

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO
OCTOBER 7th
AND ITS AFTERMATH

GIL TROY



JEWISH PEOPLE POLICY INSTITUTE
המכון למדיניות העם היהודי
Established by the Jewish Agency



JCC Association
of North America

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FACTS

FIGURES

HISTORY



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PREFACE

Dear JCC Colleagues and Friends,

The October 7 massacre and the ongoing war in Gaza that followed found many JCC professionals and members without sufficient knowledge or understanding of the complex and nuanced reality in the Middle East. Many questions, including who are the Hamas terrorists, what is the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, what role do key countries in the region play, among others, have been raised again and again—not always with answers.

We hope the attached guide, developed by The Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI) and Professor Gil Troy, historian, author, and a popular commentator on politics and other issues, will answer these and other questions. This guide also is intended to shed light on the complexities of life in Israel, especially during the ongoing conflict, and help you participate in meaningful dialogue with various parties who inquire about what is happening in Israel.

We hope you find it to be a useful resource and will refer to it often.

Leah Garber

Senior Vice President | Director General

Center for Israel Engagement

JCC Association of North America



This guidebook seeks to help Jews and non-Jews, in Israel and worldwide, understand the events that have unfolded since October 7 in historical and ideological context. These are difficult times – and this is no Six Day War. Months after absorbing the bloodiest terrorist attack in its history, Israel finds itself stuck on so many fronts. On Day 86, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant declared: “We are being attacked from seven different arenas: Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, the Palestinian territories, Iraq, Yemen, and Iran.” Israel has invaded Gaza, defended itself successfully against an unprecedented Iranian attack, absorbed more than 5,000 Hezbollah rocket launches, and seen tens of thousands of its citizens displaced, north and south, for months. Parts of Gaza in ruins, with hundreds of thousands of Palestinians displaced and thousands killed.

Beyond the Middle East, a worldwide movement has demonized Israel’s actions and Zionism itself, while Israel has clashed repeatedly with its closest allies, including the United States, regarding military tactics and “day after” strategies. Since October 7, haters have targeted Jews on a scale unseen since the Holocaust in the 1930s and 1940s, and the mass expulsions of Jews from Arab lands in the 1950s.

At the same time, Israel’s military lost far fewer soldiers than most experts anticipated in an excruciatingly difficult urban warfare theatre, while killing thousands of Hamas terrorists, destroying tens of thousands of armaments, and regrettably, killing many Gazans caught in the crossfire. Meanwhile, Israel’s political divisions have emerged again, especially over the painful questions of how to handle the heartbreaking hostage dilemma, as well as the character of Israel’s current and future leadership.

No one knows how this multi-front war will end – but most people in the Jewish world are struggling with complicated questions about what Israel feels it must do to survive, what kind of Israel and Middle East will emerge from these wars, and how Israel can restore its international standing.

This guidebook is the first in a series that will be addressing pressing issues about the meaning of Zionism, Jewish peoplehood, and the Jewish condition in an age of

increasing Jew-hatred. It is meant to trigger robust debate about what Israel means to the Jewish people, how Israel should progress, and how the Zionist movement can help us find meaning today. It is the inaugural publication of the Jewish People Policy Institute's Renewing Zionism in the 21st Century project.

And, yes, trigger-warning: this is an old-fashioned, intellectual project. It explores pressing issues with facts, charts, timelines, subtleties, and complex arguments. Not every idea should be reduced to a TikTok video. The views expressed here do not represent the views of the JPPI. They are those of the author – who thanks many JPPI colleagues for all their wisdom, knowledge, disagreements, challenges, creativity, and skill, in the writing, editing, and publishing of this guidebook.

Special thanks to Barry Geltman for a masterful editing job, and Maya Haser for the extraordinary graphics, while Yair Orvieto and Shai Bernat-Kunin aided in the research, and Doron Krakow was an invaluable thought partner.

Full documentation backing this guidebook can be found at the jppi website: <https://jppi.org.il>

For more copies of this guidebook please email: info@jppi.org.il

In memory of our fallen, especially a 22-year-old hero of the Nova festival, Ben Mizrachi, in shock that dozens of innocent hostages still remain captive in Hamas's hands, enduring abuse daily, and with hopes for a true peace.

Professor Gil Troy, Jerusalem, July, 2024

Q & A

5 SHORT ANSWERS TO VERY BIG QUESTIONS

1 WHAT HAPPENED ON OCTOBER 7?

On Saturday, October 7, 2023, over 3,000 Hamas terrorists invaded Israel from Gaza in what they called “Operation Al-Aqsa Flood.” Thousands of other Gazans followed, some had worked with the Israelis they assaulted. The Palestinian marauders killed at least 1,139 Israelis and 71 foreigners, including citizens from 30 nations, wounding 4,834, and kidnapping 253 men, women, and children – some dead, most alive.

Hezbollah, a Lebanese terrorist army and political party, started firing rockets from southern Lebanon to help Hamas. Within days, over 150,000 Israelis were displaced from their homes, north and south. On October 17, exploiting the chaos, Iran unleashed its proxies, especially Yemen-based Houthis, targeting international shipping lanes and the bases America established against Islamists in Iraq, eastern Syria, and northern Jordan. Responding in self-defense, Israel launched a full-scale war against Hamas in Gaza, while skirmishing with Hezbollah.

2 WHY DID HAMAS ATTACK?

Hamas is an antisemitic jihadist movement, which vows in its charter to “obliterate” Israel, seeking one Jew-free state of Palestine, “from the River to the Sea” – from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005 – the Disengagement – uprooting 8,500 Israelis. By 2007, Hamas had seized power in a coup. Since then, Palestinians

resented Israel's defensive blockade, while Israelis resented the ongoing rocket fire from Gaza, which Israel's disengagement didn't stop. Pressured by the international community, Israeli leaders started acting on the assumption that Hamas was turning pragmatic, and preferred governing Gaza to destroying Israel. Yet Article 25 of Hamas's charter endorses "armed resistance" with "all means and methods." That concept – *Conceptzia* in Hebrew – lulled Israelis into a false sense of security, which collapsed on October 7.

3 WHY DID ISRAEL LAUNCH A WAR THAT KILLED AND DISPLACED SO MANY CIVILIANS?

International law justifies fighting back when a hostile neighbor invades. The war began on Israel's side as a counterattack, repelling the invaders. In the first three days, during the initial attack and counter-attack, 382 Israeli soldiers were killed, along with 59 police officers, 13 medics, and dozens of civilians who also mobilized instantly. Israel then vowed to degrade Hamas's military capabilities and defeat it politically, to avoid a recurrence. Hamas had spent years hiding its weapons and headquarters in hospitals, kindergartens, mosques, apartment buildings, and hundreds of miles of tunnels, some seven stories deep. In this small, fortified territory, with Hamas fighters hiding behind civilians, many Gazans were caught in the crossfire. Israel's unprecedented efforts to protect civilians kept the ratio of civilians killed to each terrorist killed far lower than America's ratios of 4 to 1 or more, in Iraq and Afghanistan - even with many tragic misfires. Every life is sacred. Many Israelis regretted the hard choices their soldiers were making – and the high cost the Hamas invasion imposed on both sides.

4 WHY DID EVENTS IN ISRAEL DISRUPT SO MANY LIVES THOUSANDS OF MILES AWAY?

October 7 was a cataclysmic event. Israel suffered the highest per capita loss of any country ever from a terrorist attack. The scale of the murders; the viciousness of the rapes and maimings; the assaults on the elderly, pregnant women, little girls, baby boys, commanded attention worldwide. Many Palestinian terrorists recorded their crimes, broadcasting footage on social media. Such a well-publicized, catastrophic Islamist assault anywhere would have commanded attention. But Israel is often in the news. Jews – and citizens in most Western democracies – care about the Jewish

state. Simultaneously, a well-funded network of pro-Palestinian activists targets Israel obsessively. Even before Israel counterattacked, these protesters blamed Israel for being attacked, unleashing waves of antisemitic assaults that continue.

As of this writing, Israel's just war to degrade Hamas's military power in Gaza slogs on. The threats from Hezbollah to Israel's north, and from the Houthis to the international shipping community, intensify – Hezbollah rockets have destroyed over 500 Israeli homes. Iran's nefarious influence on these events becomes clearer daily. And, globally, the assault on Israel, Zionism, and Jews keeps disrupting campuses, legislatures, and public squares.

5 WHY DID IRAN ATTACK ISRAEL ON APRIL 13?

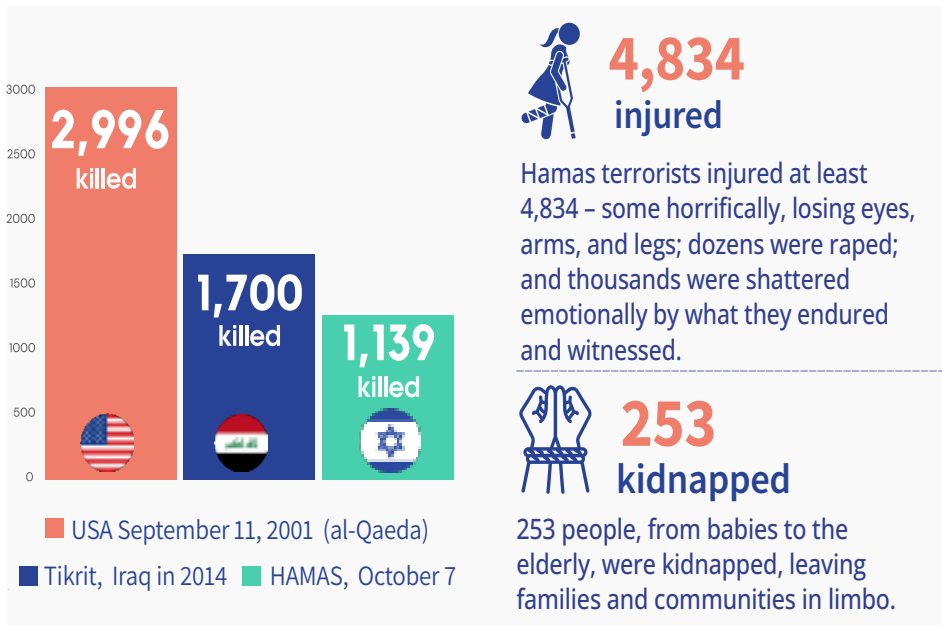
Iran's leaders justified their missile barrage of 320 rockets against Israel by pointing to the killing in Syria of eleven Iranians, including two leading generals. That misses the broader context. Iran's Islamic Republic is obsessed with destroying the Jewish State. Israel and the Iranian regime have skirmished in the shadows for decades. Through the services of one of the dead generals, Mohammed Zahedi, Iran helped orchestrate Hamas's assault on October 7, and greenlighted the subsequent attacks against Israel launched by Hezbollah, the Houthis and others in the "Axis of Resistance." The remarkable success of Israel and the coalition of allies in downing most of the missiles neither diminishes the scale of the attack nor does it excuse its lethal intentions.

1

OCTOBER 7: WHAT HAPPENED?

October 7, 2023 was the bloodiest day in Jewish history since the Holocaust. The violence targeting the most vulnerable, from infants to elderly Holocaust survivors, revealed a viciousness that evoked the worst Nazi crimes. Shouting “slaughter the Jews,” Hamas terrorists murdered Israeli-Arabs, Bedouins, Thai and Nepalese agricultural workers, simply for associating with “the Jews.”

BLOODIEST TERRORIST ATTACKS



By Body Count: October 7 is the third bloodiest attack in history. Following the 2,996 civilians al-Qaeda murdered in the United States on September 11, 2001, and the 1,700 army cadets ISIL jihadists executed in Tikrit, Iraq in 2014. **Per capita:** October 7 is the bloodiest attack in history, with 1.19 killed per 10,000 Israelis; the second, Tikrit, was 0.46. **The American equivalent would be losing 40,000 victims, thirteen 9/11s.**

Nine months later, most Israelis were surprised to still be fighting. Israel's supporters are still reeling. Israel's counterattack burgeoned into a long, difficult war to destroy Hamas's capacity to repeat this massacre, free 253 hostages, crush Hamas's governing grip over Gaza, and deter other enemies from considering a similar invasion – which Hamas officials vowed to replicate “a second, a third, a fourth time.” With Hamas embedded among Gaza's civilians, many civilians caught in the crossfire died, along with many terrorists hiding in civilian clothes.

On October 7, protests with cries of “Death to the Jews” erupted worldwide – while the slaughter continued, long before Israel counterattacked. After Israel entered Gaza on October 27, and the Palestinian death toll mounted, protests worldwide intensified. Posters proclaimed “Rape Is Resistance and “Babies Are Occupiers Too... Free Palestine by Any Means Necessary.” Anti-Jewish incidents soared – ranging from harassment to graffiti to occasional beatings. A foiled terrorist plot in Ottawa targeted “Jewish persons.” By the spring, over 130 encampments in major universities left two of three Jewish students polled on those universities feeling threatened, having heard anti-Jewish not “just” anti-Israel and anti-Zionist cries, as well as personal threats such as “we know where you live” and “Zionists must die.”

True, some protesters were upset about the loss of civilian life. But too many turned vicious.

The anti-Israel mobs often attacked Israel's allies too, burning American flags in New York and British flags in London. Pro-Palestinian protesters chased Michael Grove, a British Minister, in London's Victoria Station. They shouted “Fuck the Jews” outside the Sydney Opera House. They disrupted the Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree lighting ceremony, the Toronto mayor's New Year's ice-skating party, and multiple commencement ceremonies. They screamed outside the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center and splashed red paint on the White House gates.

OCTOBER 6: THE CONTEXT

On October 6, most Israelis worried more about internal divisions than about their lethal enemies. After a year-and-a-half in the opposition, Benjamin Netanyahu had returned as prime minister on December 29, 2022. Israel's longest-serving prime minister, Netanyahu led governments from 1996 to 1999, and again from 2009 to 2021.

Netanyahu's governing coalition controlled 64 of 120 Knesset seats. Yet, from the start,

it triggered intense opposition in the media and on the streets. Much of the controversy centered on the government's sweeping proposal to overhaul Israel's judiciary. The issue stirred tribal, ideological, and religious divisions. For the first time in Israel's tumultuous political history, many army reservists threatened not to serve if mobilized.

Even amid the domestic chaos, Saudi Arabia showed many signs of being ready to normalize relations with Israel. Since September 2022, the Abraham Accords had revolutionized the Middle East, as the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, then Morocco and Sudan, launched bottom-up economic, cultural, and political ties with Israel. Israel's foes wanted to sabotage these peace moves. Iran's regime kept trying to develop nuclear weapons, while threatening "Little Satan" – Israel – and "Big Satan" – America. Iran and Qatar bankrolled proxies throughout the Middle East, supplying Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Southern Lebanon with rockets, armaments, and well-trained fighters. Meanwhile, Hamas tried outmaneuvering the Palestinian Authority, which controlled the disputed territories called "the West Bank" or "Judea and Samaria." On October 6, most Israelis worried more about intensifying terrorism in those territories than any Hamas threat.

THE INVASION

At 6:29 A.M. on October 7, 2023, Hamas launched 5,000 rockets in 20 minutes. Israel trusted a billion-dollar-fence along the 40-mile-long border to detect infiltrators and repel them with remote control machine gun turrets and other devices. Hamas's old-fashioned firepower overwhelmed the high-tech defenses. Rockets, mines, and bulldozers created seven main breach points for 3,000 terrorists. Hamas ambushed soldiers and civilians running to shelters – and armories. Some terrorists paraglided over the fence, raining death on Israelis below – especially at the SuperNova Rave, where 4,000 concert-goers danced near the border.

Israel's command-and-control centers in the south collapsed. Thousands of other Gazans then swarmed. Some were directed by Palestinian day laborers who had gathered intelligence for Hamas in Israel, because the international "*conceptzia*" assumed that steady incomes would prod Gazans to bury their jihadist dreams.

The assault was carefully planned – for over two years. The terrorists had maps and battle plans for each village. Some had the prayer times of synagogues in cities nearby – hoping to kill Jews as they celebrated their Sabbath and Simchat Torah, a holiday

celebrating the Five Books of Moses. The terrorists also overran three military bases, including the IDF's Gaza division headquarters, and captured the main police station in Sderot, a town with over 30,000 inhabitants.

Some intelligence reports concluded that Hamas hoped to seize as many communities as possible, then work their way up the coastal corridor, to the larger cities of Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Tel Aviv. Had they succeeded – and had Hezbollah invaded from the north – the casualties would have been exponentially higher.

One captured Hamas terrorist confessed that “The plan was to go from home to home, from room to room, to throw grenades and kill everyone, including women and children.... Hamas ordered us to crush their heads and cut them off, [and] to cut their legs.” This terrorist received permission to rape a young girl's corpse.

Another was asked “Why did you kidnap women.” The terrorist responded: “To rape them.” A third was recorded boasting to his parents about killing “the Jews.”

Within hours, terrorists murdered at least 52 civilians in Kibbutz Kfar Aza. They killed over 90 in Be'eri – a tenth of that kibbutz's population. They decimated one-quarter of Nir Oz, murdering 46 and kidnapping 71. Nearly half of Be'eri's homes, and 80 percent of homes in Nir Oz sustained damage. Engineers estimated it would cost \$80 million to rebuild Be'eri alone.

Hamas murdered 30 people during its assault on a symbol of Israeli sovereignty, Sderot's police headquarters. But the terrorists missed a yeshiva with hundreds of sleeping students 190 meters away. They murdered another 40 throughout the city. Meanwhile, two pickup trucks filled with terrorists penetrated 15 miles into Israel. They killed 52 in Ofakim, with a population of 40,000. “I still can't believe it,” one resident remarked three months later. “There were terrorists running around our neighborhood, on our streets.”

Hamas turned the international SuperNova concert into a bloodbath. While murdering 364 revelers and kidnapping 40, they raped and mutilated many partygoers. “We couldn't imagine that hundreds of terrorists could invade Israel like this,” Amir Ben Natan, 37, told *Rolling Stone*. “I feel like I was hunted.... We were helpless. We were unarmed civilians who just wanted to have fun.”

The next day, U2 front man Bono dedicated a song during one of his concerts to Israel and the doomed concertgoers. “Our hearts and our anger, you know where that's pointed....” he proclaimed. “We sing for those. Our people, our kind of people, music people. Playful, experimental people. Our kind of people....”

Experts will long debate “how did it happen.” But the scale and success of Hamas’s October 7 massacre raises a second question: how did Israel repel most of the invaders by nightfall, especially because it took hours before so many army units arrived?

It’s a less popular story because it’s not about Jews bleeding, but Jews fighting back. Nevertheless, on October 7, citizens, police officers, and soldiers, at home and on base, fought back fiercely. These Citizen Commandos not only saved countless lives. These Jewish, Arab, Bedouin, and Druze Israelis saved Israel.

OCTOBER 7.2: WHEN ISRAELIS SAVED ISRAEL



ZIONISM

The movement of Jewish national liberation, Zionism builds on three fundamental ideas:

- that Jews are a people in addition to sharing the religious faith of Judaism – **Am Yisrael**;
- that Jews have ties to a particular homeland – **Eretz Yisrael**;
- and that Jews have the right to establish a state on that homeland – **Medinat Yisrael**.

Zionism is also a core expression of Jewish values and vision rooted in Judaism’s DNA. Zionism is Abraham and Sarah wandering the land, Moses and Miriam yearning for the land, and Moshe Dayan redeeming the land. Zionism is Jews eating apples and honey for the new year, breaking the glass to honor the destroyed temples under the wedding canopy, and singing “Next Year in Jerusalem” at Passover seders.

Until 1948, the Zionist movement’s main goal was to establish a Jewish state while also creating a New Jew, strong, proud, free. Since 1948, Zionism’s goal is to defend the Jewish-democratic State of Israel when necessary, but continue to build and be rebuilt by it, always.

Jews confuse: Zionism could have been called Judeanism instead of being named after that central hill in Jerusalem, Mount Zion; and Israel could have been called Judea – instead of being named after the Land of Israel. Then it would be hard to claim “I only hate Judea and Judeanism, not Jews....”

Calling Zionism “settler-colonialism” negates Jews’ deep ties to the land of Israel; calling Zionism “racist” or “apartheid,” falsely tries making the nationalist clash between Israelis and Palestinians a racial fight.

Non-Jews who support Israel and the Jewish people, can be Zionists while people, Arab and Jewish, who live in Israel but don’t believe that the Jewish state is also a shared project of the Jewish people, can be good Israelis without being Zionists.

If October 7 represents Hamas's massacre, October 7.2 represents Israel's counterattack. That story is not about Jewish powerlessness echoing pogroms or the Holocaust. These heroic tales returned Israel to its Zionist trajectory. October 7 and 7.2 added more chapters to Zionism's rollercoaster tale about Jews redeeming their homeland, despite cruel neighbors, and how Israelis learned to fight when necessary but to live, build, and rejoice always.

Kibbutz Nir Am's security coordinator, Inbal Lieberman, 25, instantly realized the scale of this attack differed than the others the people in this beleaguered region had long endured. She organized 11 other kibbutz members. She prevented the electricity from being restored so the kibbutz's electric gates wouldn't open. She and her neighbors then fought against the infiltrators for three hours until the IDF arrived. No one on her kibbutz was killed that day. "I'm not a hero, I wasn't there by myself," she told reporters.

When the sirens wailed in Beersheba, two brothers, Noam and Yishay Slotki, also sensed a cataclysm. Despite usually respecting Judaism's religious restrictions against driving on the Sabbath and holidays, despite each having been discharged from the army, they drove toward the Gaza border. Both were killed fighting outside Kibbutz Alumim.

Each brother left a wife and baby behind. Noam was 31 and Yishay, 24. "They understood that there was a need to help Israel immediately, that the army was not able to arrive at that time to save the towns near Gaza, and they took on the task themselves," their father Rabbi Shmuel Slotki said. "Like many others, they enlisted for this task on their own and without being called... it's really an incredible thing — the spirit of heroism, the spirit of responsibility, dedication to the people of Israel."

Many police officers fought fiercely. Yisrael Zinger used Google Maps to find a backroad exit when terrorists blocked the concert's main roads. His convoy led 500 concertgoers to safety. He then joined with other officers and soldiers in the firefight of their lives. Part of the answer to "Where was the army," is that soldiers were stuck in many intense gun battles as early as 7 AM. Zinger's only regret when interviewed on TV from his hospital bed, where he was recovering from injuries: "we didn't save more people."

Others who saved concertgoers included Oz Davidian, 53, a local farmer, who saved 120 people, and Youssef Ziadna, 47, a Bedouin taxi driver, who saved 30 more. Each used his knowledge of the area to dodge the terrorists. In Ofakim, another cop, Itamar Alus, a 39-year-old husband and father, defines himself to TikTok fans of his cooking videos as a "simple guy who likes preparing appetizers for our holy Sabbath." His neighbors call him a hero.

Alus battled for hours, armed only with his pistol, and a fighter's instinct he had never tapped before. "The terrorists shot 'rat-tat-tat-tat-tat'" with Kalashnikov assault rifles, he recalls. "We were just 'pop-pause-pop-pause-pop.... But they never anticipated our citizens' resistance."

Describing a father-and-son team and two brothers, who rushed toward the bullets, each sharing one gun between them, Alus marvels: "What love of country! What love of the other!". All four died.

The same social networks that spread anti-Israel propaganda, and that day publicized repulsive rape videos trying to demoralize Israelis, mobilized the first wave of defenders – the Home Front Commandos. Many Israeli military corps have alumni WhatsApp groups, trading gossip, updates, and occasional job offers. That day, they improvised their own command and control systems.

The Duvedevan counter-terrorist commandos' WhatsApp shared pin locations and deployed groups of two, three, four veterans who lived nearby – as the enlisted soldiers and reservists reached the overrun communities within an hour or two and fought to reconquer them. Other soldiers hit particular intersections and created WhatsApp groups to share information with improvised units while fighting.

The anti-judicial reform protesters leapt into action too. Throughout nine months of political struggle, Ahim BaNeshek, Brothers and Sisters in Arms, developed a large network of elite combat reservists. When Hamas attacked, an effective network of battle-hardened veterans existed, thanks to Israel's political chaos.

Politically, many Duvdevan veterans lean right. This network is all left. But partisanship vanished as patriotism – and extraordinary military training – triumphed.

So much for the threats not to serve.

When the politicians failed and the IDF faltered, the people stepped in. A consensus coalesced that day. For Israelis, victory does not just include breaking Hamas and restoring deterrence – but rebuilding the pastoral south, which was safe and blooming, in undisputed territory behind pre-1967 borders, until Israel disengaged from Gaza in 2005. Omri Bonim, one of many Kibbutz Rambos who saved his community, Reim, says, "when we all return, we will rebuild it all, and we will show the world how beautiful our community is."

HOW DID GAZA BECOME SUCH A THREAT TO ISRAEL?

On October 7, Hamas's invasion shocked Israel. While complaining that Israel's blockade strangled Gazans, Hamas amassed over 20,000 rockets and built a maze of tunnels with 5,700 shafts, crisscrossing up to 450 miles in an area 25 miles long. One Hamas official, Mousa Abu Marzouk, told Russian TV that Hamas reserved the tunnels for Hamas fighters: "it is the responsibility of the United Nations" and "the occupying forces," meaning Israel, to protect Gazans. This lethal, urbanized fortress mocked the peace President George W. Bush and the international community promised in 2005 – if only Israel withdrew completely from Gaza, which it did.

GAZA: A SHORT HISTORY

Human habitation in Gaza dates back millennia. In the Bible, Samson was imprisoned and died there. In Hebrew, Gaza is "Azzah" – "strong city."

The Ottomans ruled Gaza from the 1500s until 1917 – with occasional interruptions, including Napoleon's conquest of Gaza City in 1799. In 1920, following World War I, the League of Nations gave England a Mandate to rule Palestine, including the Gazan coastal strip. The League of Nations recognized "the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine," and encouraged "close settlement by Jews on the land." A British census counted 72,095 Gazans – 98.41 percent Muslims.

A small number of Jews had lived in Gaza for centuries. But, as with the larger Jewish community of Hebron, that long, rich story ended with the Arabs' 1929 massacres. On August 25, 1929, British police escorted Gaza's Jews onto the train to Tel Aviv to save them. The British then banned Jews from Gaza to mollify Arab radicals.

Tensions grew as Zionism, the Jewish movement for national liberation rooted in core Jewish values, progressed. Zionism recognizes that Jews are a people as well as a religion, that Jews have deep, historical ties to their national homeland, and that Jews

have the right to establish a state on that homeland. Before establishing the State of Israel in 1948, the Zionist movement focused both on building a New Jew – strong, proud, free – and establishing a Jewish-democratic state in the historic homeland. Today, Zionism is a movement to defend the Jewish state and the Jewish people when necessary – and to build, be rebuilt, and perfect Israel always.

As they built a Jewish state before 1948, Zionists defined the emerging border with settlements, not just lines on maps. Building a “stockade and watchtower” created facts on the ground – while helping the desert bloom. In 1946, Zionists established eleven southern settlements essentially overnight. One of these “11 points in the Negev,” Kfar Darom, was in Gaza. Other kibbutzim established that Yom Kippur night, 1946, include Be’eri and Nirim, which Gazans invaded on October 7.

THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

132 - 136 CE **As the Romans crush the Bar Kochba** revolt, the Emperor Hadrian renames Judea/the Land of Israel – Syria Palaestina – later Palaestina... Palestine.

1920-1948 **Under the British Mandate Arabs**, Christians, and Jews all have “Palestinian” passports and are called “Palestinians.”

1948-1949 **The chaos of Israel’s War of Independence** creates 700,000 to 750,000 Arab refugees – henceforth, the Jewish and non-Jewish citizens of the new state are known as “Israelis” - including 850,000 Jewish refugees absorbed from Arab and Muslim countries. Most Arabs with roots in British mandatory Palestine call themselves “Palestinians,” especially outside of Israel.

1964 **The Palestine Liberation Organization** is founded, vowing to liberate all of Palestine – meaning Israel within its 1948 borders.

1967 **The Six Day War** generates as many as 325,000 additional Palestinian refugees, but Israel wins territory from Syria – the Golan Heights; from Egypt – the Sinai and Gaza; and from Jordan – East Jerusalem, and the disputed territories, called by some by their Biblical names Judea and Samaria, called by others the West Bank, as in west bank of the Jordan River.

The Talmud mentions a Kfar Darom from centuries ago. In 1930, Tuvia Miller purchased the site from Arabs to establish a fruit orchard. Miller sold the land to the Jewish National Fund, after the 1936 to 1939 Arab riots. Kfar Darom survived from 1946 to 1948, until the Egyptians besieged it.

On November 29, 1947, as the British prepared to withdraw, the League of Nations' successor, the United Nations, proposed a compromise between the Palestinian Jews and the Palestinian Arabs who kept clashing. UN General Assembly Resolution 181 again recognized Jews' right to their homeland in the Land of Israel – which the Romans renamed Palestine, to try stripping the Jews of their ties to the land. The resolution partitioned the land, incorporating the “Gaza Strip” into the “Independent Arab State” the UN proposed alongside a Jewish State.

Many Jews anguished over dividing their homeland and internationalizing their capital, Jerusalem. But, their future prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, insisted that half a loaf is better than none – especially after the Holocaust. Most Zionists accepted the compromise. Most Arab leaders rejected it. These radicals, spurred by the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Haj Amin-al-Husseini, squelched Arab moderates. Those Arab extremists left “Palestine Betrayed,” the historian Efraim Karsh argues.

The Arab rejection – and mass invasion when Israel declared its independence in May 1948 – invalidated the UN compromise. *The CIA World Factbook* notes: “Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Egypt administered the newly formed Gaza Strip,” which Egypt carved out of the territory covered by the rejected partition plan.

Following the war, 160,000 Palestinian Arabs expanded Gaza's population to about 240,000 inhabitants. Some fled the new state voluntarily – expecting to return triumphantly after the Jews lost. Some fled in fear. Some fled after being expelled. Similarly, on the West Bank of the Jordan River, in the biblical regions of Judea and Samaria, which Jordan seized, the population jumped from about 420,000 to 764,900.

The UN established UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, in December 1949. There were approximately 700,000 Palestinian Arab refugees – a small percentage of the millions of refugees World War II and its aftermath created. UNRWA was expected to help Palestinian Arabs resettle within three years, then disband.

Instead, UNRWA helped Palestinians resist resettling, while Arab governments refused to resettle them too. Palestinians became the first displaced people treating refugee

status as hereditary. UNRWA grew increasingly anti-Israel. By 2020, UNRWA lesson plans included grammar exercises saying, “Jihad is one of the doors to Paradise,” with math exercises adding up terrorist martyrs. UNRWA schools and facilities hid terrorist bases. In January 2024, *the Wall Street Journal* reported that American intelligence estimated that at least ten percent of UNRWA’s 12,000 Gaza employees joined terrorist groups.

The IDF identified at least 14 UNRWA employees who rampaged on October 7. Israeli intelligence released audio recordings of Mamdouh al-Qali, an UNRWA teacher and Islamic Jihadist, boasting: “We have female hostages, I captured one!” In another recording, an UNRWA teacher and Hamas terrorist told a friend he captured a “sabaya,” an Islamic State Jihadist term for sex slaves. In January, 2024, these revelations finally prompted some Western countries to suspend their UNRWA funding.

Egypt mostly ruled Gaza from 1949 through 1967 – without international legitimacy. That leaves Israel the right to establish a buffer zone in that territory, because Jews still have rights to settle there under the British Mandate.

In 1967, following its Six Day War of self-defense against invading Egyptian, Jordanian, and Syrian armies, Israel seized Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt. Egypt estimated Gaza’s population at 442,100 people. Some Israelis felt inspired by Kfar Darom’s Talmudic roots. Most were wary of the hostile population. Israel’s Prime Minister Levi Eshkol called Gaza “a bone stuck in our throats.”

The Egyptians didn’t want Gaza either. During the Camp David peace negotiations in 1978 between Israel and Egypt, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat demanded the Sinai back, without Gaza. The treaty left Gaza for the Palestinians and Israelis to manage... or fight over.

The Israel-Egypt treaty of 1979 established an 8.7-mile-long buffer zone for Israel’s military to patrol along the newly drawn Egyptian border. The IDF hoped this awkwardly nicknamed “Philadelphi Corridor,” would stop smuggling between Egypt and Gaza.

Israel ultimately built over 140 communities – called “settlements,” for security along the Jordanian border, out of religious excitement in returning to biblical Judea and Samaria, and for commuting ease, near Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Israel also established 21 settlements in Gaza – including reestablishing Kfar Darom.

Seventeen villages in Gaza’s southwest formed Gush Katif, Hebrew for Harvest Bloc. The Israeli government encouraged these communities hoping to establish a security presence in Gaza too.

Many Gazans worked with the Jews. Eventually, two hundred Gush Katif farmers generated exports of over \$200 million annually, 15 percent of Israel’s agricultural exports. But Palestinians kept attacking these settlements. When an IDF truck driver accidentally ran over four Gazans in December 1987, Palestinians rioted. Known as the “Intifada,” the shaking off, in Arabic, this upheaval spread to the other territories. It lasted until 1991. The violence spawned a radical Islamist movement, inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, the Arabic acronym for “the Islamic Resistance Movement.”

HAMAS: A FACT BOX



The Arabic acronym for the Islamic Resistance Movement, founded in 1987

Kept trying to undermine the Oslo Peace Process in the 1990s with **suicide bombings and terrorism**

Its 1988 Charter vows “to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine,” and **“obliterate” Israel**

In 2007, seized control of Gaza - after Israel’s complete disengagement – **in a violent coup**



Alternated between attacking Israel and claiming to be “pragmatic,” until it invaded Israel and **ramped wildly on October 7, 2023**



Hamas's founding charter vowed "to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine," from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. The preamble promises to "obliterate" Israel. Article 15 calls for Jihad, holy war, against the Jews. Article 11 affirms that "The land of Palestine is an Islamic Waqf, holy possession" and "No one can renounce it or any part." Hamas made the longtime terrorist and Palestine Liberation Organization leader, Yasir Arafat, look moderate. In 1993, Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin signed the Oslo Accords with Arafat, planning phased IDF withdrawals from Palestinian cities, amid a long-term peace process. The Accords established the Palestinian Authority (PA), led by Arafat. In May 1994, the PA began administering Gaza.

The Oslo years proved to be rocky politically and diplomatically. Israelis' harsh debates about how to stay safe inspired one Oslo opponent to assassinate Yitzhak Rabin in 1995. Israel's government kept clashing with President Bill Clinton as he demanded more concessions. But Israeli anxiety only grew as the divisions within the Palestinian national movement proved ever more lethal – and Hamas terrorists started targeting Israeli civilians. Arafat's PA was dictatorial and corrupt. As American diplomats pressured Arafat to recognize Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state, Hamas gained popularity among Palestinians by attacking the PA and "the Jews."

In July 2000, President Bill Clinton hosted Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak at Camp David, the presidential retreat. Barak's offer to Arafat was so sweeping, most Cabinet members dissolved Israel's government in protest. But Arafat never even counter-offered. In his final White House visit, Arafat tried charming Clinton. "You are a great man," Arafat said. "The hell I am," Clinton recalls snapping. "I'm a colossal failure and you made me one."

Clinton felt like a failure because the region was ablaze. The Palestinians had launched what they called the Second Intifada. Suicide bombers were blowing up buses and cafes throughout Israel. Eventually, terrorists killed over 1,000 Israelis. Hamas and Islamic Jihad kept attacking Gaza's Jews. The Israelis often needed army escorts whenever they left their villages.

In March 2001, Ariel Sharon became prime minister. Sharon had long championed settling Gaza to defend Israel. By April 2002, after terrorists murdered 130 Israelis in a single month, Sharon counterattacked. Operation Defensive Shield succeeded militarily, eventually calming the daily assaults. But Sharon faced condemnations worldwide as a mass-murderer.

Sharon also worried about protecting 21 separate settlements in a sea of hostility. He considered disengaging from Gaza – withdrawing all Israelis, to separate Israel's Gaza corridor from the Palestinians.

In 2004, President George W. Bush encouraged Prime Minister Sharon, writing: “Palestinians must undertake an immediate cessation of armed activity and all acts of violence against Israelis anywhere, and all official Palestinian institutions must end incitement against Israel.” Bush affirmed Israel’s “right to defend itself against terrorism.” And the president vowed to launch an international effort “to build the capacity and will of Palestinian institutions to fight terrorism, dismantle terrorist organizations, and prevent the areas from which Israel has withdrawn from posing a threat...”

DOC BOX: THE DISENGAGEMENT: DEFINING QUOTATIONS

Letter From President George W. Bush to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, April 14, 2004

“Under the roadmap, Palestinians must undertake an immediate cessation of armed activity and all acts of violence against Israelis anywhere,



and all official Palestinian institutions must end incitement against Israel... Israel will retain its right to defend itself against terrorism, including to take actions against terrorist organizations. The United States will lead efforts, working together with Jordan, Egypt, and others in the international community, to build the capacity and will of Palestinian institutions to fight terrorism, dismantle terrorist organizations, and prevent the areas from which Israel has withdrawn from posing a threat that would have to be addressed by any other means... The United States is strongly committed to Israel's security and well-being as a Jewish State.”



August 2005

Israel withdrew completely from Gaza, dislodging 8,500 Israelis from their homes.



But: Hamas Charter, Article 13:

“Initiatives, and so-called peaceful solutions and international conferences, are in contradiction to the principles of the Islamic Resistance Movement...”

“There is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad.”

In August 2005, Israel withdrew from Gaza, dismantling all 21 Jewish communities, uprooting 8,500 Israelis. Israel was bitterly divided. The army had to dislodge Jews from their homes, destroy businesses, raze 38 synagogues, relocate 48 graves. Strategically, the fiercest debate surrounded the Philadelphi Corridor. That 8.7-mile boundary separating Gaza from Egypt would become a major flashpoint in 2024: Israel insisted it must reconquer it to stop the weapons flow to Gaza, but the world feared a humanitarian disaster in neighboring Rafah.

Sharon's generals feared Palestinian smuggling from Egypt would make Gaza an armed camp. Tragically, 2005's greatest doubters never imagined the Hamas buildup now menacing Israel.

Ariel Sharon overruled his advisers. He withdrew completely, to avoid the already-ahistorical accusation that Israel was "occupying" Gaza. Sharon gambled on a secured border, and worldwide applause.

Even before Hamas seized power in its 2007 coup, both hopes had vanished. As Gaza pounded Israel with rockets, cries of "occupation" and "blockade" continued. In October 2006, an *International Herald Tribune* reporter, Patrick Seale, mocked Israel's fight against the Gazans' Qassam rockets. "These are highly irritating but largely ineffectual weapons," he scoffed, ignoring Israelis' trauma, while not acknowledging that America would never tolerate such assaults. Seale accused Israel's Chief of Staff, Dan Halutz, of "making lurid statements to the effect that Hamas and other Palestinian groups have smuggled millions of dollars' worth of weapons into Gaza from Egypt – including antitank and anti-aircraft weapons as well as tons of explosives – and have built a whole underground city to store their arsenal."

Halutz underestimated. Still, three new Gaza-related claims against Israel gained currency. First, Palestinians labeled Gaza "the world's largest open-air prison", belying its shopping malls, its mansions, its border with Egypt, its seashore which could have made Gaza a Middle Eastern Riviera. Second, reporters sitting in skyscrapered jungles like Manhattan, with a population density of 73,000 residents per square mile, labeled Gaza, with its 14,000 people per square mile, "one of the most densely populated places on earth." Gaza's population density parallels London's – above ground, without taking into account Hamas's vast tunnel network.

Finally, whenever Israel defended itself, critics cried "genocide", which means the mass targeted destruction of a people. Yet Gaza's population almost doubled between 2000

and 2024, while the young age average of Palestinians in all the territories – under 20, suggested many more births than deaths.

Hamas pummeled the PA. In January 2006, Hamas won 42.6 percent of the votes in the Palestinian parliamentary elections. These “elections” occurred without free speech, civil society institutions, or basic civil liberties for anyone under Palestinian rule.

In June 2006, Hamas terrorists breached Israel’s borders via tunnels, killing two soldiers, wounding two, and kidnapping another, Gilad Shalit. Five years later, Israel released 1,027 Palestinian prisoners to free Shalit. Collectively, these prisoners had killed at least 569 Israelis. Many of these terrorists helped plan the October 7 assault, including Hamas’s most notorious military leader, Yahya Sinwar.

In June 2007, Hamas violently seized control of Gaza, effectively seceding from the PA.

With Hamas ruthlessly crushing dissidents and outsiders, the international community nevertheless pressured Israel to adjust. After becoming prime minister again in 2009, Benjamin Netanyahu asserted that encouraging Hamas rule in Gaza would weaken the PA and minimize international pressure for a Palestinian state.

Israeli peaceniks and most Western diplomats insisted that Israeli moderation would encourage Hamas’s pragmatism. Robert Malley, a Democratic foreign policy guru, claimed in 2006 that “Hamas wants the ability to govern.” Malley often led the chorus demanding Israel “cease fire” whenever it defended itself.

Meanwhile, Hamas built military bases under hospitals, amassed weapons in mosques and kindergartens, and masked its war preparations behind ambulances, UN workers, and UNRWA facilities. And it indoctrinated Gazans, from childhood, to hate “the Jews.” Such totalitarian terrorism flourished, especially after Israel withdrew. Israel wavered, imposing a blockade to stop the arms flow, while allowing humanitarian materials – fuel, food, international aid, and Qatari cash into Gaza – which Hamas commandeered. Periodically, tensions erupted into mini wars. Israeli authorities called these clashes “mowing the lawn,” assuming that periodic military pushback would constrain an increasingly “pragmatic” Hamas.

This Israeli doctrine developed under insistent calls for Israeli “ceasefires,” whenever it tried dismantling Hamas’ infrastructure – especially in 2008-2009, 2012, 2014, and 2021. Even after October 7, few American policymakers acknowledged their role in this cycle. By contrast, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton did take responsibility. She

admitted in November: “Remember there was a ceasefire on October 6 that Hamas broke by their barbaric assault on peaceful civilians.... Hamas has consistently broken ceasefires over a number of years.”

Israel also succumbed to international pressure – and assumptions of reasonableness – by allowing more Gazans to work in neighboring kibbutzim and villages. From 2021 to 2023, the number of work permits jumped from 7,000 to 17,000. Some of these Gazans helped plan the assault and participated zestfully. And despite its blockade, and the open secret that Hamas was stealing resources, an average of 425 trucks and 20 fuel tankers entered Gaza from Israel daily.

Hamas’s Ali Barak boasted to Russia Today TV on October 8, as translated by the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI): “We made them think that Hamas was busy with governing Gaza, and that it wanted to focus on the 2.5 million Palestinians [there]. All the while, under the table, Hamas was preparing for this big attack.... The thing any Palestinian desires the most is to be martyred for the sake of Allah, defending his land.” Ali Barak continued: “We have been preparing for this for two years. We have local factories for everything. We have rockets with ranges of 250 kilometers, 160 kilometers, 80 kilometers, 45 kilometers and 10 kilometers.”

Today, many Israelis bitterly realize that, just as many Palestinians exploited the Oslo Peace Process to arm themselves in the West Bank, Gaza’s terrorist groups exploited the disengagement to threaten Israel. Americans must examine the West’s “*conceptzia*” too. After 18 years of shouting “occupation” and “blockade,” critics acknowledge that, somehow, Hamas dominated Gaza. Detailing the tunnels serving as “bunkers” and “command centers,” the *New York Times* reported that Hamas’s underground “maze” extends “across most if not all of Gaza, the territory they control.” Being “occupied” while controlling territory is as logical as being “blockaded” while importing tons of armaments.

THE WAR IN ISRAEL: WHAT ARE THEY THINKING?

In 2014, Israel attacked Hamas – after Hamas terrorists kidnapped and killed three Israeli teenagers. A reporter interviewed Israel’s legendary writer Amos Oz, a proud leftist, about Israel’s difficult choice regarding a ground offensive in Gaza. Oz interviewed the interviewer. Oz asked, “Question 1: What would you do if your neighbor across the street sat down on the balcony, put his little boy on his lap and started shooting machine-gun fire into your nursery? Question 2: What would you do if your neighbor across the street dug a tunnel from his nursery to your nursery in order to blow up your home or in order to kidnap your family?”

Nine years later, the dilemmas were tougher, the questions more searing. But many Israelis blamed October 7 on their failure to eliminate the threats earlier. Elnatan Levenstein eulogized his younger brother Yonadov, a 23-year-old soldier who married on September 7, fought to liberate Kibbutz Nir Oz on October 7, and fell in battle on November 4. The older brother apologized, insisting that his “generation” should have fought that battle. Elnatan remembered repeatedly expecting to enter Gaza with his army buddies in 2012, during an eight-day clash, but Israel’s leaders kept canceling incursions. Eleven years’ worth of “humanitarian ceasefires” and accommodations made the inevitable far more costly, when Israel invaded after October 7 to restore Israelis’ sense of security.

Benjamin Netanyahu returned as prime minister in early 2009, a year-and-a-half after Hamas seized power in its Gaza coup. In his memoirs – published before October 7 – Netanyahu emphasizes that he worried about Iran more than Hamas. He resisted pressure in 2014 from cabinet ministers Avigdor Lieberman and Naftali Bennett to “conquer” Gaza. “That could only be done with the wholesale destruction of Gaza, with tens of thousands of civilian deaths,” Netanyahu wrote. “After destroying the Hamas regime, Israel would have to govern two million Gazans for an indefinite period.” He concluded: “I believed the cost in blood and treasure was not worth it.”

After October 7, Israel had lost too much “blood and treasure” on one day for the government to retreat again. Proclaiming “a Second War of Independence,” Netanyahu now sought “total victory” over Hamas.

Netanyahu eventually articulated three war aims to the *Wall Street Journal* – which he acknowledged “would take many months.... One, destroy Hamas. Two, free the hostages. Three, ensure that Gaza never again poses a threat to Israel.” That last goal required “durable demilitarization, which can only be carried out and sustained by Israel,” and “deradicalization” – a daunting challenge when so much of the world is so blindly pro-Palestinian, even pro-Hamas. President Joe Biden supported those aims – especially at first. On October 10, shocked by the “pure unadulterated evil... unleashed on the world,” the Democratic president defined Hamas as a “terrorist organization ... whose stated purpose for being is to kill Jews.” Acknowledging that the “attack has brought to the surface painful memories and the scars left by millennia of antisemitism and genocide of the Jewish people,” Biden proclaimed: “We stand with Israel. And we will make sure Israel has what it needs to take care of its citizens, defend itself, and respond to this attack.” While sending the USS Gerald R. Ford, America’s leading aircraft carrier, and needed munitions – Biden told Netanyahu: “if the United States experienced what Israel is experiencing, our response would be swift, decisive, and overwhelming.”

Nevertheless, President Biden has repeatedly declared himself “heartbroken by the tragic loss of Palestinian life.” He distinguishes between terrorists who target civilians and democracies which don’t. But, sadly, looking at Gaza, it is clear – this is what “overwhelming” looks like.

Israel and America differ regarding “the day after.” The Israeli government focused on winning the war. While that strategy reinforced short-term unity, it dodged “day after” questions ranging from how Israel could ever work with Palestinians to how Gazans can access food and water, let alone rebuild. Israel’s sidestep frustrated Biden and the international community. It risked making the war look vengeful rather than a disciplined unleashing of tremendous firepower, seeking stability for Palestinians not just Israelis.

Once again, Israel showed greater tactical sophistication on the battlefield than strategic vision in imagining how to break the impasse.

Israel did not roll into Gaza on October 8. Anticipating traps, Israel began bombing targets, while mobilizing and training reserves. Sacrificing military advantage to minimize civilian casualties, Israel telegraphed its opening moves, advising 1.1 million Gazans to head south. Israeli soldiers distributed over 1.5 million pamphlets, made six million phone calls, and

sent six million warning texts to Gazans. Such attempts to save lives in enemy territory were unprecedented, as was providing humanitarian aid to the enemy who had just slaughtered their civilians, creating regular four-hour pauses in the fighting, distributing detailed maps, and providing a humanitarian escape corridor for civilians – and disguised terrorists. John Spencer, a retired major specializing in urban warfare studies at West Point marveled: “No military has ever done this in urban warfare history.”

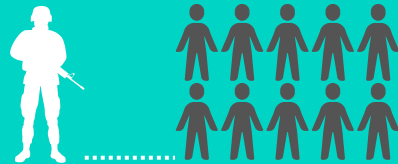
CIVILIAN DEATHS IN WARTIME: AN UNFORTUNATE RISE

The rise of “total war” in the 20th century and of terrorist ministates in the 21st century, has brought war from distant battlefields to the homefront.

The Percentage of Wartime Deaths among Civilians (Not Combatants)



Today, the UN estimates that in urban warfare nine or ten civilians often die for every combatant killed.



During the Persian Gulf War (August 1990 to February 1991), the ratio of civilian deaths to combatants was 7 to 1.

During the Iraq War (2003 to 2011), the ratio was anywhere from 2 to 1 to 10 to 1, depending on civilian death estimates.

Given how embedded Hamas is in Gaza's civilian infrastructure, the IDF ratios of civilian deaths to each terrorist killed, while heartbreaking, is impressive.

UN experts estimate that in urban warfare, ten civilians are often killed for every combatant. That makes Israel's far lower ratio, in dense, three-dimensional urban warfare, remarkable. So many deaths, including thousands of women and children, of course, remains horrific. Nevertheless, the war revealed Israeli discipline, precision, and ethics.

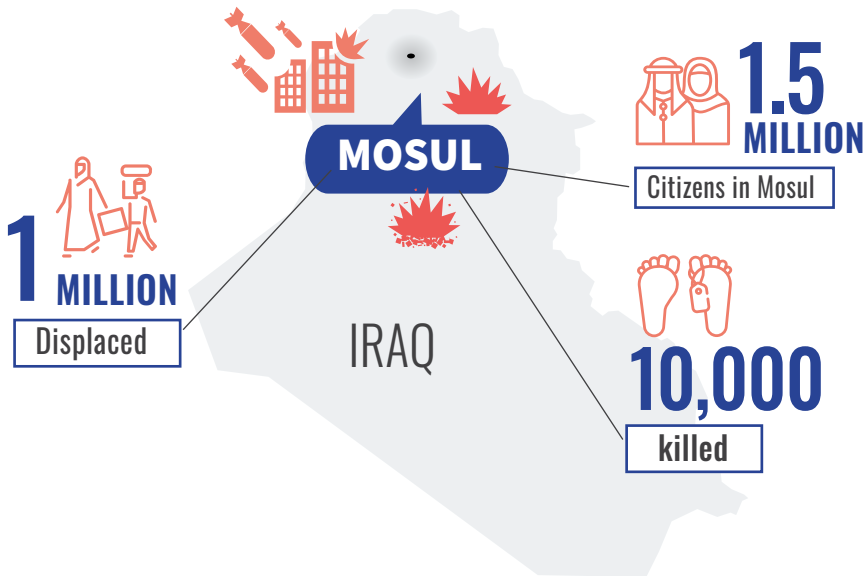
Predictably, world sympathy for Israel disappeared quickly. Perhaps the popular turning point occurred on October 17, 2023, when Hamas claimed Israel bombed al-Ahli Arab Hospital, killing five hundred. If true, veteran reporters noted, it would have taken days to count 500 bodies in the rubble of an old, solid, six-story building. Once Israel proved that the explosion came from a misfired Hamas rocket that landed in a parking lot near the hospital, Hamas lowered the body count. The reputational damage to Israel, however, remained. And civilian deaths mounted – despite Hamas including over 17,000 terrorists killed in their numbers of “innocents.”

Just War theory defines both the “right to go to war” and the “right conduct in war.” Having been attacked mercilessly in their homes, most Israelis agreed that every death, every casualty, every disruption since October 7, was the fault of Hamas.

In *Just and Unjust Wars*, the philosopher Michael Walzer imagines a “sliding scale... the more justice, the more right.” Many would add: and the more might you're justified in unleashing.

In assessing “right conduct,” issues become murkier – especially in urban warfare. Ethical armies distinguish civilians from combatants, fight proportionally, and only attack to advance the military strategy. But the moral dilemmas are constant. Consider the case of Yonadov Levenstein, killed by a sniper who popped out of a building Israel hadn't knocked down. Was the IDF's moral responsibility to the apartment building's inhabitants, many of whom were hostile – or to protect Yonadov and his comrades? Yet without holding Hamas to any standards, many people worldwide attacked Israel for violating these civilizational norms. Israel felt it was acting as any democracy would – and many democracies had – while being held to standards no democracy could meet in similar circumstances. Democracies have used awful firepower against awful enemies. when under President Barack Obama, a US-led coalition attacked the Islamic Jihadist group in Iraq, ISIL in 2016, at least 10,000 civilians died in the ensuing nine-month battle to free Mosul from the Islamic State. Unlike Gazans with Hamas, most civilians there opposed ISIL. The United States under Obama undercounted the “collateral damage” at first – until forced to acknowledge it.

THE BATTLE OF MOSUL: A COMPARISON



From October 2016 to July 2017, an American-led coalition joined with Iraqi forces to dislodge ISIL – Islamic State jihadis from the city of Mosul, population 1.5 million.

The ISIL jihadis had abused the population terribly, and had filled the city with mines, booby traps, and tunnels.

In 9 months of fighting, over one million people – mostly hostile to ISIL – were displaced, and at least 10,000 civilians were killed – some estimates run up to 40,000.

Obama clearly defined America’s priority as keeping the American people safe. He recognized that “We are at war with an organization that right now would kill as many Americans as they could if we did not stop them first. So this is a just war – a war waged proportionally, in last resort, and in self-defense.” Calling civilian deaths “heartbreaking tragedies,” he nevertheless concluded that “To do nothing in the face of terrorist networks would invite far more civilian casualties.... So doing nothing is not an option.”

Israelis remain proud of their “purity of arms” code, reflecting Zionism’s dream of perfecting the Jewish soul and improving the world while defending Jewish bodies. Many democratic armies study Israel’s moral doctrines and restraint toward civilians. The double standard expecting Israel to fight an immoral enemy with restraints

no democracy would accept fueled the decades-long Arab propaganda campaign delegitimizing Israel.

Echoing centuries-old antisemitic tropes that Jews are all-powerful and all-evil, critics overlooked the facts that Hamas attacked Israel and then Hezbollah started bombing it from the north. It's a familiar pattern. As mentioned, in 2005, Israel withdrew from Gaza. In repeated conflicts, especially since Hamas seized power in 2007, Israel kept inventing techniques to fight urban warfare as ethically as possible. Israel dropped leaflets, texted citizens, and "knocked on roofs," sending missiles across targeted buildings before dropping bombs. Israel empowered pilots and drone operators to abort legitimate missions if too many civilians might die. Sacrificing the element of surprise, Israel has repeatedly tried to act morally – while being condemned internationally.

Since withdrawing from Gaza, Israel acted with restraint, tolerating the intolerable, as Hamas built its arsenal. Now, finally, without denying the complexity, admitting that its justifications are ugly and actions often uglier, Israel acted decisively.

Similarly, the 2006 Second Lebanon War ended with UN Security Council Resolution 1701, calling for a cease-fire, and banning Hezbollah weapons south of the Litani River, 18 miles from Israel. Yet, since then, Hezbollah has amassed over 150,000 rockets, and filled southern Lebanon with trained killers ready to invade Israel, who now shoot rockets daily, wreaking mass destruction. Diplomats evaded responsibility for their previous "cease-fire" calls while downplaying the unprecedented threat Hamas and Hezbollah posed. Sometimes war today is the only way to produce peace tomorrow.

Most Israelis regret what their kids had to do to reestablish a sense of safety throughout the country. But they recognized the Hamas war as a war of *"ein breira,"* no choice. Without apologies, and without Western approval, if necessary, Israel decided to do whatever it takes to end the supreme emergency Hamas's invasion caused.

Ultimately, Israelis must fight as morally as possible, to satisfy their own consciences, not to please the world. The IDF's main mission remains winning the war by dislodging Hamas. Still, in this just war, every Israeli soldier's primary moral obligation remains "do your job" – defending themselves, their comrades, and their homeland against enemies, north and south.

ONE MILITARY EXPERT ASSESSES ISRAEL'S MORALITY

“

The truth is that Israel has painstakingly followed the laws of armed conflict and implemented many steps to prevent civilian casualties, despite enormous challenges.

”

400 miles

TUNNELS

30,000

HAMAS TERRORISTS

Israel's military faced over 30,000 Hamas fighters in over 400 miles of defensive and offensive tunnels embedded in and under civilian areas, populations and protected sites such as hospitals, mosques, schools, and United Nations facilities across multiple cities.

“Ultimately, comparisons with both past and modern cases highlight the fact that there is almost no way to defeat an entrenched enemy defender without destruction, even while implementing all feasible precautions and limits on the use of force required by the laws of war”.

John Spencer, Urban Warfare Expert, West Point, in Newsweek, Feb 12, 2024.



THE BACKLASH:
WHAT ARE THEY THINKING?

On October 7, most Jews worldwide had a sick feeling in the stomach. Instantly identifying with the Israelis fighting for their lives, they recognized how the viciousness Go-Proed and shared online echoed throughout Jewish history. Call that realization – and identification – a peoplehood moment.

Many Jews and Israel supporters mobilized. They texted Israeli friends and relatives. They doom-scrolled, following the news obsessively. They raised money – over one billion dollars in October in America alone. They protested – joining America’s largest pro-Israel gathering ever, in November, 290,000 strong. Some lost friendships or Instagram followers. Some young Jews, the *New York Times* reported, decided to marry Jewish or have another baby – to help replace the 1,200 murdered. Call that activism, that proactive response, that resistance to Jew-hatred – Zionist movements.

Israelis experienced parallel peoplehood moments – the solidarity forged by recognizing the murderers’ zeal as anti-Jewish, not “just” anti-Zionist. And Israelis’ Zionist movements countered the assault immediately – fighting back heroically, spiritually, and militarily.

Increasingly, however, Diaspora Jews felt caught between three powerful forces. First, Israel was fighting tough, nefarious foes including Iran, over one thousand miles away from Israel, Hezbollah in the north, and Palestinian terrorists in the territories, not just Hamas. Many Jews stayed stuck in the trauma of October 7, as Israeli casualty-numbers mounted, and Hamas kept holding – and abusing – hostages. Second, the Gaza warfare was bloody, difficult, heartbreaking. The justifications for Israel’s actions, while standard among democratic militaries, sounded heartless on social media. Finally, the obsessive coverage of Gaza, along with the systematic pro-Palestinian protests, created a Sanctimony Cyclone, a storm of accusations, exaggerations, lies, unkind judgments, and sweeping repudiations trying to make Israel, Zionists, Jews – and their supporters – radioactive.

Objectively, there has been a disproportionate fascination with this war. In the first six months after October 7, 2023, the *New York Times* published 4,191 articles about the Gaza War. That compared to 80 articles about the American-led battle to free Mosul over nine months in 2016-2017, 198 articles about the Tigray War in Ethiopia, which killed 600,000 in a year, and 5,434 articles during the first 13 years of Syria's civil war. One Microsoft Copilot Artificial Intelligence analysis found 25,000 articles about Gaza worldwide in six months – compared to 1,000 articles about Mosul in nine months.

THE SILENCED MAJORITY SUPPORTS ISRAEL – ESPECIALLY INITIALLY

Most Americans rallied immediately around their Jewish friends, the embattled Jewish state, and President Joe Biden. A December Harvard CAPS Harris Poll found 73 percent of Americans branding Hamas's massacre “genocidal,” with 84 percent calling it a “terrorist attack,” and 81 percent supporting Israel over Hamas. Surprisingly, as late as May, 2024, 69 percent recognized that “Israel is trying to avoid civilian casualties” in Gaza – defying the media exaggerations caricaturing Israel's self-defense campaign as brutal.

These poll numbers echoed Gallup polls over 20 years showing consistent support for Israel, between 70 and 80 percent – no matter the hysterical headlines.

From coast to coast, Americans cheered Israel. On October 9, the White House National Security Council spokesperson, John Kirby, choked up, live on CNN, while discussing the scenes of rape and murder he saw. A record 425 members of Congress co-sponsored a resolution supporting “Israel as it defends itself against the barbaric war launched by Hamas and other terrorists.”

Six weeks later, dozens of senators went silent while watching the Israeli government's summary film depicting the carnage Palestinians unleashed. Some ran from the viewing-room, weeping. With such support, a steady flow of American weaponry kept Israel fighting.

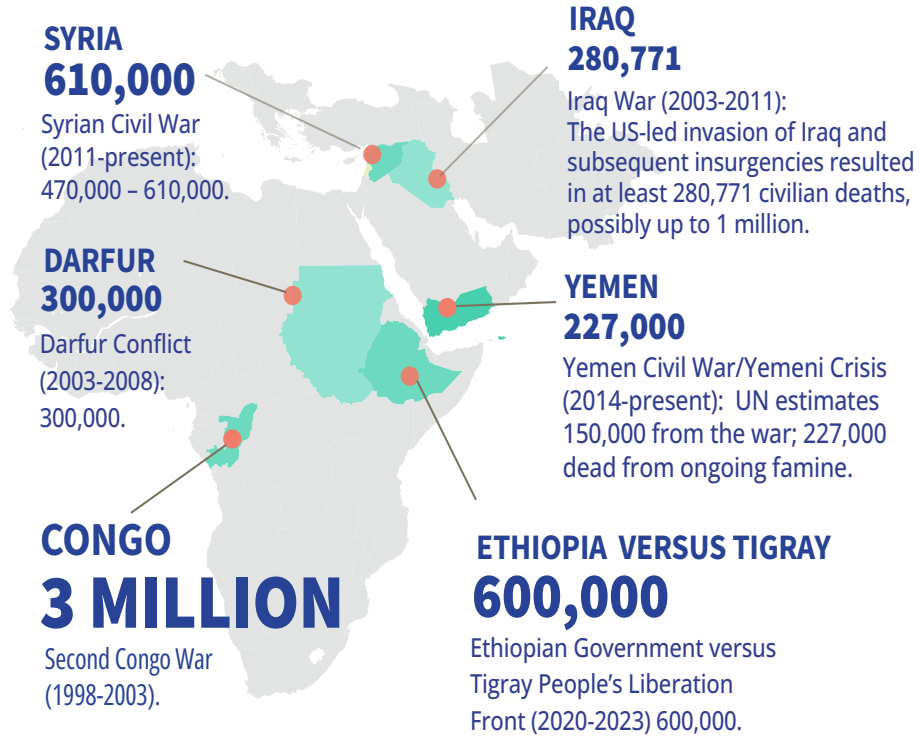
Madonna was devastated, declaring during a London concert: “I turn on social media and I want to vomit. I see children being kidnapped, pulled off motorcycles; babies being decapitated, children at peace raves being shot and killed.” She posted a video of the invasion on Instagram, proclaiming: “My heart goes out to Israel” and “I am aware that this is the work of Hamas.”

Over 700 leading Hollywood actors, producers, and screenwriters, including Jerry Seinfeld, Jamie Lee Curtis, Amy Schumer, and Deborah Messing, embraced Israel. In New York, when two non-Jewish construction workers, identifying themselves as proud Americans, confronted a neighbor tearing down hostage posters, the videoed confrontation went viral.

A RABID MINORITY DEMONIZES ISRAEL

6 BLOODIEST CONFLICTS SINCE 2000

Oxfam and others call the Gaza conflict the “deadliest conflict in the 21st century.” Sadly, it’s far from true – although death tolls are mostly estimates.



Nevertheless, Jew-hatred has surged globally against Israelis, Jews, and their supporters. Pro-Palestinian hoodlums have attacked synagogues, schools, federation buildings, even popular restaurants serving Israeli food. Anti-Zionist threats forced Madonna to beef up security. The number of incidents of American Jews harassed, of Jewish institutions vandalized, jumped 337 percent in the two months after October 7.

A small well-organized group of anti-Jewish anti-Zionists dominated the headlines. It's a structural problem – extremists command attention. There's a passion gap. Too many decent, hard-working, pro-Israel Westerners, are passive. This Silenced Majority made it too easy to overlook the bipartisan consensus recognizing that Israel and Western democracies share common values, interests, challenges, enemies, and a common fate.

Time and the Palestinian casualty-count took its toll. With each week, the bloody images and the world's impatience drained Israel's support – even in America. The vast scale of destruction in Gaza, the relentless media coverage, the growing tension between President Biden and Prime Minister Netanyahu, and the impossible dilemmas Israel faced, changed the conversation – and blackened Israel's reputation. Jews experienced four particular forms of betrayal: radicals' thuggish delight; organized feminism's silence; illiberal liberals' moral confusion, and, the greatest atmospheric disturbance triggering the Sanctimony Cyclone, the remote-control morality of those safely insulated from Israel's difficult dilemmas. It's the Triple-Double-Cross: These fanatics betrayed the Jews – yet again – liberal ideals, and themselves, their core identities.

THE RADICALS' THUGGISH DELIGHT

Admittedly, the images of dead Palestinians are searing, the arguments justifying Israel's tactics, inelegant. But many critics started bashing Israel on October 7, with bodies still smoldering. The bashers' glee showed a hatred for what Israel is, not what it does, shifting the conversation from Israel's tactics to Israel's existence.

On October 8, the Democratic Socialists of America co-sponsored a rally claiming "resistance is justified when people are occupied." Some protesters stomped on an Israeli flag and flaunted a swastika image – merging antisemitism and anti-Zionism just as the Gazans had. Others shouted the number "700" – the first estimates of Jewish dead – while making slicing gestures with their fingers on their necks.

HEZBOLLAH

Both a Lebanese Shia Islamist political party and a terrorist army, formally founded in 1985 following the 1982 Lebanon War. The name means “Party of God.”



Led by Hassan Nasrallah, the group exerts great political influence over Lebanon and has fought Israel stubbornly, especially when Israel was in Lebanon until 2000, and during the 2006 2nd Lebanon War.

The 2006 War ended with a cease-fire, UN Security Council Resolution 1701, calling for Hezbollah to be disarmed and for a demilitarized area north of Israel up to the Litani River. **Hezbollah ignored the agreement.**



Hezbollah amassed **over 150,000 missiles**, many long-range, and trained a terrorist army of anywhere from 50,000 to 100,000 fighters – with much financial and logistical support from Iran.

Hezbollah began rocketing Israel on October 8, **destroying over 500 houses and forcing 80,000 Israelis to evacuate northern Israel.**



Various professors announced themselves “exhilarated” by the “awesome” events or exulted: “this is what decolonization looks like.” Over thirty Harvard student organizations held “the Israeli regime entirely responsible for all unfolding violence.” “Decolonization is not a metaphor,” George Washington University’s Students for Justice in Palestine preached. “Every Palestinian is a civilian even if they hold arms. A settler is an aggressor, a soldier, and an occupier even if they are lounging on our occupied beaches.”

Thus began months of protests, often targeting Jews, Jewish sites, and patriotic icons too. In America, shouting “from the River to the Sea,” protesters splashed red paint on the Lincoln Memorial Plaza – although the *Washington Post* didn’t even cover it. They blocked Christmas-time traffic to JFK and LAX airports. And, as the Houthis in Yemen started attacking Israeli ships, then other internationally protected freighters, they shouted: “Yemen, Yemen, make us proud, turn another ship around.”

Caught in a binary world, even when Iran launched 320 missiles against Israel, activists with the “AntiWar Committee, Chicago,” cheered, and shouted “death to America” in Farsi, as well as “death to Israel.” One young woman explained to a Free Press reporter: “Iran and Yemen and Hezbollah are all... part of the arc of resistance, because the enemies are Israel and the USA.”

Many thugs turned violent. One stabbed a Jewish woman in Lyon. Others shot at Jewish schools in Montreal. In Los Angeles, a Palestinian computer science professor knocked down a Jewish counter-protester, who died from the fall. In New Orleans, a protester tried burning Israel’s flag. In the scuffle, pro-Palestinian demonstrators broke a Jewish student’s nose. Helping the victim, Natalie Mendelsohn sighed, “I had Jewish blood on my hands, and that’s something I never thought I would encounter.”

THE SILENCE OF THE FEMINISTS

On October 6, most Jewish leaders would have assumed that young women were more passionate about their feminist identities than most young Jews were about their connection to Israel. Yet, on October 7, scrolling the same news, many Jews felt personally assaulted and mobilized. By contrast, many feminists went silent.

Gradually, some women denounced this massive, highly publicized, self-promoted act of gendered violence. But the formal feminist community remained unconscionably silent. It took two months to hear from Planned Parenthood and UN Women. The National Organization of Women’s belated statement condemned sexual violence generically without mentioning Hamas.

By comparison, in May 2021, when Israel defended itself against yet another Hamas bombardment, over 120 gender studies departments denounced the Jewish state. Two years later, despite seeing Palestinian rape culture spawn Hamas’s rape cult, despite teaching “Believe Survivors,” not one gender studies department defended one of these victimized women. Anguished signs in London proclaimed: #METOO – UNLESS YOU’RE A JEW.

Some, when pressed, even doubted the testimonials – and the voluminous evidence of stripped women, broken pelvises, mutilated genitalia, and bloody jeans. Clearly, the demand to demonize Israel was so great, it ignored victims of systematic sexual violence.

In singling-out women, the terrorist-rapists tried stripping Jewish women of their dignity. And they tried humiliating Jewish men, treating them as so helpless they cannot even defend their women and children. “The suffering of Israeli women and girls cannot be swept aside, as the world has been so eager to do,” the law professor Susan Estrich wrote. “Who treats a teenage girl like this? How do you tell her parents that these were the last minutes of their daughters’ lives?... And what does the world say to Israel? Stop fighting? Let them get away with it? Would you?”

THE ONGOING MORAL CONFUSION OF ILLIBERAL LIBERALS, ESPECIALLY IN UNIVERSITIES

Although the most aggressive attacks on Jews made the headlines, the thugs were a relatively small, marginal group. Far more distressing was watching progressives, whom many Jews considered their natural allies, equivocate about Palestinian atrocities – while condemning Israel’s self-defense efforts.

Again and again, the spaces Jews most worshipped – the media, academia, the art world, hosted the most vicious Israel-bashers, bullying others into silence.

In October, at this moment of Jewish agony, university leaders went silent – or mealy-mouthed. Harvard’s president, Dr. Claudine Gay, was “heartbroken by the death and destruction” – obscuring the guilty party. Even the *New York Times* found the statement “tepid.” At the Oscars, some celebrities wore red pins with bloody hands, evoking a violent double-murder, when Palestinians lynched two Israelis in Ramallah in 2000, and one murderer showed-off his blood-soaked hands. Somehow “the violence” was treated like a natural phenomenon, not carefully planned Palestinian war crimes. Cornell University’s president, Martha Pollock declared: “The loss of human life is always tragic, whether caused by human actions such as terrorism, war or mass shootings, or by natural disasters such as earthquakes, fires or floods.” With donors revolted and revolting, she apologized.

By the time, President Gay, University of Pennsylvania’s president, Liz Magill, and MIT’s president, Sally Kornbluth, told a Congressional panel they would judge calls for genocide

“in context,” such temporizing had become scandalous.

The half-heartedness contrasted with the intense Jew-hatred and periodic violence too many Jewish students encountered – over 1,000 incidents on North American campuses alone in the first six months of war. Israel’s critics claimed American Jews had to choose between their liberalism and their Zionism – in fact, embracing the anti-Zionism spreading on the streets and on campus meant choosing to ally with an illiberal, oppressive, sexist, homophobic, antisemitic, anti-American, anti-Western Hamas.

By springtime, hating Israel had become so ingrained in so many student-activists, that dozens of campuses across America faced disruptive protests. Escalating, the activists bullied Jewish students, openly embraced Hamas, not just the Palestinian cause, and threatened “the Yahoodim” with more and more “October 7th-style” attacks. Jewish students watched in dismay as Israel-bashing unleashed waves of Jew-hatred and became the identity marker of their progressive peers. Many universities had classes disrupted, exams postponed, even commencements cancelled or changed, as this small minority claimed to speak for their generation.

THE REMOTE-CONTROL MORALISTS

It’s too easy to sit six-thousand-miles away from Gaza and mourn Gazans’ deaths. The Sanctimony Cyclone left no room to answer Amos Oz’s question “What would you do?” – or “What has America done?”

The world mindlessly echoed Hamas’s death toll – which by incorporating the terrorists killed absolved every terrorist of guilt or implied that the evil Israelis incompetently only killed innocents. Few credited Israel for its unprecedented efforts to minimize civilian deaths. Instead, that word “unprecedented” was used to describe the numbers killed – despite death tolls in other conflicts in the hundreds of thousands. Few seemed to have patience for the IDF’s genuine dilemmas. Officers often had seconds to decide whether to abort legitimate, military missions to minimize civilian casualties. And higher-ups had to decide whether it was worth risking their soldiers’ lives to preserve this or that building, or deploy the infantry not the air force.

THE SMALL ANTI-ZIONIST JEWISH GROUPS COMMANDING OUTSIZED ATTENTION

Reporters loved claiming that the few Jews denouncing Israel represented a growing anti-Zionist trend dividing Jewish communities in half. In the “Ceasefire Now Coalition,” Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) and IfNotNow (INN) collaborated with the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) to denounce Israel as “genocidal” and an apartheid regime.

The night after 290,000 Jews massed on the Washington Mall, 150 members of the coalition so menaced Democratic National Committee members on Capitol Hill, the protest turned violent. Few reporters noted that the pro-Israel rally was two-thousand-times larger.

Many IfNotNow activists are children of rabbis and Jewish day-school graduates. Using their Jewish fluency, they blow the shofar at anti-Israel rallies, hold freedom seders in Jew-hating, pro-Palestinian campus encampments, and brazenly say the mourner’s prayer for “all” Palestinians “killed by Israel,” including Hamas terrorists. This went far beyond anti-Zionism – it violated Jewish sensibilities. In a letter, over 500 Jewish students attending Columbia University wrote, these Jews “tokenize themselves by claiming to represent ‘real Jewish values,’ and attempt to delegitimize our lived experiences of antisemitism.”

In a divided America, lines blurred. Some progressives denounced the Democratic president, Joe Biden, as “Genocide Joe.” Meanwhile, most Republican legislators supported the president in re-arming Israel – while opposing him on most other issues. Still, the partisan polarization, as the 2024 presidential campaign intensifies, sometimes confuses the debate. Jewish liberals continue defining “antisemitism” as coming from the Trumpian right and white supremacists. In parallel, Jewish conservatives harp on the left’s antisemitism.

October 7 confirmed that both right-wing antisemitism and left-wing antisemitism are evil – and spreading. The violence also blurred anti-Zionism with antisemitism. Hamas harnessed traditional antisemitism to intensify its anti-Zionism, while pro-Palestinian thugs harnessed critiques of Israel to justify traditional Jew-hatred.

Right-wing Jew-hatred was simpler to fight intellectually. It revived old-fashioned stereotypes of Jews – and now Israel – as greedy, power-hungry, threatening, part of a worldwide conspiracy undermining whatever they held dear from moment to moment. Left-wing Jew-hatred came wrapped in the language of human rights and a progressivism many liberals applauded, weaponized by a critique of Israel’s bombing campaign and its right-wing government.

THE NEW BIG LIES: WHAT SOME OF THE MOST POPULAR YET DECEITFUL PHRASES DEMONIZING ISRAEL REALLY MEAN

Israel's enemies keep demonizing Israel – and demoralizing Israel's supporters with an arsenal of Big Lies. More and more, everyone “knows”: that Israel occupies Gaza – despite disengaging from it in 2005: that “From the River to the Sea” envisions a democratic Palestine when it envisions an exterminated Israel; and that hundreds of innocents deserved to be massacred, maimed, raped, and terrorized – because “this is what decolonization looks like.”

This primer refutes some New Big Lies against Israel-sometimes repeating material mentioned earlier.

“FROM THE RIVER TO THE SEA, PALESTINE WILL BE FREE”

If Palestine is free – meaning Jew-free – from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea – there is no room for more than seven million Israeli Jews. “From the River to the Sea,” proposes a one-state solution, meaning a no-Jewish state solution. Some Palestinians claim the slogan imagines a secular democratic state with Jews and Arabs living together. If peacefully-inclined protesters use the slogan, it's their responsibility to distance themselves from the usual exterminationist vision – or find a different slogan.

“From the River to the Sea,” implies that every inch of Palestine is “occupied.” The cry ignores the fact that Israelis didn't launch a colonial expedition, reaching some exotic locale in pith helmets and safari suits. The protesters reject the Jews' status as indigenous people, still using their ancient language and ancient texts, rooted in their same ancestral land, culture, Bible. And the charge negates Jews' deep history in the Promised Land.

The ADL – Anti Defamation League – and many mainstream, left-leaning, organizations consider the phrase “hate speech.” It violates the 1948 Genocide Convention. Article

3(c) prohibits “Direct and public incitement to commit genocide.” And tone counts. Protesters often shout the phrase venomously – while importing a bullying, autocratic, third-world street politics to campuses and city streets.

October 7 and the Iranian rocket swarm of April 13 offer clarity: if your enemy calls for your destruction – your enemy is calling for your destruction. It is bigoted not to take Islamist fundamentalists seriously, rather than condescendingly deciding they can’t really mean that. Palestine from the River to the Sea, leaves no rooms for Jews – or the Jewish State.

“GAZA IS STILL OCCUPIED (AFTER THE DISENGAGEMENT)”

In 2005, Israel disengaged from Gaza, uprooting over 8,500 Israeli citizens in 21 settlements – and four settlements in Samaria too. Generals lobbied to keep a strip of land for defensive purposes – the Philadelphi corridor. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon claimed that if Israel retained one grain of Gazan sand, critics would claim it was still “occupied.” And the international community promised that once Gaza was no longer occupied, Israel could live in peace as the Gazans prospered.

That word “occupation” is the keystone lie in the fight against Israel’s legitimacy. Some critics of Israel’s actions, but not its very being, use the word to describe the disputed territories since 1967. By contrast, Hamas and many other Palestinian rejectionists look at every inch of Israeli land as occupied. In its updated, supposedly more pragmatic, 2017 charter, Hamas declared “There shall be no recognition of the legitimacy of the Zionist entity. Whatever had befallen the land of Palestine in terms of occupation, settlement building, judaisation [sic], or changes to its features or falsification of facts is illegitimate... Hamas rejects any alternative to the full and complete liberation of Palestine, from the river to the sea.”

So beware: When some people say “end the occupation,” they mean, “return some or all territories filled with Palestinians, taken in 1967.” When Hamas says “end the occupation” they mean “end Israel.” To some, “occupation” approaches the problem as a border dispute, open to compromise. To Hamas and its rabid supporters, “occupation” treats Israel as the problem and deserving of the death penalty.

This sweeping “occupation” claim overlooks Gaza’s complicated history with Egypt, which “occupied” Gaza in its legal limbo from 1949 until Israel seized the territory in its 1967 war of self-defense. The word “occupation,” evoking the Nazi occupation of Europe,

delegitimizes Israel while legitimizing the Palestinians' all-or-nothing "Nakba Narrative," claiming that European Jews with no ties to the land displaced the aboriginal people – as Israel's original sin. To many Palestinians, Israel is "occupied" – all of Israel, from the River to the Sea. All Israelis are "settlers." The Negev's plundered kibbutzim and invaded cities are "settlements," despite lying in pre-1967 Israel, within the "Green Line," the borders from the 1949 armistice with Jordan (which takes its name from a map on which the demarcation line was hastily drawn in green pencil). This sweeping big lie justify Hamas's savagery, deeming every Israeli, every Thai volunteer, every tourist, an "occupier" and thus deserving of any violence that befalls them.

Meanwhile, that word "disengagement" explains many Israelis' frustration with diplomacy-by-slogan. Eighteen years ago, Gaza housed some weapons, few tunnels, and a limited terrorist infrastructure, because Israel retained military control. Yet, almost immediately after disengagement, primitive Kassam rockets continued bombarding Israel as they had before – while critics bombarded Israel with the occupation charge. The violence against Israel – and the criticism – intensified when Hamas violently seized power in Gaza in 2007.

Facing an implacable foe vowing to exterminate the Jews – see the Hamas Charter – Israel blockaded a Hamas-controlled Gaza. That launched a chain-reaction of lies: that Israel "occupies" the territory it left – where Hamas built its deadly arsenal mostly unimpeded despite the "blockade"; that Gaza is the "most densely populated place on earth" – even though it doesn't compare to Manhattan, and other super-skyscrapered city centers; and that the Zionists made Gaza an "open air prison" or concentration camp – when Egypt controls Gaza's southern border, and keeps Gazans away from Egyptians.

Words matter. So do facts. Israel kept its promise when it disengaged. Israel betrayed many of its own citizens, who objected strenuously. Nevertheless, Israel ended up with no peace, no peace of mind, and a neighboring piece of territory that became Hamasistan. Today, Israel faces a hostile, seething, lethal multi-leveled, launching pad for thousands of rockets and marauders, exporting misery – run by fanatics who treat fellow Palestinians as cannon fodder.

“ISRAEL IS AN APARTHEID STATE”

The Jews seem to have magical magnetic powers. Over the centuries, Jews attracted various labels: Jews were too rich and too poor, too capitalist and too socialist, too traditional and too modern, too anxious to fit in and too happy to stand out.

Today’s haters target the Jewish state in addition to the Jews. As countries stand accused of different crimes, Israel keeps being found guilty of the trendiest and most heinous national sins – especially if Westerners committed them. Today, Israel is a Jewish-supremacist state with privilege, a settler-colonialist enterprise. In the 1990s, Israel was racist, colonialist, and imperialist – then guilty of “ethnic cleansing” once the Balkans mess introduced that phrase into the international vocabulary. But since the 1970s, as the international community justifiably denounced Apartheid South Africa, Israel has been called an Apartheid state.

Apartheid created a system of racial differentiation – apartness – based on biological classifications perversely assuming that whites, blacks, and racially mixed people were not equal. The Apartheid Wall in Johannesburg’s Apartheid Museum lists 148 laws sifting people into different racial categories calibrating who deserved which privileges – and which restrictions. Israel never passed one law defining people by race.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is national not racial. Israel, like every other country, does make distinctions based on various identifying factors, including religion, national origin, and citizenship. But that’s not what racism means. Moreover, if Israel is racist, and wants Apartheid, it’s doing an awful job. Israeli-Arabs enjoy equal rights – and have served as Supreme Court judges, Knesset members, key members of the Naftali Bennett-Yair Lapid coalition from 2021 to 2022. With 20 percent of the population, Israeli-Arabs constitute about 20 percent of the doctors, and 40 percent of the nurses, and pharmacists. Finally, if Israelis are anti-Arab, why were so many excited about the Abraham Accords, and why are Hamas and Iran threatened by Saudi Arabia’s potential rapprochement with Israel? Maybe Israelis don’t hate Arabs – but only fight enemies who seek to destroy them. The Apartheid slur soared in popularity after 1994. Israel, seeking a two-state solution under the Oslo Peace Process, withdrew from the most populated Palestinian cities, while approving the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. While not perfect, Israel initiated many attempts at compromise and peace. Palestinians rarely reciprocated, but Israel’s initiatives have repeatedly been used against it militarily, diplomatically, and reputationally.

In 2001, the Durban World Conference against Racism in South Africa turned into an anti-

Zionist hatefest. Four years later, spreading the poison, Palestinian activists launched Israeli Apartheid Week on various campuses. Why pivot your calendar around knocking others down rather than building yourselves up, many wondered. All that poison, such hostility to compromise, undergirds the October 7 savagery. As the Hamas charter proclaims, “Initiatives, and so-called peaceful solutions and international conferences, are in contradiction to the principles of the Islamic Resistance Movement...”

“ZIONISM IS SETTLER-COLONIALISM”

The Oxford Dictionary defines colonialism as “the act of taking control of an area or a country that is not your own, especially using force, and sending people from your own country to live there.” Textbooks mention the British colonization of “North America, parts of Africa, and India” to illustrate “colonial domination.” You can dislike how Israelis treat Palestinians. You can denounce the settlements. But calling Israel a “colonialist” or “settler-colonialist” power is like calling chocolate – vanilla.

“De-colonization” has become today’s cause celebre. And Israel-bashing is trending. Naturally, fanatics caricature Israel as a “settler-colonial state.” But it mocks the facts.

Jews put the “in” in “indigenous.” Negating Jews’ historical ties to Israel cancels the Bible and Jesus’s story, dismissing the land of Israel’s centrality to Judaism for 3,500 years.

Nevertheless, many progressives use a “de-colonization” prism caricaturing Zionists as settler-colonialists, forever-oppressing, and Palestinians as the colonized, forever-blameless. This prejudice fuses the Marxist “oppressed-oppressor” binary with the psychiatrist Franz Fanon’s argument that de-colonization is a state of mind, often requiring a cleansing violence.

Rejecting the expansive, ever-growing-pie of Thomas Jefferson’s life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, people pushing the de-colonization ideology frame the world – and America – as caught in a zero-sum power struggle. The oppressive colonizers in this Manichean, black and white world, are always guilty – and the oppressed, forever pure, innocent, trampled.

Those doctrines made the October 7 bloodbath “exhilarating,” justified, or in the perverse words of Prof. Judith Butler, an act of “armed resistance.” The rhetoric suggests the settler-colonialists got what they deserved, as the decolonizers finally rose up. Seeing the world that way requires much fanaticism, many simplifications, and multiple distortions.

But those blinders explain the feminists who failed to see the rape culture and child abuse, the liberals who failed to acknowledge the despotism, the humanists who failed to protest, the peace-loving students calling to destroy Tel Aviv, and threatening their dorm-mates and classmates, as Palestinian marauders crossed civilizational red lines.

WHAT GENOCIDE REALLY MEANS




6 MILLION

The Holocaust
(1933-1945):
Nazis slaughtered
6 million Jews.

3.9 MILLION



Holodomor (Ukraine 1932-1933):
3.9 million Ukrainians (possibly up to 7 million) died due to a man-made famine caused by the Soviet Union's forced collectivization policies under Joseph Stalin.



1.5-3 MILLION

Cambodian Genocide (1975- 1979):
The Khmer Rouge regime wiped out approximately 1.5 to 3 million Cambodians, at least 25 percent of the population.

1.2 MILLION



Armenian Genocide (1915-1916)

The Ottoman Empire murdered between 664,000 and 1.2 million Armenian Christians during World War I.



800,000

Rwandan Genocide against the Tutsi (1994):
Hutus massacred an estimated 800,000 Tutsis in 100 days.

“ISRAEL IS COMMITTING GENOCIDE”

Genocide, literally tribe-killing, means a systematic series of violent acts “committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.” Yet the Palestinian population has quintupled since 1967, from just over one million to nearly five-and-a half million people. Zionists appear to be as bad at genocide as they are at Apartheid.

Hatred often involves projection – assuming your enemies would do to you what you would do to them. These false cries that Israelis are targeting Palestinians for genocide – reflect the sweeping, categorical, and thus genocidal tendencies, in the Hamas Charter, in the October 7 sadism, and in too much pro-Palestinian rhetoric.

“DISPROPORTIONATE BOMBING”

Asymmetrical warfare is difficult. When terrorists attack your civilians, then hide behind their own civilians, what can a democratic army do? Inevitably, some of those civilian shields will die. Moreover, when you have an air force, and must choose between bombing an enemy from the air and sending your troops in door-to-door, risking ambush, what’s the moral call? A leader’s primary moral responsibility is to the led – and a defender’s primary moral responsibility to defend those unfairly, viciously attacked.

Similarly, international law prohibits “attacks that are not directed at a specific military objective.” When an aggressor hides in mosques and hospitals and kindergartens and schools, those normally untouchable civilian spaces become legitimate military targets: emphasizing the violation of civilizational norms, call them “Ha-Mosques,” “Hamospitals” and “killergartens.” Complaining about a “disproportionate response” from a regular army when fighting terrorists embedded in a city, is essentially rejecting any military response. Yet when your enemy calls for your annihilation, tries acting on it, then vows to try again and again, it’s unrealistic to expect no collateral damage.

The moral onus for every death, injury, and misfire, falls on Hamas for initiating this round. War involves a clash of powerful, ugly forces. To win, it’s logical – and moral – for your side to mobilize as much force as possible – within the bounds of reason, but not being forever constrained, and immediately criticized, as Israel often is.

HUMANITARIAN CEASEFIRE

For eighteen years, the world yelled “disproportionate bombing” and called for “humanitarian ceasefires” whenever Israel defended itself against rockets from Gaza. For eighteen years, Hamas stole much humanitarian aid sent to Gaza. After Hamas invaded, shattering so many lives, from an Israeli perspective, what would be “humanitarian” about a premature ceasefire? It’s like calling yourself “pro-peace” while tolerating a terrorist-dictatorship in Gaza that oppresses Gazans and threatens Israelis.

Most calls for “ceasefire” only target Israel. Demand a “ceasefire” from Hezbollah, from the Houthis and other Iranian proxies, and from Hamas – with a release of every hostage.

Israel’s primary obligation is to defend its citizens, and free its hostages, restoring a certain balance of fear that deters its genocidal neighbors, while rearranging the borders so a “clean” buffer zone, with no farming, no human intrusion, distances Gazans from their Israeli neighbors.

Nevertheless, for what some military experts call the first time, Israel created humanitarian corridors and distributed tons of “humanitarian aid,” including fuel which helped keep Hamas’s attack tunnels running. On October 7, Hamas terrorists kidnapped Omar Wenkert a 22-year-old suffering from colitis. His father wonders: “Why do the terrorists get aid from my country when these kidnappers won’t give my son the lifesaving medication he needs?” The dilemmas are agonizing.

Israel has tried easing the burden on innocents stuck between Hamas and the IDF – while refuting the lie that Hamas is a small, marginal group in Gaza. Most Gazans, along with as many as 72 percent of Palestinians, celebrated the carnage, and many zealously participated in it. Still, Israel keeps experimenting with ways to help, to minimize civilian suffering. External military experts acknowledged that Israel’s decision prolonged its campaign, sometimes limited its military successes, and occasionally cost Israeli lives. Unfortunately, the phrase “humanitarian aid” too often means resupplying Hamas, while “ceasefire” sounds like only pressuring Israel and letting the killers regroup.

Palestinian propagandists have developed a language that distorts words, negates history, and obscures Palestinian intentions.

October 7 was a nightmarish wake-up call. Israel must be moral – for its own sake, for its soldiers’ consciences, and its national soul. But the delusion of tolerating Palestinian lies and international gullibility ended when those terrorists swarmed Israel’s peaceful

kibbutzim and villages, sowing death and destruction – and Hezbollah’s rockets started landing too. The challenge now is creating a new reality – and a new lexicon to acknowledge that reality, then build a better, fairer, and genuinely safer new Middle East for all.

EPILOGUE

THE LESSONS OF APRIL 13

This guidebook focuses on October 7 and the ensuing Israel-Hamas war. Telling the history of the Iranian regime's 45-year obsession with Israel, and its use of "the Zionists," "the Jews," and "America," as the enemies every dictatorship needs, is beyond this project's scope. But the unprecedented barrage of 320 missiles the Iranian theocrats launched against Israel on April 13, illustrates some themes that keep recurring since October 7th:

WHY IS IRAN INVOLVED IN THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR?

Iran is over 1,000 miles away from Israel.



Since 1979, the Islamic Republic in Iran has pursued a Jihadist agenda against **"Big Satan," the United States, and "Little Satan," Israel.**



Iran's push to develop nuclear weapons

triggered a shadow war with Israel, characterized by Israeli attempts to sabotage and expose the program, and assassinate some key players.



Iran's proxy strategy funds, arms, trains, and controls Jihadi terrorists like Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Houthis, encouraging them to fight, and trying to **encircle Israel in enemies dedicated to making the Jewish state unlivable.**

- Israel is fighting a multi-front war against jihadists who cross many civilizational norms in their systematic campaign against Zionists, Jews, and the Jewish State, Israel.
- These Jew-haters are also anti-American and illiberal, repudiating fundamental Western ideas and ideals.
- No matter what kind of unprecedented military assault Israel endures, even many of its friends immediately hold Israel to a standard no other country is held to, demanding “restraint” and “take the win” before Israel has an opportunity to counterattack.
- The anti-Zionist propagandists’ war of words echoes and encourages a far bloodier war targeting every innocent Israeli, both Jewish and non-Jewish. The extraordinary defense Israel and its allies mounted against Iran saved countless lives, but the shrapnel from one missile gravely injured a 7-year-old Bedouin girl, Amina al-Hassouni.
- Nevertheless, despite facing many enemies on these many fronts, Israel is not helpless – and Israel is not alone. On April 13, Israelis once again saved Israel – this time with all systems working exceptionally well, from the intelligence community to the high-tech defenses to Israel’s skilled and courageous pilots and drone operators. Meanwhile, the IDF’s seamless cooperation with its American, European, Jordanian, and Saudi Arabian partners that night offers tremendous hope.

Such international synergy suggests that we will win this civilizational battle – and, with vision, grit, and moral clarity, emerge from these dark days with the global forces of enlightenment strengthened and now including more and more Arab brothers and sisters.

THE GROWTH OF ISRAEL: A TRAJECTORY



1

2000-1750 BCE

Abraham and Sarah
Go to Canaan

1400-1250 BCE

Exodus and
Return Home



2

3

1006- 930 BCE

Reign of **David** and
Solomon: First Temple Built

586 BCE

First Temple Destroyed;
Babylonian Exile



4

5

520 BCE -70 CE

Second Temple:
Maccabees, Herod,
Hillel, Jesus, Civil War

70 C.E.

Exile – The Romans Destroy the Second Temple and Exile many of the Jews, although some Jews will live in the Land of Israel continuously throughout the exile.



6

1897

7



Zionism – Twenty years of pioneering culminates in the Founding of the Modern Zionist Movement with Theodor Herzl and the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland.

8

1921



Transjordan Partition – Under the British Mandate, the area of Palestine is divided.

1947

9

UN Partition – the area of Palestine is further divided, but David Ben-Gurion accepts the division to achieve statehood.

10

1948



Founding of Israel – 6 Arab armies attack

1950

11

Mass Migration: 850,000 Jews expelled from Arab Countries – become citizens not permanent refugees

12

1956



Sinai Campaign – Joint Anglo, Franco, and Israeli force

13

1960s

The Love in:
The Communitarian
Ideal Thrives

1967

Six Day War – Israel
captures/liberates Sinai, Golan
Heights, Jerusalem, West Bank and
Gaza (PLO founded 3 years earlier)

14



15

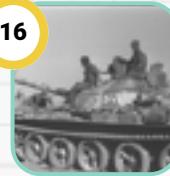
1970s

The Roller Coaster:
Arrogance, Despair in '73 –
Redemption in '76 & '79

1973

Yom Kippur War – Surprise
attack by Egypt and Syria

16



17

1979



Camp David Treaty
with Egypt – Israel
returns Sinai

1980s

The Great Inflation –
and Mild Depression

18



19

1982

Lebanon War:
Israel attacks PLO state
within a state



20

1990s

Oslo Peace Doesn't Last –
High Tech Boom Does

1993

21

Oslo Peace Accords with Palestinians

22

2000s

The Great Terror –
but Greater Prosperity:
Israel as Start Up Nation

2000

23

Camp David talks fail;
Palestinians turn to
violence



24

2005

Gaza Disengagement

2010s

25

The Abraham Accords:
Make it the Arab-Israeli
Conflicts, some solved,
others lingering



26

2020s

Division when feeling Safe –
Unity when Slaughtered,
especially on October 7, 2023

For Further Reading

Daniel Gordis, *Israel: A Concise History of a Nation Reborn* (Ecco, 2016): Gives a short, punchy, and thoughtful introduction to the basics of Israeli history and the start of the Zionist movement.

Anita Shapira, *Israel: A History* (Brandeis University Press, 2012): Offers a valuable overview of Israel's history and the Zionist idea from a more academic perspective.

Yaakov Katz, *Shadow Strike: Inside Israel's Secret Mission to Eliminate Syrian Nuclear Power* (St. Martin's Press, 2019): Explores both Israel's ongoing security dilemmas and Israel's multi-dimensional, often complex, relationship with the United States through the lens of Israel's preemptive strike on Syria's nuclear reactor in 2007.

Gil Troy, *Moynihan's Moment: America's Fights Against Zionism as Racism* (Oxford University Press, 2013): While telling the story of how the US ambassador to the UN, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, led the fight against the General Assembly's "Zionism is Racism" resolution, the book also gives a history of anti-Zionism.

Gil Troy, *The Zionist Ideas: Visions for the Jewish Homeland – Then, Now, Tomorrow* (Jewish Publication Society, 2018): An anthology of Zionist writings with a comprehensive introduction that helps readers understand the range of Zionist thought, before the state through today, from Left to Right, religious to secular.

Adi Schwartz and Einat Wilf, *The War of Return: How Western Indulgence of the Palestinian Dream Has Obstructed the Path to Peace* (All Points Books, 2020): Gives valuable insight into Israel's conflict with the Palestinians and how both Western blindness and Palestinian maximalism make matters worse.

Dan Senor and Saul Singer, *The Genius of Israel (The Surprising Resilience of a Divided Nation in a Turbulent World)*, (Simon & Schuster, 2023): Explores Israeli society and ideology, explaining Israel's remarkable successes despite its many challenges.

Bari Weiss, *How to Fight Anti-Semitism* (Crown, 2019): Written following the Pittsburgh synagogue massacre but still relevant as a call to embrace both Jewish and American values in response to Jew-hatred.

David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2014): A thoughtful, sophisticated analysis of what another historian, Robert Wistrich, called "The Longest Hatred."

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*Natan Sharansky, Prisoner of Zion,
Human Rights Activist, former Deputy Prime Minister*

ANSWERS THESE QUESTIONS... and MORE

1. What happened on October 7?
2. Why did Hamas attack?
3. Why did Israel launch a war that killed and displaced so many civilians?
4. Why did events in Israel disrupt so many lives thousands of miles away?
5. Why did Iran attack Israel on April 13?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Professor Gil Troy is a Senior Fellow in Zionist Thought at the Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPi). Troy, a Distinguished Scholar in North American History at McGill University living in Jerusalem, is an award-winning American presidential historian and a leading Zionist thinker. He is the author of eight books, on the American presidency, and five books on Zionism, including the best-selling, *The Zionist Ideas: Visions for the Jewish Homeland – Then, Now, Tomorrow*; the three-volume set of Theodor Herzl's *Zionist Writings*; and *Never Alone: Prison, Politics, and My People*, co-authored with Natan Sharansky. President Isaac Herzog, in his foreword to the recently published Hebrew edition of *Never Alone*, praised Troy as “a revered scholar, author and history professor.” Troy's next book, *To Resist the Academic Intifada: Letters to My Students on Defending the Zionist Dream*, will be published in fall, 2024.



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