. The fact is that we dropped three or four times more on Iraq in 40 days than was dropped on Dresden. The number of civilian casualties in Dresden wasn’t known for years, so it’s just a foolish comparison, devoid of context. There were no hostages there, no requirement to enter Dresden on the ground, the objectives of that operation were different, and certainly the damage is not greater. So these are essentially more lies – damned lies.”

AIR

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SYDNEY SHEIKH HOLDS HATEFUL VIGIL MOURNING NASRALLAH

Ran Porat

Shi’ite cleric Youssef Nabha is the imam of the Arrahman mosque in Sydney. He is an avid supporter of the Iranian regime, spreads conspiracy theories (such as ‘the US created ISIS’) and has openly voiced antisemitic views multiple times. In 2019, an Australian fund where Nabha was a director (*Al-Mabarat*) lost its charity status. This is possibly because ties between this organisation and Iran’s terror proxy in Lebanon, Hezbollah, surfaced in the media. In 2020, he praised Iranian terror mastermind General Qassim Soleimani shortly after he was assassinated by the US.

On Sept. 27, Hezbollah’s leader, Hassan Nasrallah, was killed in an Israeli airstrike in Beirut, along with other top commanders of the terror organisation. It was no surprise that Nabha, likely shocked by death of his heroes, quickly arranged a three-day vigil in his mosque for “the righteous martyrs, the master of resistance” – as the notice about the event read.

In the first vigil (Sept. 27), Nabha told the audience that “Israel wages its war on Lebanon and behind it [are] all the parties from America and the hypocritical, charlatan and lying West. [Israel’s PM] Netanyahu also teaches all the arts of lying and hypocrisy. These parties who meet in order to eradicate the resistance and in order to eradicate Lebanon with its people and its honour and in order to besiege it and invade its land if they can.”



Sheik Youssef Nabha of Sydney’s Arrahman Mosque (Image: YouTube screenshot)

He then boasted that while Muslims believe in the after-life and are not afraid to die, “your enemy, he is keen on life. He would like to live a thousand years, connected to life. I mean, imagine that one missile lands, it lands a million and 200,000 [Israelis] in the shelters. But we remember when the planes came, we would go up to the roofs to watch.”

Islam will win, promised Nabha, and will eventually destroy Israel: “Now we will invade them and they will not invade us. Let the Israelis prepare their brigades, perhaps after this war, in which there will either be final victory or it will be the first fruits of the final victory, because it sometimes needs stages.”

Hailing the attacks on Israel by “all those supporting fronts from Syria to Iraq to Yemen to Iran in their supportive stance for this entire axis [of Iranian proxies],” Nabha prophesied that “This war may carry the good news of

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victory, and it gives us that... live in it... high and lofty morale.”

“Israel or this arrogant one [a derogatory term for the West] exploits [the war] to start tearing apart and dispersing the Muslims,” warned Nabha. To prevent that, he said, the Islamic world must unite to outnumber the Israelis and easily destroy the Jewish state – as the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini, called for: “Imagine, brothers and sisters, if Muslims were united, perhaps a billion and a half or two billion Muslims in the world, as Imam Khomeini... said. If every Muslim had a bucket of water, they [Israel] would have drowned... There would be no need for missiles, no earthquake, no [battle of] Khaybar... a bucket of water, they would have drowned... Egypt is 115 million – 115 million! If they were to ‘liberate’ Israel, 115 million Egyptians would come.”

Slamming attempts to reach a ceasefire in the war in the Middle East and the mediating Arab countries assisting in this effort, Nabha concluded, “There is no doubt that Israel has committed and continues to commit the most heinous crimes in Palestine and Lebanon under an American-Western cover that arms and supports it with the latest missiles and military technology and provides it with money that prevents its economy from collapsing.”

Israelis lie to everyone in the world, and are headed by a liar PM, said Nabha: “Israeli lies have been combined to the point that they say that it is lying to them, that it is lying to everyone. Netanyahu is lying to everyone, even to the Americans, the West, and the Arabs... Israeli lies represented by Netanyahu have been combined with American-Western hypocrisy and deception, resulting in an uncompromising war on Palestine and Lebanon, which will bring nothing but disappointment, failure, and defeat to Israel and its supporters, God willing, and which will achieve the beginning of a resounding victory for Palestine and Lebanon, God willing. They see it far away, but we see it close.”

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرِّسَالُ أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُ عَلَىٰ أَعْيُنِهِمْ أُولَئِكَ يَنْقَلِبُ
 عَلَىٰ عُنُقِهِمْ لَمَّا بَعَثَ اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدًا وَمِنْ قَبْلِ اللَّهِ الشَّاكِرِينَ
 سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ
 بِمَقَامِ الْأَسَى وَالْحُزْنِ وَالتَّسْلِيمِ لِقَضَاءِ اللَّهِ وَقَدْرِهِ تَعْلَى الْمُسْلِمُونَ وَاللِّبَانِيُّونَ وَجَمِيعَ أحرار العالم
 نَبَا اسْتَشْهَدَ سَيِّدَ الْقِيَامَةِ
 سَمَاعَةَ الْعَلَمَةَ الْمَجَاهِدَ السَّيِّدَ حَسَنَ نَصْرَاللَّهِ (رض)
 وَيَهْدَى الْعُنُقِيَّةَ الْأَيُّمَةَ سَيِّدًا مَجْسُودًا
 عَنْ رُوحِ سَمَاعَتِهِ الطَّاهِرَةِ، أرواح الشهداء الأبرار الذين ارتقوا معه، وصوم شهداء
 لبنان وفلسطين وعالمنا الإسلامي
 الزَّمان (ثلاثة أيام): ابتداء من يوم الأحد 2024/09/29 في الساعة : 6.30 مساء
 المكان: مسجد الرحمان Kingsgrove Circuit, 20 Garema Cct.
 نسأل الله لشهادتنا الرحمة ولكم الأجر والثواب.
 A majlis Azaa Husseinii will be held in Arrahman mosque
 for the souls of the righteous martyrs, the master of resistance, Sayyed
 Hassan Nasrallah (may God be pleased with him), and the souls of the
 martyrs who ascended with him, and the martyrs of Lebanon, Palestine,
 and our Islamic world.
 a memorial service will be held (Three days) on
 Today Sunday 29th September, Monday 30th and Tuesday 1st October
 At 6:30 pm.
 Masjid Arrahman, 20 Garema Cct, Kingsgrove.
 May God reward you greatly, and grant mercy and a high status to the martyrs.

The Arrahman mosque’s invitation to a vigil for the righteous martyr and “master of resistance” Hassan Nasrallah

Near the end of his sermon, Nabha resorted back to the traditional Muslim antisemitic trope that Jews have distorted the “true religion” and are cursed by God: “Those who were entrusted with the Torah and then did not take it up are like that of a donkey carrying volumes. Wretched is the example of the people who deny the verses of Allah. And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people. Say, ‘O you who are Jews, if you claim that you are allies of Allah rather than the people, then wish for death, if you should be truthful.’ But they will never wish for it, because of what their hands have put forth. And Allah is knowing of the wrongdoers.”

A few days later (Sept. 29), Nabha again spoke about Nasrallah in his sermon and praised martyrdom: “The battle has changed [since past times] through technological weapons and the treachery, deceit and trickery that the Israelis and Americans are doing to seize opportunities to kill others. Therefore, it is natural for this resistance fighter and this mujahid to be martyred when he has lived 40 or 42 [years] of his honourable and blessed life in this line, in this path. In this, it is natural for him to be a martyr.”

Nabha is not alone in his support for Hezbollah among Australian Muslim preachers. At least two more mosques in Sydney held mourning ceremonies for Nasrallah, which were attended by hundreds. In one of them, al-Zahra Mosque in Arncliffe, people were told pray for “the soul of the leader of the Islamic Resistance in Lebanon, Sayed Hassan Nasrallah, the souls of the righteous martyrs who departed with him and all those who have been innocently slain as a result of the Zionist aggression in Lebanon and Palestine.” And prominent Sheikh Ahmad Jundi prayed for Hezbollah’s victory against Israel during an event at al-Sadiq College in Sydney, attended by an audience of children.

Hezbollah in its entirety has been a proscribed terror organisation in Australia since 2021. Our law enforcement agencies should be taking immediate action against the people involved in these events celebrating terrorism and calling for direct support for this banned terror group. AIR

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UNHAPPY ANNIVERSARY IN CANBERRA

Jamie Hyams

As the first order of business on October 8, the first Parliamentary sitting day after October 7, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese moved a lengthy motion

that, among other things, condemned the Hamas attacks, called for the release of the hostages, condemned anti-semitism, recognised the number of Palestinians killed, called on Iran to cease its destabilisation while recognising Israel's right to defend itself against Iran's attacks, supported a ceasefire and affirmed support for a two-state solution.

Opposition Leader Peter Dutton condemned the Hamas attacks and antisemitism in Australia, but said the Coalition could not support the motion because it went “well beyond the intent of what should be a motion to mark the loss of life of 1,200 people, on the first anniversary” of the attacks, singling out the call for a ceasefire especially.

Jewish ALP MP Josh Burns said, “this motion... recognises the fact that, for no excusable reason, thousands of militants came in and ripped apart communities and traumatised a country.”

Jewish Liberal MP Julian Leaser said, “We can't have a ceasefire at the moment that would allow terrorist organisations... to regroup and reform and continue to attack innocent civilians.”

Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs Tim Watts noted, “They were terrorist attacks characterised not just by their brutality... but by the appalling broadcasting of this depravity, a unique innovation in this depraved attack,” but defended the inclusion of the paragraph mentioned by Mr Dutton.

Shadow Minister for Government Services and the Digital Economy and Science and the Arts Paul Fletcher noted the Government had changed the standing orders to disallow amendments. He said that in the circumstances, “the response of... Israel... a country that is and should be a beacon of hope for nations around the world – to defend itself, to defend its people, to restore order, is... appropriate and proportionate.”

Shadow Trade Minister Kevin Hogan noted the attackers “were happy to do some of the most horrific, barbaric things that a human being can do to another... but their killers celebrated it. That's what makes this all the more horrific.”

Independent Allegra Spender pointed out, “Hamas didn't protect the people it claimed to lead. It hid its weapons behind civilians and it used them as human shields.”

The motion passed with the ALP and the independents voting in favour, the Coalition against and the Greens abstaining.

Mr Dutton then sought to introduce his own lengthy motion focussed only on the attacks and the need to combat antisemitism, but the ALP moved a motion to adjourn

the matter, which was carried with the ALP and Greens voting in favour and Coalition and independents against.

Later that day in the Senate, Foreign Minister Senator Penny Wong moved the same motion as Albanese had.

Shadow Foreign Minister Senator Simon Birmingham moved some amendments, and said the attacks “were so deliberately barbaric and so rich in torture and inhumane acts that it's hard for any decent-meaning person... to fully understand what occurred.”

Greens Foreign Affairs spokesperson Senator Jordon Steele-John moved his own motion that condemned the attack and antisemitism and Islamophobia, and called for the release of the hostages, but also condemned Israel's “ongoing genocide and war crimes in Gaza” and called for sanctions on Israel.

“Jewish Liberal MP Julian Leaser said, ‘We can't have a ceasefire at the moment that would allow terrorist organisations... to regroup and reform and continue to attack innocent civilians.’”

Coalition Senators Shadow Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development Bridget McKenzie; Shadow Minister for Health, Aged Care and Sport Anne Ruston; Shadow Home Affairs Minister James Paterson; Shadow Finance Minister Jane Hume; Shadow Minister for Indigenous Australians Jacinta Nampijinpa Price; Shadow Minister for Education Sarah Henderson; Shadow Minister for Environment, Fisheries and Forestry Jonathon Duniam; and Shadow

Assistant Foreign Minister Claire Chandler, along with Coalition Senators James McGrath, Dean Smith, Kerryne Liddle, Paul Scarr, Matt O'Sullivan, Linda Reynolds, Maria Kovacic, Slade Brockman, Hollie Hughes, Richard Colbeck and ALP Senator Raff Ciccone all spoke movingly in support of Israel and the hostages, and in condemnation of the Hamas attacks and antisemitism.

By contrast, Greens Senator David Shoebriidge referred to the “genocide” and “occupation of Palestine”, while former Greens Senator and now independent Lidia Thorpe accused Israel of genocide, referred to “so-called Israel” and finished by declaring “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.”

The ALP accepted some of Senator Birmingham's amendments, but the rest were defeated on the votes of the ALP, Greens and independent Senators Pocock, Payman, Thorpe and Tyrell. Only the Greens, Payman and Thorpe opposed his amendments that the ALP accepted, and the amended motion, which then ultimately passed. Only the Greens, Payman, Pocock and Tyrell supported Steele-John's motion.

Interestingly, the Government motion's paragraph calling for a two-state solution, which was voted on separately in the Senate, was defeated when the Coalition opposed it because the ALP refused to insert the word “negotiated” in the call for a “two-state” resolution, while the Greens abstained.


 THE
CINE FILE

The day the music died

Surviving October 7th: We Will Dance Again

Directed by Yariv Mozer; released 23 August, 2024

Allon Lee

Artistic works involving Jews and Israel often need to battle on multiple fronts. “Denialists” can challenge the veracity of events, no matter how well-documented. Then there is the poisonous accusation that “Zionists” exploit the arts, sports, and even humanitarian gestures to “launder” Israel’s persecution of Palestinians.

This is one reason Israeli filmmaker Yariv Mozer chose to cover Hamas’ massacre at the Supernova music festival for his new documentary – *Surviving October 7th: We Will Dance Again*.

As he explained to the *Times of Israel*, Supernova “wasn’t political and we knew this film could cross borders and be easier to bring to the world... The parties weren’t in the army, they came to party, and they found themselves in a scene of terror.”

The BBC conditioned its broadcasting of the documentary on Mozer never referring to Hamas as terrorists. Yet, given the self-evidently horrific actions we see – 364 people out of around 3,500 at the festival were murdered and 44 more kidnapped to Gaza – this unfortunate compromise is largely unnoticeable.

The film tells the story of October 7 from the perspectives of 17 partygoers, individually talking direct to camera.

Their monologues are intercut with an abundance of audio-visual material from CCTV, car dashcams, mobile phones, calls to emergency services, as well as Hamas bodycam footage, to create a near minute-by-minute reconstruction.

Running for 90 minutes, the result is a taut, chilling, raw, deeply moving and surprisingly intimate experience.

It begins in the early hours of October 7 and sets the scene by introducing the *dramatis personae* – their backgrounds and how they ended up at the festival.

When the festivities are prematurely ended by a huge barrage of rockets from Gaza at

6:30am, the documentary shifts, becoming a study in contrasts.

On one side are the rampaging hate-filled terrorists high on Islamist dogma and a stimulant called captagon. Meanwhile, at the party, many are riding high on a wave of chemically enhanced feelings of love courtesy of MDMA (aka “Ecstasy”).

Similarly, while we hear the terrorists gleefully slaughter the innocent as they call out “*Allahu Akbar*” (God is greatest), terrified Israelis recite the *Shema* – “Hear O Israel, the Lord is God, the Lord is One” – an age-old affirmation of Jewish identity and the Jewish prayer recited before one’s death.

When the rockets begin falling, some attendees pack up and leave, while the more spaced out and chilled remain. But once the enormity of what is transpiring sinks in, many exhibit an amazing degree of level-headedness.

Some who manage to escape the bottleneck of cars at the exit stop at roadside bomb shelters – *migunit* – to wait out the incoming missiles, unaware that thousands of terrorists are pouring into Israel.

The *migunit*, ubiquitous in southern Israel, become a death trap when the terrorists arrive.

Others, like Elad, 23, seek shelter at a military base, thinking it’s “the safest place you could be,” unaware terrorists are there too.

Lacking self-awareness, at one point, a terrorist says, “They’ll never know what happened here in 20 million years.” Except, of course, the terrorists broadcast their monstrous crimes in real time on social media.

Israelis were also capturing events on their mobile phones as Natanel, 19, explains, “so that I [can] believe it myself... to look at it later, if there is a later.”

There is much to absorb in the documentary, probably too much for a single viewing. Rewatching is painful, but well worth it.

We Will Dance Again is a tale of ordinary people thrust into an extraordinary situation. In the end, the astounding humanity and concern the partygoers show one another in their fight to survive shines through. AIR

At time of publication, the opportunity for Australians to watch the documentary on TV was unclear. Channel 9 bought the Australian rights and was reported to be planning to air it on October 7, but this did not occur. A Nine spokesperson told AIJAC there were no plans to screen it. Subsequently, some online sites claimed Nine intends screening it before the end of October. Alternatively, the documentary can be viewed on Apple TV (subscription required).





The failures, the heroes and the blood: The literature of October 7

The October 7 War: Israel's Battle for Security in Gaza

Seth J. Frantzman

Wicked Son, July 2024, 348 pp., \$33.12



The Gates of Gaza: A Story of Betrayal, Survival, and Hope in Israel's Borderlands

Amir Tibon

Little Brown & Co, Sept. 2024, 352 pp., \$46.75



One Day in October: Forty Heroes, Forty Stories compiled by Yair Agmon and Oriya Mevorach

Magid, October 2024, 400 pp., \$41.75



Calev Ben-Dor

Ours is not a bloodline but a textline,' Amos Oz and his daughter Fania Oz-Salzberger tell us in their wonderful book, *Jews and Words*. So we should not be overly surprised that as the anniversary of the Hamas massacre on October 7 was drawing closer, hundreds of thousands of words had been written to mark the event – 80 Hebrew-language books published in Israel so far – to help us better understand that day.

In different ways, *One Day in October* by Yair Agmon and Oriya Mevorach; *The October 7 War*, by Seth Frantzman; and *The Gates of Gaza* by Amir Tibon do just that.



The Fiasco: Gazans capture an Israeli tank on October 7 (Image: Anas Mohammed/ Shutterstock)

ISRAEL'S MISTAKEN 'CONCEPTION'

A journalist who has spent time living in and travelling across the region writing about military tactics and strategy, Frantzman does a good job at mapping out the conception

that led to the IDF's failure to prepare for the Hamas attack. He notes the building of the concrete underground barrier, which Israel came to over-rely on, which was "designed to deal with the 2014 threat" (namely Hamas' offensive tunnels that entered Israeli territory). That was a blunder, according to Yossi Langotsky, an Israeli geologist and colonel in the reserves who consulted on how to handle the tunnel threat, "along the lines of the Maginot line" [*The French fortifications that failed to stop the Nazi invasion in WW2 – Ed*].

The Netanyahu-led Government and the security establishment believed Hamas to be uninterested in war. Frantzman writes of how, in September 2023, Israeli security officials travelled to Doha in Qatar to discuss more funding to Gaza and allowing more daily labourers from the Strip into Israel. Israel's assessment was that Hamas was deterred and any escalation in rhetoric or threats was actually for money and work. "Hamas had been defeated in 2002, 2009, 2012, 2014, and 2021, and it would be defeated again. Also, Hamas had not changed. It didn't have new weapons."

Frantzman also describes the problems on the day itself. The gaps in how the IDF warnings were communicated to the top brass. How Hamas' attack on the army base at Reim blinded the IDF to the extent of the attack. In Kibbutz Be'eri, Arik Kraunik, who had the keys to the armoury where the security team could access rifles and armoured vests, was killed in the initial attack before he could distribute the gear and weapons. This left the rest of the dozen members of the team unable to obtain more rifles to defend the community. "The security team kept fighting, but they had one rifle, which passed from one wounded man to another as members of the team became incapacitated," Frantzman explains.

The challenge is how one can effectively analyse a war that is ongoing and whose end is uncertain. And, for some readers, the various units and



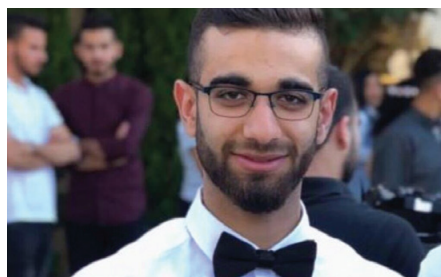
places may become hard to follow – the book is filled with details about Shayetet 13, Duvdevan, Yahalom commandos, Yasam police commandos, Shaldag, Sayeret Matkal and others. But those looking for details about the years preceding the attack, the day itself and the last 12 months of military operations will undoubtedly learn a great deal.

SURROUNDED BY SUPER-HEROES

One Day in October, meanwhile, introduces us to 40 real-life Israeli heroes, in their own words or the words of their loved ones. Many include broadly secular or national religious Jewish-Israelis: Aner Shapiro threw out grenades seven times after they were thrown into his shelter (in which Hirsch Goldberg-Polin was also hiding) before the explosion of the eighth killed him; brothers Noam and Yishay Slotki who fought (and died) together protecting Kibbutz Alumim; 54-year-old Chief Supt. Avi Amar, who fought in Sderot, Kibbutz Kfar Aza, and finally Kibbutz Be’eri where he was killed; Livni Ben-Yehuda, the first female infantry commander and head of a border defence battalion, who stood by the fence breach trying to stem the tide of terrorists entering Israel; retired IDF veteran Eran Masas, 46, from Kiryat Ata near Haifa, who drove 200 kilometres to Sderot to help and ended up directing Nova survivors to safety; and the story of Yotam Chayim, told by his mother, about a boy who overcame many difficulties before escaping Hamas kidnappers and tragically being shot by the IDF.

But the book also does a good job of featuring different groups within Israeli society: 23-year-old Arab Israeli Awad Darawshe, a paramedic at the Nova Festival who refused to flee and believed he could talk Hamas down; Nasreen Yousef, a Druze mother who interrogated captured Hamas fighters, spoke to their commander on the phone pretending

to be a sympathiser, and then told the IDF of their location; Bedouin minivan drivers Yosef El Zaidneh and his late cousin Abed al-Rahman al-Nasarah who rushed towards the festival to rescue those fleeing; ultra-Orthodox ambulance drivers who continued past IDF checkpoints to reach the wounded (“If I’m going to drive on Shabbat” one says, “it’s in order to save lives”) or ZAKA [A voluntary post-disaster response organisation – Ed.] volunteer Yossi Landau who recounted how the short stretch of road on Route 232 that usually takes ten minutes to walk took him and his colleagues seven hours to traverse because of the number of charred bodies in the vehicles.



October 7 heroes Awad Darawshe (top) and Shlomo Ron

All 40 stories are very moving but two primarily remained in my memory. One was the testimony of Thomas Hand, the Irish father of nine-year-old Emily who was kidnapped from Kibbutz Be’eri and freed in late November (Emily’s memories are also featured in the book). Thomas recounts that when he went to meet Emily, he brought their dog, Jonesy “because I wasn’t sure she’d want to hug me.” Throughout her time in Gaza Thomas thought that perhaps Emily was angry with him (she wasn’t) for not being with her to protect her, and he partially fears their reunion.

The other story is one titled “The Exact Opposite of All Those Hero

Stories” and refers to Shlomo Ron of Nahal Oz. As Hamas gunmen were about to enter the house, the 85-year-old Ron went to the living room to sit in his easy chair. Having shot and murdered him on sight, the terrorists assumed he was alone, and left the house. In his quick thinking and willingness to sacrifice, Ron’s actions allowed his family to survive.

The book is a telling reminder that the post-heroic society of many Western countries isn’t shared by Israelis (despite the perception that many Israelis dream of a hi-tech exit and a move to Berlin or California). It also emphasises – as I try to remind myself – that as we walk in the streets of Israel, we are surrounded by super-heroes. The country is full of them.

One tale of heroism that was not featured in the book is also related to Kibbutz Nahal Oz – that of retired Major General Noam Tibon, who with his wife drove to the kibbutz to save their son Amir, his wife Miri and their two granddaughters Galia and Carmel. That story is the subject of the beautifully written *The Gates of Gaza*, by Amir himself, which alternates between the harrowing events of the day itself and the history of Nahal Oz, where Amir and Miri made their home in the aftermath of Operation Protective Edge in 2014. It’s a real page turner, and the reader is introduced to various characters over the years, several of whom are ultimately brutally murdered or taken hostage on October 7.

On that dark day I was actually outside of Sorrento, Italy, on a family holiday. In the ensuing days, shocked, traumatised, and unable to get home, our hearts were in the East while we were in the West. For better or for worse, I chose not to delve too deeply into the gruesome details. Yet there was one story that consistently brought me close to tears every time I saw it – that of Noam Tibon fighting his way through the chaos and death to reach his family, banging on the door of their safe room and say-

ing “*saba hee-gia*” – “grandpa is here”. Even as I write these words, I choke up a little.

MOSHE DAYAN’S 1956 EULOGY

Hovering amongst the pages is the eulogy that Moshe Dayan gave at the funeral of Roi Rotberg, the first security chief of Kibbutz Nahal Oz, from where the book draws its title, the *Gates of Gaza* (a phrase also used in the Biblical Story of Samson.) In 1956, Rotberg was drawn out on horseback by Palestinian gunmen towards a nearby wheat field and then killed and mutilated and dragged across to the Gaza/Egyptian side of the border.

“Not from the Arabs of Gaza must we demand the blood of Roi” Dayan says “but from ourselves;”

How our eyes are closed to the reality of our fate, unwilling to see the destiny of our generation in its full cruelty. Have we forgotten that this small band of youths, settled in Nahal Oz, carries on its shoulders the heavy gates of Gaza, beyond which hundreds of thousands of eyes and arms huddle together and pray for the onset of our weakness so that they may tear us to pieces – has this been forgotten? For we know that if the hope of our destruction is to perish, we must be, morning and evening, armed and ready.

A generation of settlement are we, and without the steel helmet and the maw of the cannon we shall not plant a tree, nor build a house. Our children shall not have lives to live if we do not dig shelters; and without the barbed wire fence and the machine gun, we shall not pave a path nor drill for water. The millions of Jews, annihilated without a land, peer out at us from the ashes of Israeli history and command us to settle and rebuild a land for our people. But beyond the furrow that marks the border, lies a surging sea of hatred and vengeance, yearning for the day that the tranquillity blunts our alertness, for the day that we heed the ambassadors of conspiring hypocrisy, who call for us to lay down our arms...



Moshe Dayan delivering his famous eulogy for Roi Rothberg at Nahal Oz in 1956 (Image: IDF archive)

We mustn't flinch from the hatred that accompanies and fills the lives of hundreds of thousands of Arabs, who live around us and are waiting for the moment when their hands may claim our blood. We mustn't avert our eyes, lest our hands be weakened. That is the decree of our generation.

As Tibon writes, Dayan’s eulogy – primarily the part about demanding the blood of Roi from ourselves rather than the Arabs of Gaza – is a stinging rebuke to Israel’s current generation of politicians. “Our own leadership has failed to take responsibility for the biggest security failure in the history of the state of Israel,” Tibon says.

Indeed, just as Jews are commanded to do over the High Holy Days, it demands we carry out a *cheshbon nefesh*, a reckoning of our own actions and policies.

But, of course, the eulogy has other components too: to not avert our eyes from the hatred emanating from Gaza. To be armed and ready. To remember those Jews looking at us from the ashes of history commanding us to secure a homeland.

How to balance those components Dayan doesn’t tell us. It’s not something any politician, soldier or book has the answer to.

“WE WERE GOING TO HAVE TO LIVE”

Where does this leave us? Tibon recounts that, after his rescues, with the electricity returned, and neighbours congregating in his apartment, “Ruti [a 70-year-old neighbour], with a dead serious look on her face, approached Miri in the living room. In front of everyone, she asked where she could find a pot for cooking pasta. Miri seemed confused. ‘Pasta? What are you talking about?’ she asked. But Ruti insisted. ‘I know we’ve all had a very long day,’ she said, ‘but there are ten children sitting in that little room, and they need to have dinner.’”

Tibon continues. “As I watched people eating – the children sitting on the floor of the safe room, their parents in the living room, and the soldiers out on the porch visible only through the cracks that the terrorists’ bullets had left in our windows – I realized that Ruti had just done us all a huge favor. She had told us, in a very few words, that since we were alive, we were going to have to live.”

Following the anniversary of that unimaginably terrible day, we, those who are alive, need to live. That’s not always such an easy task. In his introduction to *One Day in October*, Yair Agmon writes of his state of mind in the weeks and months after the terrible day. ‘This book lifted me out of depression,’ he writes. ‘These heroes don’t know it, but they saved my life too.’

He is likely not the only one. 

Calev Ben-Dor is the Deputy Editor of Fathom and a senior research associate at BICOM. © Fathom (fathomjournal.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

REBEL

PROPERTY GROUP

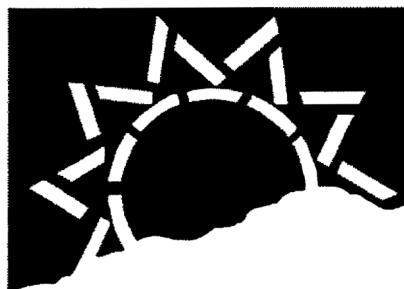
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NOTED AND QUOTED

THE MONTH IN MEDIA

VALE NASRALLAH

Media coverage of Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah's death was largely informative.

SBS TV "World News" (Sept. 29) noted that there were "celebrations" in the Middle East at the demise of Nasrallah, including in "militia-held parts of northern Syria."

Singapore-based analyst James Dorsey told *ABC RN* "Late Night Live" (Oct. 1) that Nasrallah's decision to join Hamas' war against Israel on Oct. 8 "was a gamble that cost him his life and put the movement that he built at great risk... He overestimated the degree to which Iran would come to his rescue [and] underestimated the Israelis. He thought that with October 7, the Hamas attack on Israel, Israel was on the ropes. Israel wasn't on the ropes. It was traumatised for sure. But it had been preparing to confront Hezbollah for a very long time."

ABC Middle East correspondent Eric Tlozek's online article on the assassination (Sept. 28) noted, "In Syria, Hezbollah fighters were implicated in multiple attacks on civilians and allegedly blocked food from being delivered to starving people, earning the enmity of senior Arab and Muslim leaders around the region."

Meanwhile, a *Sydney Morning Herald* editorial (Oct. 5) said Iranian Ambassador to Australia Ahmad Sadeghi was "unworthy of his job", given his social media posts praising Nasrallah as a "blessed martyr" who had opposed the "vile entity of the Zionist regime."

GOAL ORIENTED

On *ABC TV* "Insiders" (Sept. 29), *Australian* Foreign Editor Greg Sheridan summarised the goals guiding Israel's military strategy in Lebanon.

He said, "It's trying to damage Hez-

bollah and change the dynamics within Lebanon to the point where its own northern towns are safe again. It's trying to re-establish deterrence. Deterrence only works when it lives in the mind of your enemy. When your enemy says, 'if we hit these guys, they're going to hit us back so hard that we're not willing to accept that...' And, of course, let's not forget Hezbollah is the aggressor. They fired 9,000 missiles at Israel in the last year."

On *ABC Radio National* "Saturday Extra" (Sept. 28), veteran US Middle East adviser Aaron David Miller explained that Israel "lost faith, I think, in the possibility – largely because Nasrallah doesn't want it – of engaging the United States in a significant... diplomatic effort to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1701."

WHEN BOMBS BOOMERANG

In the *West Australian*, (Oct. 1), AIJAC's Oved Lobel explained why Israel was taking the fight to Hezbollah in Lebanon.

He said the Lebanese terror group started firing rockets at Israel the day after October 7 in solidarity with Hamas' massacre and since then, Israel has been targeted by 9,000 rockets, drones and missiles, displacing 60,000 Israelis.

Lobel wrote, "This is both Israel's legal right under international law and moral duty to its citizens. To paraphrase Sir Arthur Harris, Marshal of Britain's Air Force during World War II, Hezbollah entered this war under the rather childish delusion it was going to bomb everyone else, and nobody was going to bomb it."

AT HOME WITH MISSILES

On *ABC TV* "News" (Sept. 25),

Lebanese Health Minister Firass Abiad absurdly claimed that Israel had killed 569 people the previous day and only one was a Hezbollah member. Abiad said Israel's claim that Hezbollah stores missiles in people's homes was "an insult to the intelligence" – despite the hundreds of pictures and videos released documenting this practice.

Earlier (Sept. 23), Lebanese journalist Mohamed Clate told *ABC TV* "News" that Hezbollah does not fire rockets from residential areas. He said this was "an excuse" by Israel "to target civilian areas," just as it falsely claims there are terror tunnels under hospitals in Gaza.

On *ABC TV* "7.30" (Oct. 2), former Australian Ambassador to Israel Senator Dave Sharma explained Israel's challenge in needing to degrade Hezbollah, which "puts missile silos in people's roofs, adjacent to schools, underneath hospitals, just as Hamas did as well." He noted that Israel "trie[s] to minimise civilian casualties by warning residents of south Lebanon to vacate their homes."

NORTHERN EXPOSURE

Speaking to *Sky News* from Israel (Sept. 27), AIJAC's Joel Burnie said Hezbollah started firing rockets at Israel on Oct. 8, 2023, displacing 80,000 residents in Israel's north.

"In the Australian context... we're talking about a city the size of Hobart or Geelong or Newcastle." Any cease-fire must rein in Hezbollah and return the displaced Israelis to their communities, he said.

Meanwhile, in the *Australian Financial Review* (Sept. 28), AIJAC's Dr Bren Carlill argued that the key to ending the escalating fighting between Israel and Hezbollah is holding Iran accountable for its role in the conflict that

started on October 7.

GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS

Ahead of a UN General Assembly vote on a Palestinian-drafted resolution nominally demanding Israel's unconditional withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza within 12 months, AIJAC's Dr Colin Rubenstein told *Sky News* (Sept. 17) that the resolution text calls for "military, economic" boycotts of Israel, accuses it of apart-

heid and "basically call[s] for [Israel's] unravelling."

After the resolution's passage, writing in the *Daily Telegraph* (Sept. 24), Dr Rubenstein criticised the Australian Government for abstaining instead of voting "no".

The Government had scored "a clear own-goal", he said, and damaged the ALP's policy of supporting a negotiated process towards Israeli-Palestinian peace.

In Adelaide's *Advertiser* (Oct. 3), AIJAC's Justin Amler said the

resolution was a recipe for continued conflict and Australia's abstention was "morally incomprehensible".

TIME WARPED

In the *Australian* (Sept. 28), former Labor minister Dr Mike Kelly criticised Foreign Minister Penny Wong's call at the UN General Assembly for a set timeline for the declaration of a Palestinian state regardless of the status of negotiations.

Dr Kelly said none of the precon-



IN PARLIAMENT

Prime Minister **Anthony Albanese** (ALP, Grayndler) – Oct. 2 – Jewish New Year message: "We reject antisemitism... Jewish Australians have long been a valued and important part of the modern Australian story. Australia is your home, and you have made it a better home."

Opposition Leader **Peter Dutton** (Lib., Dickson) – Oct. 2 – Jewish New Year message: "... the Jewish people's spirit of strength, solidarity and survival – a spirit which has seen them overcome every trial and tribulation... will see Jewish people today prevail over present ordeals."

Foreign Minister Senator **Penny Wong** (ALP, SA) – Sept. 28 – National Statement to the UN General Assembly: "Palestinian civilians cannot be made to pay the price of defeating Hamas... Australia wants... new ways to build momentum, including the role of the Security Council in setting a pathway for two-states, with a clear timeline for the international declaration of Palestinian statehood."

Greens Deputy Leader Senator **Mehreen Faruqi** (NSW) – Oct. 9 – "Racism and colonialism are intertwined, and the monarchy is a symbol of that... It ties this nation's complicity to the horrific genocide in Gaza perpetrated by another settler colony founded by the British."

Shadow Assistant Foreign Minister Senator **Claire Chandler** (Lib., Tas.) – Oct. 8 – moved that the Senate consider "The need... to act in response to... Iran's widespread sponsoring of terrorism, promotion of antisemitism, and oppression of its people by listing the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organisation and declaring the current Iranian Ambassador... persona non grata."

Assistant Trade Minister Senator **Tim Ayres** (ALP, NSW) – "We maintain diplomatic relations with Iran because it's in Australia's national interest... and [that]... of our closest strategic partners."

Greens Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Senator **Jordon Steele-John** (WA) – "We will not be party to the blatant warmongering... implicit in [Senator Chandler's] motion."

The motion was defeated.

Shadow Foreign Minister Senator **Simon Birmingham** (Lib., SA) – Oct. 8 – "Does the Albanese Government agree that Israel's inherent right to self-defence necessitates it to remove the terrorist threat from its borders?"

Senator **Wong** replying: "Israel has a right to defend itself and... international law is to be respected."

Senator **Dave Sharma** (Lib., NSW) – Oct. 8 – commenting on Wong's timeline for recognition of Palestine: "Is the elimination of terrorists, like Hamas, from the governance... a precondition for recognition or would the minister's clear timeline override that objective?... Is a reformed Palestinian Authority a prerequisite for any recognition or, again, would your clear timeline override that objective?"

Senator **Alex Antic** (Lib., SA) – Oct. 8 – "Israel has every right... to defend its territory and... to defend its people from external threats."

Senator **Faruqi** – Oct. 8 – "Palestine will be free, inshallah."

Shadow Education Minister Senator **Sarah Henderson** (Lib., Vic.) – Sept. 20 – Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee: "Do you support slogans such as 'river to the sea' and 'intifada' being shouted on university campuses at Jewish students. Of course, ... 'intifada' is another way of calling for the destruction of Israel, as is 'river to the sea'."

Senator **Jacqui Lambie** (JLN, Tas.) – Sept. 18 – "I have been increasingly horrified by the antisemitism in this country."

Senator **Faruqi** – Sept. 18 – moving to debate a motion calling for an independent report into the killing of Zomi Frankcom: "We would never ask a murderer to investigate their own crime. Why on earth would we trust war criminals to investigate their own war crimes?"

Minister for Indigenous Australians **Malarndirri McCarthy** (ALP, NT) – "Air Chief Marshal Binskin's report indicates that Israel's process is broadly in line with the approach that the Australian Defence Force would take."

Only the Greens and independent Senators **Fatima Payman** (WA) and **Lidia Thorpe** (VIC) supported the motion.

Senator **Penny Allman-Payne** (Greens, Qld.) – Sept. 18 – "Every day, Israel has murdered more and more civilians in indiscriminate attacks."

ditions exist for a Palestinian state and it was more important to “make sure that we’re focused on the quality of the outcome, not a date.” He suggested the Government should instead “start putting pressure where it belongs,” which is on Iran and Hamas.

The next day, *SBS TV* “World News” included AIJAC’s Colin Rubenstein saying, “a Palestinian state alongside Israel... has had the support of the Israeli people” but “the Palestinian leadership wants a state instead of Israel.”

In the *Sunday Telegraph* (Oct. 6), Senator Dave Sharma wrote that Wong “singl[ed] Israel out for criticism but [was] entirely silent on the roles being played by Hezbollah and Iran.”

An op-ed by NGO humanitarian adviser Naomi Brooks in the *Canberra Times* (Sept. 25) criticised an escalation of Israeli airstrikes in Lebanon, saying, “We must use the international practices and accountability mechanisms that have served to protect civilians for so long. These can be used today to end Israeli impunity and its destructive, catastrophic violence across the Middle East.”

It was Hamas’ massacre on October 7 and Hezbollah’s ongoing rocket attacks since Oct. 8 that are actually responsible for the “catastrophic violence across the Middle East.”

RISKY REALITIES

An *ABC TV* “News” interview on Sept. 24 with the Australian Red Cross’ Yvette Zegenhagen shone a rare light on why aid workers are increasingly being killed in conflicts, including Gaza.

Zegenhagen said, “this is not an issue that is unique to any one conflict,” explaining that more “armed conflicts are being fought in densely populated areas.” Furthermore, “it’s often the local humanitarian workers... who are already part of their communities... living day-to-day in conflict zones,” not foreign workers, who are most at risk.

WAR GAINS

In the wake of Iran firing around 200 ballistic missiles at Israel to avenge Israel’s killing of Hassan Nasrallah, AIJAC’s Colin Rubenstein explained in the *Australian* (Oct. 4), that the regime follows an “Islamist doctrine” called *muqawama* (resistance), which calls for perpetual war.

Quoting Israeli strategic analyst General Gershon Hacoheh, he said, “In the West, war is seen as a deviation from a stable order... managed with the aim of restoring a state of peace... Within the framework of *muqawama*, fighting is oriented towards maintaining and preserving a continuous momentum of friction and struggle – forever, if necessary.”

Rubenstein said this helps to explain Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar’s public declarations that civilian losses in Gaza are “necessary sacrifices” in the long war to destroy Israel.

PRICE GOUGING

On Oct. 11, *Sydney Morning Herald* regular contributor Jenna Price accused Israel of making Palestinian and Lebanese civilians pay a terrible price for the crimes and threats of Hamas and Hezbollah.

On Oct. 7, the one-year anniversary of Hamas’ massacre, David Leser expressed similar thoughts in the paper and in the *Age*.

Leser acknowledged Hamas’ “murderous doctrine” and the “private rejoicing in much of the Arab world” at the possible demise of Hezbollah.

His article inflated the number of children killed in Gaza while undercounting the number of Hamas fighters killed.

Leser also accused Israel of becoming the “oppressors of a broken people” over the past 60 years and asserted that Palestinians have a “very legitimate right... to resist brutal occupation.”

Leser and Price disappointingly ignored the incontrovertible truth

that, since the late 1930s, Palestinian leaders have rejected numerous opportunities to create their own independent state, instead preferring to reject coexistence and pursue relentless terrorism.

DELUSIONAL CLAIMS

In the *Sydney Morning Herald* (Oct. 4), Sydney University PhD candidate Eva Shteinman rejected claims that antisemitism is “pervasive, systemic and representative of university life.”

Shteinman suggested that accusations of antisemitism on campus “emerged simultaneously with debate around Israel,” which she said, was “no coincidence” and designed to curtail “valid” criticism of the Jewish state.

Shteinman said, “Claims of antisemitism began to appear in the media when the university allowed, for a brief period, the student-led encampment protests, which were staged in opposition to Israel’s actions in Gaza.”

In fact, the encampment was not “brief”, but lasted 55 days and, as the paper noted on June 14, was “sprawling”. It was notable that Shteinman did not engage with the experiences of Jewish students, many of whom reported they had been targeted for harassment or exclusion.

LACK OF BALANCE MEETS CLUELESSNESS

On Oct. 5, the *Sydney Morning Herald* letters editor’s week in review column confidently asserted: “I’d like to thank the letter writers for their evenhanded contributions to the debate [on the Israel-Hamas war].” The column added that the paper’s “commitment to independent journalism includes seeking comment from our readers to guarantee fairness and balance.”

Yet all five letters on the corresponding page that day lavishly praised Eva Shteinman’s highly partisan and controversial op-ed, and the *Herald* never published any letter that was

critical of Shteinman's view or claims.

The following week's column claimed the columns by David Leser and Jenna Price "provided some welcome balance to the debate."

In other words, contrary to the letters editor's claim, the *Sydney Morning Herald* has overwhelmingly favoured anti-Israel opinion pieces, especially from Jewish anti-Zionists, and the letters page is dominated by emotive and factually dubious smears.

PUBLISH, AND BE DAMNED

On Sept. 21, the *Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald* ran a long opinion piece by extreme anti-Israel activist Louise Adler under the headline "The things I've learnt you can't ask about Israel."

Adler's list included a claim that "it is impossible to ask... whether anyone feels that the images from Gaza... are reminiscent of the photos of the Jews rounded up in the Warsaw ghetto."

In a letter published only in the *Herald* (Sept. 22), AIJAC's Jamie Hyams responded that "Comparing Gaza to the Holocaust is obscene, and amounts to Holocaust denial. The Nazis tried to kill every Jew. Israel targets only terrorists while evacuating civilians. In fact, it is Hamas, which started this war, that shares the Nazis' genocidal aims while it sacrifices its people, as it has repeatedly made clear."

THE GOOD OIL

On *ABC Radio* "World Today" (Oct. 4), US-based Iran analyst and recent AIJAC guest Behnam ben Taleblu weighed up the likelihood of Israel targeting Iran's oil fields in response to the regime firing almost 200 ballistic missiles at it on Oct. 1.

Taleblu said, "in the past, attacks and even sanctioning Iranian oil has gotten the regime's attention before," noting that Israel had "struck oil terminals at least twice that belong to Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen, who

also have been firing on Israel."

Ultimately, it "depends on how much cover the Iranians believe the attack would be given by the Americans," he said.

Earlier (Oct. 2), Taleblu told *ABC Radio National* "Breakfast" that Western countries want a ceasefire in the Middle East but "may have missed one element of what is going on in the region, which is that we are in a wider war" with Iran.

Nine Newspapers' Peter Hartcher wrote on Oct. 2, that Iran's "strategy from the outset was to light a 'ring of fire' around Israel to burn it to death" by arming proxy terror groups on its borders.

BEHM ME UP

In the *Canberra Times* (Oct. 5), the Australia Institute's Allan Behm blamed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict's intractability solely on Israel.

Behm wrote, "like most of the US allies, Australia is caught between a rock and a hard place. The rock is Israel's intransigence and the implacability of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition partners."

He absurdly suggested that "what the Middle East needs most... is a supra-state."

Meanwhile, in the same edition, Jack Waterford's column was even more ludicrous, suggesting that the ideal solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would be the "relocation of the Jewish state," possibly to Ukraine.

SAME OLD CYCLE

In the *Age* (Oct. 7), Emeritus Professor Amin Saikal said what needed to happen is "Netanyahu and his extremist supporters [to] restrain themselves and embrace a Gaza ceasefire."

This, he claimed, would free the Israeli hostages, avoid escalation and even lead to "a diplomatic resolution of the long-running Israeli-Hezbollah hostility and Israeli-Palestinian

conflict."

But as Steven A. Cook told the ABC on Sept. 26, "the Hamas leadership, specifically Yahya Sinwar, has never been interested in a ceasefire. And Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his right-wing coalition partners have also not done anything to suggest that they were interested in a ceasefire. So, I think... the United States was in the unenviable position of being the one who wanted agreement more than the parties themselves."

MEDIA MALPRACTICE

ABC Global Affairs Correspondent John Lyons repeatedly misrepresented a claim regarding Palestinian casualties that pro-Palestinian advocates have been attributing to the *Lancet* medical journal.

Lyons told *ABC NewsRadio* (Oct. 7), "Gaza now is basically, in my view, unliveable... The... official death toll for Gaza is about 41,000 to 42,000. But the... *Lancet* says they believe that as many as 186,000 Palestinians in Gaza have died as a result of this war. Not just from the bombing, but from people who had cancer, or who had serious medical conditions, heart conditions, have not been able to get any medical treatment because the hospitals aren't functioning, the water's bad, kids have died from malnutrition, or from polio."

He repeated a variation of this on *ABC Radio* "AM" (Oct. 7) and on *ABC NewsRadio*'s news briefs (Oct. 8).

The *Lancet* never claimed any such thing. This claim is based on a letter published by the *Lancet*. Moreover, that letter did not assert that 186,000 Palestinians had died but predicted that figure might eventually be reached in future.

There is also no evidence to support Lyons' claim that large numbers of "kids" have died because of malnutrition and, so far, there appears to have been exactly one case of polio in Gaza, whose victim did not die.

Allon Lee

A DAY THAT WILL LIVE IN INFAMY

The first anniversary, on October 7, of Hamas' inhuman campaign of murder, rape and torture, which left nearly 1,200 Israelis dead, and saw the kidnapping of a further 250, dominated local media. Coverage was mostly sympathetic to Israel.

Commemorating the anniversary, AIJAC's Justin Am-ler, appearing in the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Hobart Mercury* (Oct. 5), wrote "The Jewish people were barely allowed one moment of respite, to mourn and grieve, before they were under attack once again."

On Oct. 7, News Corp columnist Andrew Bolt accused the Federal Government of repeatedly saying Israel has a right to defend itself, yet failing to "support any specific action Israel has taken."

In the *Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald* (Oct. 6), Zionist Federation of Australia President Jeremy Leibler listed the slew of calumnies directed at Australian Jews, including, "Apparently, we are colonisers. We are not indigenous to Israel. We have no historical connection to the land. We are white supremacists. We are bad Jews because we are Zionists. We are weaponising antisemitism. We are abusing our power and influence. The charge sheet of being a Jew in Australia goes on and on."

In the *Australian* (Oct. 5), AIJAC's Mark Leibler said the accusation of genocide levelled against Israel amounts to a modern-day antisemitic blood libel.

Newspaper editorials on Oct. 7 highlighted the moral blindness of protesters, especially those wanting to demonstrate on the day itself.

The *West Australian* noted, "October 7 was as much an assault on liberal democracies as the September 11 attacks on the United States, but the response has been remarkably different."

The *Advertiser* criticised a pro-Palestinian activist who compared "Hezbollah's slain leader Hassan Nasrallah to... South African freedom fighter Nelson Mandela." Mandela, "fought to bring peace and unity to South Africa. Nasrallah... used human shields and rained missiles on Israel in pursuit... of [its] eradication," it said.

The *Herald Sun* accused anti-Israel protesters of "attempt[ing] to trash... the significance of October 7... which the Israeli and Jewish communities... remember as an anniversary of barbarism and evil."

The *Australian Financial Review* said, "Anti-war protesters have seemingly backed the goals of Hamas and Hezbollah terrorists."

The *Sydney Morning Herald* suggested, "Australians seem to be rapidly losing interest in, if not patience with, the protests."

On Oct. 8, the *Canberra Times* editorialised that anti-Israel street protests have "been overshadowed by the 'useful idiots', fellow travellers, and terrorist sympathisers who marched under thinly disguised versions of the banners of Hamas and Hezbollah."

A UK *Observer* editorial in the *Guardian Australia* (Oct. 7), argued that "the Arab world is ready to recognise Israel's right to exist" but Israel must agree to an independent Palestinian state, predicting "such a breakthrough would defang Hamas... better than any military campaign ever could."

The views of former and current Jewish Federal MPs were given prominence on Oct. 7. In the *Guardian Australia*, Federal Labor Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus expressed shock "at the reluctance of some on the left to call out Hamas' behaviour." Liberal MP Julian Leeser in the *Australian Financial Review* warned that "our leaders have turned a blind eye to the rising antisemitism." In the News Corp papers, former Liberal Federal Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said Israel has been "abandoned in its hour of need."

In the *Courier Mail* (Oct. 6) and *Australian Financial Review* (Oct. 7), Israel's Ambassador to Australia Amir Maimon wrote, "we didn't ask for this war, we don't want this war, but we will win it."

Unsurprisingly, less sympathetic perspectives were heard too.

On *ABC NewsRadio*, Joel Carmel, a spokesperson for fringe Israeli NGO "Breaking the Silence", said the war "was justified" at first but "very quickly became a war of revenge."

On *Channel 10* on Oct. 7, spokesperson for the anti-Israel Jewish Council of Australia, Sarah Schwartz, absurdly claimed that, "Under international law, an occupying force doesn't have a right to defend itself against a population which is already under its control." Of course, if Hamas hadn't attacked Israel, there would be no Israeli presence and therefore, no Israeli control over Gaza.

On *ABC Radio National* "Breakfast" (Oct. 8), the Palestinian Authority's Australian representative Izzat Abdulhadi said protesters "are mourning the victims of Gaza. I think it has been exaggerated by... a lot of politicians about the 7th of October, because 7th of October is not an isolated event."

"The Australian Financial Review said, 'Anti-war protesters have seemingly backed the goals of Hamas and Hezbollah terrorists'"

THE LAST WORD

Rabbi Ralph Genende

LESSONS OF A YEAR OF WAR

It's hard to believe how time has passed and brought us up to and past the agonising anniversary of October 7. There are so many lessons we have learned and are still learning from that day and this awful war – here are six:

1. Never underestimate the evil that human beings are capable of. The cliché that we are all basically good is as dangerous as it is untruthful. Human beings are as capable of devastating demonic behaviour as they are of infinitely fine action. It's not a new lesson but as old as humanity itself, found in the first chapters of the Bible when Cain viciously turns on his brother. It's prevalent in history and literature – for instance, Aeschylus called on us to tame the savageness of man and make gentle the life of this world. The barbaric actions of Hamas, Hezbollah and their fellow travellers embody this lesson.

2. We Jews are more vulnerable than others. The re-awakening and legitimisation of antisemitism across the world is a stark reminder that toxic human beings, while a threat to all of humanity, tend to specialise in the irrational hatred of Jews. The vituperative hatred of Israel as exemplified by the obsessive attention of the UN and its distorted and tireless focus on Israel also highlight this. The very presence or existence of the Jew can evoke horrible and outrageous actions – in the manner of Haman's uncontrollable hostility towards Mordechai in the Book of Esther.

3. We are a stiff-necked and resilient people, seasoned by centuries of hostility and persecution, but also united by a common destiny regardless of our differences. Some of the prodigious acts of goodness, kindness, and ingenuity by Jews across the world supporting each other and affirming our common destiny, have been breathtaking.

We, however, need to also be obstinate in our determination not to allow our own extremists – be they wild-eyed settlers or

wide eyed anti-Israel ideologues – to undermine us from within.

4. Never underestimate the utter foolishness of humanity.

Einstein put it best when he said, “Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity; and I'm not sure about the former.” This is most evident in the denial and even defence of the violent evil and self-declared annihilatory intentions of Hamas (and Hezbollah and Iran).

The impassioned protestors, progressive university leaders and teachers across the Western world display, at best, lack of moral clarity, at worst, indecent and indefensible ignorance. They also manifest an inability to appreciate the inevitable horrors, costs and complexity of all wars. The Psalmist got it right when he said, “They have eyes, but they can't see, ears but they can't hear.”

5. Never let go of your compassion. I struggle with my outrage at Hamas and my anger at the refusal of the world to understand Israel's suffering. I am full of rage at the blatant lies and antisemitism unleashed across the world and in our own Australia. But I will not

surrender my compassion for the suffering of the countless innocents – of my people and of Gaza and Lebanon – who did not choose this war and do not support Hamas or Hezbollah. I have no pity for the Hamas fighters and followers, who have given up their humanity, but I weep for the children of Gaza they have so callously endangered and abandoned as they hide in their tunnels and stash their weapons in schools, hospitals and mosques.

6. Don't let go of your hope. This war may have unleashed a tsunami of hatred, but it has also unleashed a torrent of love and generosity. The Jewish people are singled out by God to be messengers of justice and righteousness, called on to join hands with all who believe in bettering our battered planet. So let's hold on to our many friends and allies of different faiths, cultures and communities and affirm the Psalmist's words, echoed in Israel's national anthem: “Our hope won't be lost!”



Prayer ceremony for Rosh Hashana (Jewish New Year) on the Tel Aviv Promenade (Image: Shutterstock)



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