

# The Israel-Hamas War One Year Later: Mass Violence and Palestinian Dispossession

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## Abstract

This essay analyzes the Israeli offensive in the Gaza Strip as it has unfolded in the year since Hamas’s October 7, 2023, attacks. It first details the death and destruction Tel Aviv has wrought over that period, the predictions for mass casualties to come, and the state-sanctioned violence and theft faced by Palestinians not just in Gaza but across the occupied territories and Israel. It then examines why Washington’s support of Tel Aviv has remained steadfast despite domestic and international condemnation, arguing that President Joe Biden’s Zionist ideology has played a decisive role. The article further shows that Israel’s interest in the territorial dispossession of Palestinians under the cover of war has led its right-wing government to thwart efforts at a ceasefire that would return the hostages still held by Hamas. The analysis concludes with a reflection on the antiwar protests that continue to roil US campuses as Donald Trump returns to power.

Israel’s ongoing response to Hamas’s devastating attacks on October 7, 2023, constitutes one of the bloodiest and most destructive military offensives the world has witnessed in decades.<sup>1</sup> In the Gaza Strip, as of November 2024, at least 43,000 Palestinians—the majority of whom are children and women—have been killed, nearly 100,000 have been injured, and about 10,000 more are believed to be buried under the rubble of buildings shattered by 75,000 tons of explosives used

<sup>1</sup> Julia Frankel, “Israel’s Military Campaign in Gaza Seen as Among the Most Destructive in Recent History, Experts Say,” *The Associated Press*, January 11, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/israel-gaza-bombs-destruction-death-toll-scope-419488c511f83c85baea22458472a796>; Nir Hasson, “The Numbers Show: Gaza War Is One of the Bloodiest in the 21st Century,” *Haaretz*, August 14, 2024, <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/palestinians/2024-08-14/ty-article-magazine/.premium/the-death-toll-in-gaza-is-bad-even-compared-to-the-wars-in-ukraine-iraq-and-myanmar/00000191-50c6-d6a2-a7dd-d1decf340000>.

by the Israeli military.<sup>2</sup> According to one estimate, about 10 percent of Gaza’s population has been killed or injured, or is missing.<sup>3</sup> Another report suggests that once indirect deaths are added to the toll, including from disease and starvation, the Palestinian losses may surpass 186,000.<sup>4</sup> Yet another forecasts that if the current death rate persists, 335,000 Palestinians—15 percent of Gaza’s inhabitants—will die by the end of 2024.<sup>5</sup>

This massive bombardment, in the words of Francesca Albanese, the United Nations special rapporteur on the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, has “destroyed or severely damaged most life-sustaining infrastructure” in Gaza.<sup>6</sup> This includes more than 70 percent of housing units, 88 percent of hospitals, 67 percent of agricultural land, 95 percent of livestock, and nearly 70 percent of water sources.<sup>7</sup> Israel’s devastation has been coupled by a siege that has rendered the strip “almost hermetically sealed” and a refusal to allow the entry of sufficient humanitarian aid.<sup>8</sup> According to the UN Office for the Coordination

<sup>2</sup> Alia Chughtai and Muhammet Okur, “One Year of Israel’s War on Gaza,” Al Jazeera, October 8, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/longform/2024/10/8/one-year-of-israels-war-on-gaza-by-the-numbers>; Shamim Chowdhury, “Gaza War Death Toll Passes 43,000, Palestinian Health Ministry Reports,” *Newsweek*, October 28, 2024, <https://www.newsweek.com/gaza-war-deaths-surpass-43000-palestinian-health-ministry-reports-1975910>; Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “There Must Be ‘Due Reckoning’ for Horrific Violations, Possible Atrocity Crimes in Gaza—UN Human Rights Chief,” November 8, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/11/there-must-be-due-reckoning-horrific-violations-possible-atrocity-crimes>.

<sup>3</sup> Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, “About 10 Percent of the Gaza Strip’s Population Killed, Injured, or Missing Due to the Israeli Genocide,” July 25, 2024, <https://euromedmonitor.org/en/article/6420/About-10-percent-of-the-Gaza-Strip%E2%80%99s-population-killed,-injured,-or-missing-due-to-the-Israeli-genocide>.

<sup>4</sup> Rasha Khatib, Martin McKee, and Salim Yusuf, “Counting the Dead in Gaza: Difficult but Essential,” *The Lancet* 404, no. 10449 (July 24, 2024): 237, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(24\)01169-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(24)01169-3/fulltext); Sophia Stamatopoulou-Robbins, “The Human Toll: Indirect Deaths from War in Gaza and the West Bank, October 7, 2023 Forward,” Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, October 7, 2024, [https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2023/2024/Costs%20of%20War\\_Human%20Toll%20Since%20Oct%207.pdf](https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2023/2024/Costs%20of%20War_Human%20Toll%20Since%20Oct%207.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Arwa Mahdawi, “We Are Witnessing the Final Stage of Genocide in Gaza,” *The Guardian*, November 6, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/nov/06/we-are-witnessing-the-final-stage-of-genocide-in-gaza>.

<sup>6</sup> Francesca Albanese, “Anatomy of a Genocide,” Human Rights Council, A/HRC/55/73, February 25–April 5, 2024, <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/anatomy-of-a-genocide-report-of-the-special-rapporteur-on-the-situation-of-human-rights-in-the-palestinian-territory-occupied-since-1967-to-human-rights-council-advance-unedited-version-a-hrc-55>.

<sup>7</sup> Lucy Swan, Tural Ahmedzade, and Harvey Symons, “How a Year of War Laid Waste the Gaza Strip—Visualised,” *The Guardian*, October 10, 2024; Frances Vinnall and Mohamad El Chamaa, “Mapping the Damage to Gaza’s Hospitals: Battered, Abandoned and Raided,” *The Washington Post*, May 21, 2024; The Palestinian Information Center, “FAO: War Has Destroyed Two-Thirds of Agricultural Land in Gaza,” October 4, 2024, <https://english.palinfo.com/news/2024/10/04/326463>; Wafaa Shurafa and Julia Frankel, “In the Searing Heat of the Gaza Summer, Palestinians Are Surrounded by Sewage and Garbage,” *The Associated Press*, June 27, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-war-gaza-dirt-sanitation-sewage-garbage-d96fbbbc37e7a73acfd0aa4798394c7>; Nancy Murray and Amahl Bishara, “In Gaza, Israel Has Turned Water into a Weapon of Mass Destruction,” *+972 Magazine*, January 16, 2024, <https://www.972mag.com/gaza-israel-water-weapon>.

<sup>8</sup> Brett Murphy, “Israel Deliberately Blocked Humanitarian Aid to Gaza, Two Government Bodies Concluded. Antony Blinken Rejected Them,” *ProPublica*, September 24, 2024, <https://www.propublica.org/article/gaza-palestine-israel-blocked-humanitarian-aid-blinken>; Brett Murphy, “Blinken to Israel: Allow More Aid into Gaza or Face the Consequences,” *ProPublica*, October 15, 2024, <https://www.propublica.org/article/israel-gaza-humanitarian-aid-blinken-pentagon-warning-letter>; Gisha, “Gaza Now: Current Facts and Figures,” October 9, 2024, <https://gisha.org/en/the-humanitarian-catastrophe-in-gaza-facts-and-figures>; Nidal al-Mughrab, “UN Agency Says Israel Still Preventing Aid from Reaching Northern Gaza,” *Reuters*, October 21, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/un-agency-says-israel-still-preventing-aid-reaching-northern-gaza-2024-10-21>.

of Humanitarian Affairs, 495,000 Gazans are facing “catastrophic levels of food insecurity.”<sup>9</sup>

Israel’s retaliatory attack has not been limited to the Gaza Strip. In the West Bank and East Jerusalem over the past year, Israeli forces have killed 702 Palestinians, “destroyed, confiscated, sealed or forced the demolition” of 1,777 Palestinian-owned structures, uprooted seven communities, and displaced 4,574 individuals.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, as US President Joe Biden acknowledged, West Bank Palestinians have been suffering from “intolerable levels” of “extremist settler violence.”<sup>11</sup> This has consisted of more than 1,400 attacks resulting in 144 casualties, the displacement of more than 1,300 people, and the extensive destruction of property.<sup>12</sup> During some of these episodes, Israeli security forces actively participated; in others, they stood by and allowed settlers to do as they pleased.<sup>13</sup>

Within Israel, too, state-sanctioned violence targeting Palestinians has reached unprecedented levels. Thousands of men, women, and children, including academics, physicians, and students, have been subjected to a mass-incarceration campaign. Without charge or trial, Palestinians have been placed in detention facilities “dedicated” to their “continual abuse and torture,” including through waterboarding, electric shocks, and sexual assault.<sup>14</sup> At least 53 detainees have died in these facilities in the past year.<sup>15</sup>

Hamas’s October 7 attack, and the bloody response it triggered, have devastated Israel, too, though to a far lesser extent. The Israel Defense Forces has suffered its highest death toll in decades—380 troops during Hamas’s attack and another 800 since the beginning of its ground invasion of Gaza on October 27, including those who have died in Lebanon while fighting Hezbollah.<sup>16</sup> That group began shooting rockets into Israel shortly after Hamas’s initial strike

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<sup>9</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Reported Impact Snapshot | Gaza Strip (9 October 2024),” <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-9-october-2024>; Liam Stack, “U.N.-Backed Panel Warns Action Needed in Days to Avert Gaza Famine,” *The New York Times*, November 9, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/09/world/middleeast/un-panel-gaza-famine.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Human Rights Watch, “West Bank: Israel Responsible for Rising Settler Violence,” April 17, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/04/17/west-bank-israel-responsible-rising-settler-violence>.

<sup>11</sup> The White House, “Executive Order on Imposing Certain Sanctions on Persons Undermining Peace, Security, and Stability in the West Bank,” February 1, 2024, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2024/02/01/executive-order-on-imposing-certain-sanctions-on-persons-undermining-peace-security-and-stability-in-the-west-bank>.

<sup>12</sup> Human Rights Watch, “West Bank”; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Humanitarian Situation Update #228 | West Bank,” October 10, 2024, <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-update-228-west-bank>.

<sup>13</sup> Amnesty International, “State-Backed Deadly Rampage by Israeli Settlers Underscores Urgent Need to Dismantle Apartheid,” April 22, 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/04/state-backed-deadly-rampage-by-israeli-settlers-underscores-urgent-need-to-dismantle-apartheid>; Yagil Levy, “How Settler Violence Serves Israel’s Interests,” *Foreign Policy*, October 4, 2024, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/10/04/west-bank-settler-violence-serves-israel-interests-idf-gaza-war>.

<sup>14</sup> B’Tselem, “Welcome to Hell: The Israeli Prison System as a Network of Torture Camps,” August 2024, [https://www.btselem.org/sites/default/files/publications/202408\\_welcome\\_to\\_hell\\_eng.pdf](https://www.btselem.org/sites/default/files/publications/202408_welcome_to_hell_eng.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “UN Report: Palestinian Detainees Held Arbitrarily and Secretly, Subjected to Torture and Mistreatment,” July 31, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/07/un-report-palestinian-detainees-held-arbitrarily-and-secretly-subjected>.

<sup>16</sup> The Israel Defense Forces, “IDF [Soldiers] Killed and Wounded in the War,” n.d., as of November 20, 2024, in Hebrew, <https://www.idf.il/160590>; Human Rights Watch, “Questions and Answers: The Hamas-Led Armed Groups’ October 7,

as a show of solidarity.<sup>17</sup> Israeli civilian deaths numbered 815 during Hamas's incursion, plus about 45 more in subsequent attacks carried out by Palestinians in Israel and the West Bank, and 47 from Hezbollah's rockets.<sup>18</sup> Of the 251 hostages taken to Gaza on October 7, 117 were released by Hamas and eight were extracted during Israeli military operations.<sup>19</sup> It is estimated that between 51 and 60 hostages are still alive while the rest were killed by Hamas, died from Israeli fire, or perished from unknown causes.<sup>20</sup> As for the economic impact, Israel has been waging the most expensive war in its history; costs are estimated to reach more than \$67 billion by its conclusion.<sup>21</sup>

In this article, I seek to answer two central questions concerning Israel's offensive. First, why has Biden, regarded by many as the only individual capable of stopping the bloodshed, allowed

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2023 Assault on Israel," July 17, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/07/17/questions-and-answers-amas-led-armed-groups-october-7-2023-assault-israel>.

<sup>17</sup> Jane Arraf, "A Hezbollah Spokesman Tells NPR It Will Stop Firing If Fighting in Gaza Ends," National Public Radio, July 17, 2024, <https://www.npr.org/2024/07/17/nx-s1-5039208/a-hezbollah-spokesman-tells-npr-it-will-stop-firing-if-fighting-in-gaza-ends>; BBC News, "What Is Hezbollah and Why Is Israel Attacking Lebanon?" October 1, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67307858>; Congressional Research Service, "Israel and Lebanese Hezbollah: Conflict and Escalation," October 25, 2024, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12770/7>.

<sup>18</sup> Shabi Gatenio, "Considerably Late: The Shin Bet Reported the Number of Those Murdered Since October 7," Shakuf, January 16, 2024, in Hebrew, <https://shakuf.co.il/46916>; Human Rights Watch, "October 7 Crimes Against Humanity, War Crimes by Hamas-Led Groups," July 17, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/07/17/october-7-crimes-against-humanity-war-crimes-amas-led-groups>; Tomer Almagor, "More Than 300 Attacks, Thousands of Detainees, and 28 Victims: Terrorism in the Shadow of War," N12, August 13, 2024, in Hebrew, [https://www.mako.co.il/news-specials/data\\_n12/Article-953dcee1463ce81027.htm](https://www.mako.co.il/news-specials/data_n12/Article-953dcee1463ce81027.htm); Avigail Zait, "Escalation Inspired by Iran: Seven Have Been Murdered in Attacks in [the West Bank] Since the Beginning of September," *Makor Rishon*, September, 13, 2024, in Hebrew, <https://www.makorrishon.co.il/news/784669>; Emanuel Fabian, "Seven People Killed in Shooting, Stabbing Terror Attack in Jaffa," *The Times of Israel*, October 1, 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/six-people-killed-nine-wounded-in-shooting-stabbing-terror-attack-in-jaffa>. At least 14 of the 815 Israeli civilian deaths initially attributed to Hamas may have in fact been due to Israeli fire ordered pursuant to the so-called "Hannibal Directive" during the counteroffensive. Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), including East Jerusalem, and Israel, "Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel," 18, Human Rights Council, A/HRC/56/26, June 18–July 12, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session56/a-hrc-56-26-a-uv.docx>.

<sup>19</sup> Oriana Boselli, "Families of Israeli Hostages Still in Gaza Call on Trump, Biden to Work Together," Reuters, November 14, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/families-israeli-hostages-still-gaza-call-trump-biden-work-together-2024-11-14>; Lauren Said-Moorhouse et al., "Who Are the Hostages Freed During the Israel-Hamas Conflict?" CNN, August 27, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2023/12/world/hostage-israel-amas-deal-dg>.

<sup>20</sup> *The Jerusalem Post*, "Israel Believes Majority of Hostages to Be Alive in Gaza—Report," November 3, 2024, <https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-827293>; Matthew Mpoke Bigg, Ephrat Livni, and Aryn Baker, "Dozens of Hostages Remain in Gaza: What We Know," *The New York Times*, October 25, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/article/hostages-in-gaza-amas.html>; Nectar Gan, Tamar Michaelis, and Ally Barnard, "What We Know About the Six Hostages Killed in Gaza," CNN, September 2, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/09/01/middleeast/israel-gaza-wwk-hostages-killed-intl-hnk/index.html>; Anna Schecter, "How 3 Israeli Hostages Tried to Save Themselves, Only to Be Killed by Their Own Military," NBC News, December 22, 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/3-israeli-hostages-tried-only-killed-military-rcna130912>.

<sup>21</sup> Sonia Gorodeisky, "Governor of the Bank of Israel: The War Will Cost 250 Billion Shekels," *Israel Hayom*, November 3, 2024, in Hebrew, <https://www.israelhayom.co.il/business/article/15836094>; *Asharq Al-Awsat*, "Israel's Economic Growth Slows in Q2 Amid Gaza Conflict," August 19, 2024, <https://english.aawsat.com/business/5052044-israel%E2%80%99s-economic-growth-slows-q2-amid-gaza-conflict>.

it to continue?<sup>22</sup> Second, why does the Israeli cabinet refuse to conclude an agreement to end the campaign and secure the release of the remaining hostages held by Hamas?

## BIDEN'S UNWAVERING SUPPORT

On the day hostilities broke out in 2023, Biden declared his commitment to Israel's security as "rock solid and unwavering" and pledged he would "offer all appropriate means of support" to the retaliation against the "Hamas terrorists from Gaza."<sup>23</sup> This included nearly \$18 billion in military aid, the deployment of thousands of American troops, and the provision of innumerable munitions—from unguided "dumb" bombs to bunker busters.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, experts have determined that the "vast majority" of bombs Israel has dropped on Gaza were made in the United States.<sup>25</sup> The administration also provided diplomatic cover, repeatedly vetoing UN resolutions calling on Israel to halt its onslaught. It also tried, though ultimately failed, to prevent the International Court of Justice from issuing an advisory opinion that found Israel's military occupation of Palestinian territories, including Gaza, to be unlawful.<sup>26</sup>

Biden's unwavering assistance to Tel Aviv has left the United States internationally isolated in a manner not seen in decades. World leaders did back Israel during the early days of the counteroffensive, condemning Hamas and declaring their solidarity with the country's (non-Palestinian) people.<sup>27</sup> But once the degree of carnage and destruction inflicted on Gaza was exposed, that

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<sup>22</sup> Adam Johnson, "The Biden Administration Says It Can't Do Anything to Stop the War on Gaza. That's a Lie," *Jacobin*, November 10, 2023, <https://jacobin.com/2023/11/biden-administration-powerlessness-israel-gaza-war-military-aid-media>; Ian Lustick, "History Tells Us How the Israel-Hamas War Will End," *Time*, January 10, 2024, <https://time.com/6549715/history-israel-hamas-war-end>; Nicholas Kristof, "What Happened to the Joe Biden I Knew?" *The New York Times*, April 19, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/04/19/opinion/biden-gaza-war.html>.

<sup>23</sup> The White House, "Statement from President Joe Biden Condemning Terrorist Attacks in Israel," October 7, 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/10/07/statement-from-president-joe-biden-condemning-terrorist-attacks-in-israel>.

<sup>24</sup> Ellen Knickmeyer, "US Spends a Record \$17.9 Billion on Military Aid to Israel Since Last Oct. 7," *The Associated Press*, October 7, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-war-us-military-spending-8e6e5033f7a1334bf6e35f86e7040e14>; Lolita Baldor and Tara Copp, "How Many US Troops Are in the Middle East?" *The Associated Press*, October 3, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/israel-hezbollah-us-military-ships-aircraft-3ef96cbdf87238de559e84e28573f611>; Mohamed El-Shewy, Mark Griffiths, and Craig Jones, "Israel's War on Gaza in a Global Frame," *Antipode*, September 25, 2024, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/anti.13094>.

<sup>25</sup> Frankel, "Israel's Military Campaign."

<sup>26</sup> Shashank Bengali, "A Look at the Three Previous U.N. Cease-Fire Resolutions the U.S. Vetoed," *The New York Times*, March 22, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/22/world/middleeast/us-cease-fire-resolution-vetoes.html>; *The Associated Press*, "Middle East Latest: US Vetoes a Gaza Cease-Fire Resolution," November 20, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-hezbollah-latest-20-november-2024-621bf47de03e7992d6ba3855a200abbc>; Mike Corder, "UN Top Court Shouldn't Urge Israel to Immediately Withdraw from Palestinian-Claimed Lands, US Says," *The Associated Press*, February 21, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/israel-palestinians-icj-court-hearings-gaza-hamas-9235cb02321a687599e77837505519cf>; Vibhu Mishra, "Israel's Continued Occupation of Palestinian Territory 'Unlawful': UN World Court," *UN News*, July 19, 2024, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/07/1152296>.

<sup>27</sup> Al Jazeera, "World Reaction to Surprise Attack by Palestinian Hamas on Israel," October 7, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/7/we-are-at-war-reactions-to-palestinian-hamas-surprise-attack-in-israel>; Itamar Eichner, "Support for Israel Post October 7 Gone in Polling," *Ynet*, October 4, 2024, <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/rjbitfvgc>.

support eroded rapidly.<sup>28</sup> By January, the United States was the only “rich country that still had net positive views” of Israel.<sup>29</sup> And at the end of the war’s first year, even Americans’ sympathy for Israel had reverted to its prewar level.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, Biden persisted, insisting that his administration would not do a “damn thing other than protect Israel.”<sup>31</sup>

This resolve conflicted with the wishes of the “Democratic Party’s most devoted constituents” and may have played a role in his party’s loss of the 2024 presidential election.<sup>32</sup> The fact that Biden continued to privilege Israel while resisting international and domestic pressure begs the question: Why is he willing to pay such a steep price?<sup>33</sup> Three reasons have been suggested. First is his belief that Israel’s enduring purpose is to protect Jews from genocidal antisemitism of the kind they experienced during the Holocaust. Second, given his legacy as the largest recipient of donations from pro-Israel organizations in the history of the US Senate, he understands not just the advantages of this support but also the perils of not aligning with the interests of these groups. The third reason has been repeatedly furnished by Biden himself: He identifies with Zionism and adheres to its core tenets.<sup>34</sup>

If we recognize that Biden’s adherence to Zionist political ideology has shaped not just his personal views about Israel and Palestine but also US foreign policy, we can understand his partiality in the mediation of the conflict. In July 2022, Biden visited the occupied territories for the time as president. In East Jerusalem, he presented a nuanced understanding of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination, situating it within the long history of settler-colonial dispossessions

<sup>28</sup> Amnesty International, “Damning Evidence of War Crimes as Israeli Attacks Wipe Out Entire Families in Gaza,” October 20, 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/10/damning-evidence-of-war-crimes-as-israeli-attacks-wipe-out-entire-families-in-gaza>; Jason Lange and Matt Spetalnick, “US Public Support for Israel Drops; Majority Backs a Ceasefire, Reuters/Ipsos Shows,” Reuters, November 15, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us-public-support-israel-drops-majority-backs-ceasefire-reutersipsos-2023-11-15>.

<sup>29</sup> Anna Gordon, “New Polling Shows How Much Global Support Israel Has Lost,” *Time*, January 17, 2024, <https://time.com/6559293/morning-consult-israel-global-opinion>; Lemna Shehadi, “Support for Israel’s War on Gaza Has Dropped in Europe, Poll Finds,” *The National*, November 5, 2024, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/europe/2024/11/05/support-for-israels-war-on-gaza-has-dropped-in-europe-poll-finds>.

<sup>30</sup> Jeffrey Jones, “Majority in U.S. Now Disapprove of Israeli Action in Gaza,” Gallup, March 27, 2024, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/642695/majority-disapprove-israeli-action-gaza.aspx>; Sophie Clark, “American Sympathy for Israel Has Plunged Since October 7 Attack,” *Newsweek*, October 7, 2024, <https://www.newsweek.com/american-opinions-israel-change-year-after-october-seven-1964801>.

<sup>31</sup> Medea Benjamin and Nicolas Davies, “The United States Is Isolated in Backing Massacre in Gaza,” *The Progressive*, November 2, 2023, <https://progressive.org/latest/the-united-states-is-isolated-davies-benjamin-20231102>; Michael Klare, “The US Hasn’t Been This Internationally Isolated Since the Cold War Ended,” *The Nation*, July 10, 2024, <https://www.thenation.com/article/world/isolation-five-eyes-alliance>; Matthew Duss, “Joe Biden Chose This Catastrophic Path Every Step of the Way,” *The New Republic*, October 7, 2024, <https://newrepublic.com/article/186695/joe-biden-chose-gaza-catastrophic-path>.

<sup>32</sup> Peter Beinart, “Democrats Ignored Gaza and Brought Down Their Party,” *The New York Times*, November 7, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/07/opinion/democrats-israel-gaza-war.html>; Alex Foley, “Karma for Kamala: Ignoring Gaza Has Lost Harris the US Election,” *The New Arab*, November 6, 2024, <https://www.newarab.com/opinion/karma-kamala-ignoring-gaza-has-lost-harris-us-election>.

<sup>33</sup> Frida Ghitis, “Opinion: Why Biden Supports Israel So Wholeheartedly,” CNN, November 8, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/08/opinions/opinion-why-biden-supports-israel-so-wholeheartedly/index.html>.

<sup>34</sup> Matt Spetalnick, Jeff Mason, Steve Holland, and Patricia Zengerle, “‘I Am a Zionist’: How Joe Biden’s Lifelong Bond with Israel Shapes War Policy,” Reuters, October 21, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/i-am-zionist-how-joe-bidens-lifelong-bond-with-israel-shapes-war-policy-2023-10-21>; Jacob Magid, “Biden Stands by Identification as a Zionist: ‘Israel Is a Safe Haven for Jews,’” *The Times of Israel*, July 16, 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/biden-stands-by-identification-as-a-zionist-israel-is-a-safe-haven-for-jews>.

facilitated by the British Empire. “My background and the background of my family is Irish American,” Biden noted, “and we have a long history. . . not fundamentally unlike the Palestinian people, with Great Britain and their attitude toward Irish-Catholics over the years, for 400 years.”<sup>35</sup> He then quoted a verse by the famed Irish poet Seamus Heaney that commemorated the release of Nelson Mandela, which marked the beginning of the end of the apartheid era in South Africa:

History says, Don't hope  
On this side of the grave.  
But then, once in a lifetime  
The longed-for tidal wave  
Of justice can rise up,  
And hope and history rhyme.<sup>36</sup>

Biden continued with his “prayer that we’re reaching one of those moments where hope and history rhyme,” implying that he wished to see the fall of the apartheid regime Israel has maintained in the West Bank.<sup>37</sup> This demonstrated a clear understanding of the injustices Palestinians have endured at the hands of Zionists and their imperial patrons, acknowledging that the same misfortune befell the Indigenous peoples of Ireland and South Africa before “hope and history” finally rhymed.

A few hours later, however, Biden traveled to Bethlehem for an event with Mahmoud Abbas, who did not mince words. “Mr. President, after 74 years of the Nakba displacement and occupation, isn’t it not the time for this occupation to end and for our steadfast people, again, to gain their freedom and independence?” the Palestinian president asked.<sup>38</sup> “The Palestinian people deserve a state of their own that’s independent, sovereign, viable, and contiguous,” Biden responded. “Two states for two peoples, both of whom have deep and ancient roots in this land, living side by side in peace and security.”<sup>39</sup>

It appears at first blush that Biden recognized in East Jerusalem and Bethlehem the Palestinians’ rights to self-determination and national independence in their homeland, but the two statements are in conflict. Although the president acknowledges that Palestinians are entitled to

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<sup>35</sup>The White House, “Remarks by President Biden at East Jerusalem Hospital Network Event,” July 15, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/press-briefings/2022/07/15/remarks-by-president-biden-at-east-jerusalem-hospital-network-event>.

<sup>36</sup>Seamus Heaney, *The Cure at Troy: A Version of Sophocles’ Philoctetes* (New York: Noonday Press, 1991). Biden slightly misquoted the poem in his remarks in *Ibid*.

<sup>37</sup>Clive Baldwin, “World Court Findings on Israeli Apartheid a Wake-Up Call: International Court of Justice Makes Clear Call for Reparations,” Human Rights Watch, September 19, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/09/19/world-court-findings-israeli-apartheid-wake-call>; Victor Kattan, “The Implications of an ICJ Finding that Israel Is Committing the Crime Against Humanity of Apartheid,” Just Security, March 20, 2024, <https://www.justsecurity.org/93403/the-implications-of-an-icj-finding-that-israel-is-committing-the-crime-against-humanity-of-apartheid-2/>; Amnesty International, “Israel’s Apartheid Against Palestinians: A Cruel System of Domination and a Crime Against Humanity,” February 1, 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/02/israels-apartheid-against-palestinians-a-cruel-system-of-domination-and-a-crime-against-humanity>.

<sup>38</sup>The White House, “Remarks by President Biden and President Abbas of the Palestinian National Authority in Joint Press Statement | Bethlehem, West Bank,” July 15, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/07/15/remarks-by-president-biden-and-president-abbas-of-the-palestinian-national-authority-in-joint-press-statement-bethlehem-west-bank>.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid*.

these rights as the Indigenous population, he proceeds to suggest that Zionists are similarly entitled because they, too, have “deep and ancient roots” in Palestine. Therein lies the rub: Biden’s Zionism consists of the ahistorical conviction that modern Jewry are the descendants of the ancient Hebrews and therefore maintain a superior claim to the territory, one that predates that of the Palestinians.<sup>40</sup> British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour, who officially committed the British Empire to Zionist settler colonialism in Palestine more than a century ago, also believed that “zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long traditions... of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs” who inhabited “that ancient land.”<sup>41</sup>

There are four key problems with such a Zionist conviction, all of which were addressed by the King-Crane Commission established by President Woodrow Wilson in 1919:

1. The Zionists never intended to share Palestine with its Indigenous population and “looked forward” to their “complete disposition.”
2. Palestinian dispossession could only be carried out “by force of arms.”
3. Support for Zionist settler colonialism in Palestine would signify a “gross violation” of Palestinians’ right to self-determination.
4. The Zionists’ purported “‘right’ to Palestine based on an occupation of 2,000 years ago, can hardly be seriously considered” as a matter of law.<sup>42</sup>

Needless to say, this commonsense judgment was ignored. But what is important to recognize is that this devotion to political Zionism, shared by Balfour and Biden, is and always has been premised on a continuous and violent process of Indigenous dispossession, the repudiation of any applicable legal principle that may limit it, and a hollow commitment to Palestinian self-determination.<sup>43</sup> Today’s offensive in Gaza represents yet another—albeit the bloodiest—episode of this century-old process.<sup>44</sup>

## ISRAEL’S RELUCTANCE TO A HOSTAGE DEAL

One of the most contentious issues concerning the offensive in Gaza has been the discrepancy between Tel Aviv’s official and unofficial objectives. A week after it began, the Israeli cabinet

<sup>40</sup> M.T. Samuel, “The Palestinian Human Right to Full Israeli Citizenship: Between Settler Colonialism and a Hard Place,” *Frontiers in Political Science* 4, no. 978240 (December 2022): 8; John Quigley, *The Case for Palestine: An International Law Perspective* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 66–68; Shlomo Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2009).

<sup>41</sup> United Nations, “Origins and Evolution of the Palestine Problem: 1917–1947 (Part I),” *The Question of Palestine*, <https://www.un.org/unispal/history2/origins-and-evolution-of-the-palestine-problem/part-i-1917-1947>.

<sup>42</sup> United Nations, “King-Crane Commission Recommendations—Syria/Palestine and Iraq—Non-UN Document,” *The Question of Palestine*, <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-206598>.

<sup>43</sup> Nandita Bose and Steve Holland, “Biden: What’s Happening in Gaza Is Not Genocide,” Reuters, May 21, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/biden-whats-happening-gaza-is-not-genocide-2024-05-20>; Sarah Leah Whitson, “The White House’s Defense of Israel Is Undermining International Law,” *Foreign Policy*, September 18, 2024, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/09/18/biden-israel-icc-icj-gaza-netanyahu-international-law>; Brad Ryan, “The Gap Between Biden’s Words and Deeds on Gaza Is Growing—and There Are Two Words the US President Can’t Shake,” ABC News, December 23, 2023, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-12-24/joe-biden-israel-gaza-analysis/103261514>.

<sup>44</sup> Rashid Khalidi, *The Hundred Years’ War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonial Conquest and Resistance* (London: Profile Books, 2020); Noura Erakat, *Justice for Some: Law and the Question of Palestine* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019); Uri Ben-Eliezer, *War Over Peace: One Hundred Years of Israel’s Militaristic Nationalism* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019).



announced the war's aims, which centered on deposing Hamas's political leadership, destroying its military capabilities, and freeing the hostages taken on October 7.<sup>45</sup> But as the assault continued, it became clear for two reasons that this was not an exhaustive list. First, it narrowed the target to Hamas when it is in fact much broader. Second, it masked the means through which the state seeks to prevent future attacks from Gaza.

Israeli leaders have made it clear that Hamas is not the sole target. Instead, all Gazans are deemed equally culpable for the attack and, therefore, all Gazans must suffer the consequences.<sup>46</sup> As Israeli President Isaac Herzog asserted just after October 7:

It's an entire nation out there that is responsible. This rhetoric about civilians not aware, not involved, it's absolutely not true. They could've risen up, they could have fought against that evil regime.<sup>47</sup>

Herzog's categorical assertion appears to represent a viewpoint consistently held by the majority of Israeli Jews throughout the past year.<sup>48</sup> The post hoc approval of Hamas's October 7 attack by the majority of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank may have served to validate the view of their collective guilt.<sup>49</sup>

As for preventing future attacks from Gaza, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu divulged shortly after the beginning of the campaign that an "overall security strategy" would be maintained over Gaza for an "indefinite period," signaling a reoccupation.<sup>50</sup> Netanyahu clarified that, unlike the nearly four decades of direct military occupation that ended in 2005, this time Israel would itself rule the territory and not rely on the Palestinian Authority, which he falsely accused of sharing the same ideology as Hamas.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> International Crisis Group, "A Ceasefire in Gaza," October 18, 2023, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/gaza-18x23.pdf>.

<sup>46</sup> Law for Palestine, "Law for Palestine Releases Database with 500+ Instances of Israeli Incitement to Genocide—Continuously Updated," January 4, 2024, <https://law4palestine.org/law-for-palestine-releases-database-with-500-instances-of-israeli-incitement-to-genocide-continuously-updated>.

<sup>47</sup> Chris McGreal, "The Language Being Used to Describe Palestinians Is Genocidal," *The Guardian*, October 16, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/oct/16/the-language-being-used-to-describe-palestinians-is-genocidal>.

<sup>48</sup> Anna Gordon, "What Israelis Think of the War with Hamas," *Time*, November 10, 2023, <https://time.com/6333781/israel-hamas-poll-palestine>; Deborah Danan, "They Are All Hamas," *Tablet*, January 24, 2024, <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/israel-middle-east/articles/hamas-palestinians-pogrom-israel>; Laura Silver and Maria Smerkovich, "Israeli Views of the Israel-Hamas War," Pew Research Center, May 30, 2024, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2024/05/30/israeli-views-of-the-israel-hamas-war>; Maria Smerkovich, "Many Israelis Say Social Media Content About the Israel-Hamas War Should Be Censored," Pew Research Center, August 26, 2024, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/08/26/many-israelis-say-social-media-content-about-the-israel-hamas-war-should-be-censored>.

<sup>49</sup> Dan Williams, "Poll Shows Palestinians Back Oct. 7 Attack on Israel, Support for Hamas Rises," Reuters, December 14, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/poll-shows-palestinians-back-oct-7-attack-israel-support-hamas-rises-2023-12-14>; *The Times of Israel*, "Poll: Gazans Increasingly Happy with Oct. 7; 52% Want Hamas to Rule Strip After War," March 21, 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/palestinians-increasingly-happy-with-october-7-even-as-hamas-support-droops-poll>.

<sup>50</sup> Raffi Berg, "Netanyahu Says Israel Will Have Security Control Over Gaza After War," BBC, November 7, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67345430>.

<sup>51</sup> Arnold Nattiv, "Gaza Reoccupation Plans: Netanyahu Tells Two Stories to Israelis and Americans," *The Jerusalem Post*, November 10, 2023, <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/politics-and-diplomacy/article-772669>; Carrie Keller-Lynn, "Netanyahu Reiterates PA Can't Rule Gaza, Israel Must Maintain 'Military Responsibility,'" *The Times of Israel*,

By September 2024, the Israeli military had largely destroyed Hamas's offensive capabilities and killed its top military and political leaders, declaring that the organization had been "defeated militarily in all of Gaza" and that henceforth it could only function as a "guerrilla terror group."<sup>52</sup> The IDF, however, did not rescind its earlier determination that a complete destruction of Hamas is not possible, as the organization embodies the idea of armed resistance to Israel's occupation in the struggle for Palestinian liberation; while people can be killed, ideas cannot.<sup>53</sup> The military then implored the members of the Israeli cabinet to pursue the war's final objective: securing an agreement for the return of the hostages because if they wait any longer, "it is not certain that there will be anyone to return."<sup>54</sup>

Netanyahu, however, continued insisting that the war was not over while derailing all negotiations for the release of the hostages.<sup>55</sup> This stems from his interest in holding on to power for as long as he can.<sup>56</sup> About 70 percent of Israelis want him to resign, his corruption cases are pending, and his governing coalition is all but assured to lose should the growing demand for early elections be accepted.<sup>57</sup> To ensure his political survival, Netanyahu shaped government policies in accordance with the preferences of his coalition partners, irrespective of domestic and international objections.<sup>58</sup> Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, leaders of the far-right Otzma Yehudit and Religious Zionist Party, respectively, seek to prevent an agreement for the return of the hostages,

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November 12, 2023, [https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog\\_entry/netanyahu-reiterates-pa-cant-rule-gaza-israel-must-maintain-military-responsibility](https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/netanyahu-reiterates-pa-cant-rule-gaza-israel-must-maintain-military-responsibility); Tovah Lazaroff, "Netanyahu: Palestinian Authority Can't Return to Gaza, This Isn't Oslo 2," *The Jerusalem Post*, December 3, 2023, <https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/gaza-news/article-776325>.

<sup>52</sup> Emanuel Fabian, "IDF Assesses Hamas Defeated Militarily in All of Gaza, Is Now a Guerrilla Terror Group," *The Times of Israel*, September 27, 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-assesses-hamas-defeated-militarily-in-all-of-gaza-is-now-a-guerrilla-terror-group>; BBC News, "Hamas: What Has Happened to Its Most Prominent Leaders?" October 18, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67103298>.

<sup>53</sup> Chantal Da Silva, "Can Israel Defeat Hamas? Its Own Military Doesn't Seem to Think So, Clashing with Netanyahu," NBC News, June 20, 2024, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/israel-military-spokesman-hamas-defeated-netanyahu-war-gaza-rcna157991>.

<sup>54</sup> Fabian, "IDF Assesses Hamas."

<sup>55</sup> Brad Dress, "Netanyahu Says War 'Not Over Yet' After Death of Hamas Leader," *The Hill*, October 17, 2024, <https://thehill.com/policy/defense/4939294-netanyahu-war-not-over-yet-death-hamas-leader>; Yaron Avraham, "This Is How the Hostage Deals Were Torpedoed: Behind-the-Scenes Revelations of the Drama in the Israeli Discussions," N12, September 19, 2024, in Hebrew, [https://www.mako.co.il/news-military/2024\\_q3/Article-106ea7c9e070291026.htm](https://www.mako.co.il/news-military/2024_q3/Article-106ea7c9e070291026.htm).

<sup>56</sup> Ben Lynfield, "How Netanyahu Plans to Hold on to Power," *Foreign Policy*, November 27, 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/11/27/netanyahu-hold-power-hamas-gaza-likud-israel>; Raf Sanchez, "Netanyahu Won't Agree to Hostage Release Deal Unless It Polls Well for Him, Israeli Families Say They Were Told," NBC News, May 31, 2024, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/israel-hamas-war-hostage-deal-netanyahu-polls-families-rcna154841>; Barak Ravid, "Biden: Netanyahu Isn't Doing Enough to Get a Gaza Hostage and Ceasefire Deal," *Axios*, September 2, 2024, <https://www.axios.com/2024/09/02/biden-netanyahu-israel-gaza-hostage-ceasefire-deal>.

<sup>57</sup> Zack Beauchamp, "The Real Reason Netanyahu Won't End the Gaza War," *Vox*, September 4, 2024, <https://www.vox.com/politics/369934/israel-gaza-protests-hostages-netanyahu-war-september>; Mick Krever, "Netanyahu's Aggressive Strategy Brings Political Success and a Raft of Scandal," *CNN*, November 12, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/11/12/middleeast/netanyahu-strategy-intl/index.html>; Moshe Cohen, "Among Many Controversies, Netanyahu's Coalition Weakens by One Mandate According to Survey," *The Jerusalem Post*, November 15, 2024, <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-829311>.

<sup>58</sup> *Haaretz*, "Netanyahu Will Stop at Nothing to Stay in Power. Israelis Must Wake Up," November 7, 2024, <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/editorial/2024-11-07/ty-article-opinion/netanyahu-will-stop-at-nothing-to-stay-in-power-israelis-must-wake-up/00000193-0342-d245-a9f7-2b7e8bcb0000>; Tom O'Connor, "Netanyahu's Military Masterstrokes Defy His Critics at Home and Abroad," *Newsweek*, October 22, 2024, <https://www.newsweek.com/netanyahu-defies-critics-military-israel-hamas-war-1972657>.

as it would likely include a commitment to end the Gaza offensive before the military can destroy Hamas.<sup>59</sup>

Such a rationale may have appeared persuasive during the early months of the conflict, but when they continued to object to a deal even after the military's announcement of Hamas's defeat, the discrepancy between the official and unofficial aims became apparent.<sup>60</sup> Under the fog of war, the military has engaged in a tried-and-true Israeli strategy, waging an ethnic-cleansing campaign in northern Gaza, facilitated through mass killing, starvation, and terrorization of the civilian population.<sup>61</sup> A hostage agreement would forestall Ben-Gvir and Smotrich's plan to establish new settlements in the area.<sup>62</sup> The two have regularly presented their stance that Israel's response to the October 7 attack must center on further territorial dispossession of Palestinians throughout the occupied territories.<sup>63</sup> Thus far, civilians have been pushed out of nearly a third of Gaza's territory and thousands of acres in the West Bank.<sup>64</sup>

Evidently, territorial expansion, the war's overarching yet unofficial objective, is viewed by the Israeli cabinet as more important than returning the hostages—especially because the two objectives are seen as mutually exclusive. Netanyahu's recent dismissal of Yoav Gallant from the post of defense minister further supports the notion that a hostage deal conflicts with the government's

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<sup>59</sup> Itamar Eichner and Moran Azulay, "Not Unanimous: How the Government Reached Agreement on Hostage Release Deal," *Ynet*, November 22, 2023, <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/r1zkfms46>; Jane Prinsley, "Smotrich and Ben-Gvir Threaten to Topple Coalition If Netanyahu Backs Hostage-Ceasefire Deal," *The Jewish Chronicle*, June 2, 2024, <https://www.thejc.com/news/smotrich-and-ben-gvir-threaten-to-topple-coalition-if-netanyahu-backs-hostage-ceasefire-deal-xvo30afb>.

<sup>60</sup> Itamar Eichner, "Smotrich and Ben Gvir Criticize Netanyahu Over Qatar Delegation: 'A Serious Mistake,'" *Ynet*, October 24, 2024, <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/h1ufl700eyl>; Aluf Benn, "The Abandonment of the Hostages Is Intended to Serve Netanyahu's Real War Goal: The Conquest of Gaza," *Haaretz*, August 21, 2024, in Hebrew, <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/2024-08-21/ty-article/.premium/00000191-7409-d5c0-afb3-f57fd2b60000>.

<sup>61</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Israel's Crimes Against Humanity in Gaza: Mass Forced Displacement and Widespread Destruction," November 14, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/11/14/israels-crimes-against-humanity-gaza>; Idan Landau, "Exterminate, Expel, Resettle: Israel's Endgame in Northern Gaza," *+972 Magazine*, November 1, 2024, <https://www.972mag.com/extermine-expel-resettle-israel-northern-gaza>; *Haaretz*, "Netanyahu's Ethnic Cleansing," November 10, 2024, in Hebrew, <https://www.haaretz.co.il/opinions/editorial-articles/2024-11-10/ty-article-opinion/00000193-11b9-d3a2-a3d7-5bf956bf0000>; Rosemarie Esber, *Under the Cover of War: The Zionist Expulsion of the Palestinians* (Alexandria, VA: Arabicus Books & Media, 2008); Yumna Patel, "56 Years of Occupation: Explaining the Palestinian 'Naksa,'" *Mondoweiss*, June 5, 2023, <https://mondoweiss.net/2023/06/56-years-of-occupation-explaining-the-palestinian-naksa>.

<sup>62</sup> Aluf Benn, "Netanyahu and His Government Are Preparing for the Next Phase of the War: Preparation for Settlement and Annexation in the Northern Gaza Strip," *Haaretz*, September 9, 2024, in Hebrew, <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/2024-09-09/ty-article/.highlight/00000191-d6e5-dc63-a9db-f6ef3b700000>.

<sup>63</sup> Janis Laizans and Michal Yaakov Itzhaki, "On the Edge of Gaza, Israeli Settlers Want Back In," *Reuters*, October 21, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/edge-gaza-israeli-settlers-want-back-2024-10-21>; Idan Yaron, "First You Take Control of the Territory, Then You Wait for the Opportunity. This Is How You Establish a New Settlement," *Haaretz*, October 22, 2024, in Hebrew, <https://www.haaretz.co.il/magazine/the-edge/2024-10-22/ty-article/.highlight/00000192-b3ef-d7bf-a7d2-bfe94dc00000>.

<sup>64</sup> Justin Salhani, "Israel Has Encroached on 32 Percent of Gaza, Al Jazeera Investigation Shows," *Al Jazeera*, May 31, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/5/31/israel-has-encroached-on-32-of-gaza-al-jazeera-investigation-shows>; Jeremy Sharon, "Israel Announces Largest Appropriation of State Land in West Bank Since Oslo Accords," *The Times of Israel*, July 3, 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-announces-largest-appropriation-of-state-land-in-west-bank-since-oslo-accords>; Jeremy Sharon, "Land Allocation Approved for First New West Bank Settlement to Be Built Since 2017," *The Times of Israel*, August 15, 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/land-allocation-approved-for-first-new-west-bank-settlement-to-be-built-since-2017>; Human Rights Watch, "West Bank."

territorial ambitions. As Gallant explained, one of the three grounds for his firing was his objection to “abandoning the captives” just so Netanyahu could satisfy his “desire to stay there.”<sup>65</sup>

## CONCLUSION

By making territorial dispossession premised on the partial physical destruction of the Palestinian people an objective of the Gaza war, Israel has affirmed the conclusion reached by prominent scholars, legal experts, and more than 50 countries that the mass violence it has been inflicting on Gaza represents a violation of the UN Genocide Convention.<sup>66</sup> The arrest warrants issued for Netanyahu and Gallant by the International Criminal Court bolster that conclusion, as a three-judge panel found “reasonable grounds to believe” that the Israeli officials “bear criminal responsibility as civilian superiors for the war crime of intentionally directing an attack against the civilian population.”<sup>67</sup> Considering the grave legal and moral implications this has for Biden and his administration, the fact that the president has categorically denied that a genocide has been unfolding in Gaza should not be surprising.<sup>68</sup> Nor should it be surprising that Biden has sought to delegitimize the widespread protests against Israel’s assault by asserting that they are motivated by antisemitism.<sup>69</sup>

In US politics, the Israel-Hamas conflict remains highly contentious, especially at colleges and universities.<sup>70</sup> American students opposing Israel’s ongoing obliteration of Gaza have formed the largest antiwar movement of the 21st century, erected encampments on more than 130 campuses, inspired students from around the globe to join their struggle, and refused to back down

<sup>65</sup> *The Times of Israel*, “Full Text of Gallant Speech: There Will Be No Atonement for Abandoning the Hostages,” November 5, 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/full-text-of-gallant-speech-there-will-be-no-atonement-for-abandoning-the-hostages/>; *The Times of Israel*, “After His Firing, Gallant Tells Hostage Families Netanyahu Needlessly Keeping IDF in Gaza,” November 7, 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/after-firing-gallant-tells-hostage-families-netanyahu-needlessly-keeping-troops-in-gaza/>.

<sup>66</sup> Nicole Narea, “Is Israel Committing Genocide? Reexamining the Question, a Year Later,” *Vox*, October 25, 2024, <https://www.vox.com/politics/378913/israel-gaza-genocide-icj>; Gerald Imray, “Genocide Case Against Israel: Where Does the Rest of the World Stand on the Momentous Allegations?” *The Associated Press*, January 14, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/genocide-israel-palestinians-gaza-court-fbd7fe4af10b542a1a4e2c7563029bfbf>; Lauren Kent and Lauren Izso, “Israel’s War Conduct in Gaza ‘Consistent with the Characteristics of Genocide,’ UN Special Committee Finds,” *CNN*, November 16, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/11/15/middleeast/israel-gaza-genocide-un-special-committee-intl-latam/index.html>.

<sup>67</sup> International Criminal Court, “Situation in the State of Palestine: ICC Pre-Trial Chamber I Rejects the State of Israel’s Challenges to Jurisdiction and Issues Warrants of Arrest for Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant,” November 21, 2024, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-state-palestine-icc-pre-trial-chamber-i-rejects-state-israels-challenges>; Tom Dannenbaum, “Nuts & Bolts of the International Criminal Court Arrest Warrants in the ‘Situation in Palestine,’” *Just Security*, November 22, 2024, <https://www.justsecurity.org/105048/icc-arrest-warrants>.

<sup>68</sup> Elena Schneider, Jennifer Haberkorn, and Eli Stokols, “Biden: What’s Happening in Gaza ‘Is Not Genocide,’” *Politico*, May 20, 2024, <https://www.politico.com/news/2024/05/20/biden-gaza-not-genocide-israel-00159020>.

<sup>69</sup> Kathryn Watson, “Biden Condemns ‘Antisemitic Protests’ and ‘Those Who Don’t Understand What’s Going On with the Palestinians,’” *CBS News*, April 22, 2024, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/biden-condemns-antisemitic-protests-palestine-columbia-university>.

<sup>70</sup> Johanna Alonso, “Anticipating Fall Protests, Colleges Adopt a Range of Approaches,” *Inside Higher Ed*, August 16, 2024, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/students/free-speech/2024/08/16/how-universities-are-preparing-fall-protests#>; Alice Sperti, “‘A Police State’: US Universities Impose Rules to Avoid Repeat of Gaza Protests,” *The Guardian*, August 17, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/article/2024/aug/17/campus-protest-rules>.

even as thousands of their classmates have been arrested.<sup>71</sup> The protesters' key demand is that their institutions divest endowment funds from companies that conduct business with the Israeli government—especially firms that profit from the sale of weapons, equipment, and services that enable the offensive in Gaza and the occupation and colonization of the West Bank.<sup>72</sup> But compliance would risk financial losses, the defection of major donors, and the wrath of political leaders across the major parties.<sup>73</sup>

It is important, however, that we do not simply treat the charge of antisemitism as only a cynical attempt to justify the suppression of political speech. Detractors argue that Israel is being unfairly singled out for its violent dispossession of Palestinians when other settler-colonial countries established under the tutelage of the British Empire—the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand—have not been subjected to the same scrutiny.<sup>74</sup> Although the employment of whataboutism in defense of genocidal violence is hardly persuasive, this contention highlights that the Palestinian struggle for survival, self-determination, and national independence ought to be seen as part of a global struggle for Indigenous liberation.

Looking ahead, it seems improbable that Netanyahu's coalition will collapse before October 2026, when the next elections for the Knesset are scheduled.<sup>75</sup> This leaves the Palestinians at the mercy of a government so committed to their violent dispossession that it is willing to sacrifice not just the lives of the hostages but also as many Israeli soldiers as necessary for the realization of their territorial ambitions. These aims, however, are not limited to forceful acquisition and the establishment of settlements. The ultimate goal is a *de jure* annexation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank that is recognized by the international community.<sup>76</sup> Without such a recognition, Israel will remain an illegal occupant of territories principally belonging to the Palestinian people.

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<sup>71</sup> Jordan Michael Smith, "Did the Student Encampments Accomplish Anything?" *The New Republic*, September 3, 2024, <https://newrepublic.com/article/185455/2024-college-campus-gaza-encampments-accomplish>.

<sup>72</sup> Clare Duffy and Ramishah Maruf, "Columbia Student Protesters Are Demanding Divestment. Here's What the University Has Divested from in the Past," CNN, April 29, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/27/business/columbia-history-divestment-student-protests/index.html>.

<sup>73</sup> Santul Nerkar, Rob Copeland, and Maureen Farrell, "Calls to Divest from Israel Put Students and Donors on Collision Course," May 3, 2024, *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/05/03/business/brown-university-divestment-israel-gaza.html>; Aimee Picchi, "Some Students Want Their Colleges to Divest from Israel. Here's What That Really Means," CBS News, May 11, 2024, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/divest-israel-what-does-it-mean-college-university-endowment-cbs-news-explains/>; Dany Bahar, "Student Protesters Want Universities to 'Divest' from Israel. But How Much Have They Actually Invested?" *Forward*, May 6, 2024, <https://forward.com/opinion/610198/protesters-divestment-universities-israel/>; Glenn Altschuler and David Wippman, "Why Very Few Colleges Will Divest from Israel," *The Hill*, October 20, 2024, <https://thehill.com/opinion/education/4941710-why-very-few-colleges-will-divest-from-israel>.

<sup>74</sup> Bret Stephens, "Settler Colonialism: A Guide for the Sincere," *The New York Times*, February 6, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/06/opinion/settler-colonialism.html>.

<sup>75</sup> Maayan Lubell, "Israel's Netanyahu Bolsters Government with Opposition Lawmaker Saar," Reuters, September 29, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/former-netanyahu-rival-saar-join-government-israels-n12-reports-2024-09-29>.

<sup>76</sup> Zvi Bar'el, "In a Country with No Real Opposition, Who Would Dare Take to the Streets to Stop Annexation?" *Haaretz*, November 13, 2024, in Hebrew, <https://www.haaretz.co.il/opinions/2024-11-13/ty-article-opinion/.premium/00000193-2118-de28-abdb-a19c37340000>; Itamar Ben-Gvir, "We Need to Conquer Gaza and Settle Jews There, I Would Be Happy to Be the First," YouTube, May 21, 2024, in Hebrew, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hu2dYc-D5pY>.

Donald Trump's administration is unlikely to prevent Netanyahu's coalition from formally annexing the occupied territories and may even grant recognition to such a brazenly illegal act.<sup>77</sup> It remains to be seen whether the rest of the world will follow suit or insist on upholding the opinion issued by the International Court of Justice and demand that Israel end its occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip.<sup>78</sup> As far as the European Union is concerned, early signs indicate the former and its continued complicity in the occupation.<sup>79</sup>

As for the wider war, the recent ceasefire agreement concluded between Israel and Lebanon reveals that Hezbollah dropped its demand that the termination of Israel's assault on Gaza be a precondition for ending its own campaign.<sup>80</sup> Considering the vast asymmetry of power between the two parties, the repeated assassinations of Hezbollah's leaders, and the more than 3,000 Lebanese who have already died from Israel's bombardment of the country, this was to be expected.<sup>81</sup> The Palestinians, once more, stand alone.

**How to cite this article:** Samuel, M. T. The Israel-Hamas War One Year Later: Mass Violence and Palestinian Dispossession. *Middle East Policy*. 2024; 1–14.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/mepo.12792>

<sup>77</sup> Amir Tibon and Ben Samuels, "Trump Dreams of Normalization with Saudi Arabia but Appoints Supporters of Annexation," *Haaretz*, November 13, 2024, in Hebrew, <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/2024-11-13/ty-article/.premium/00000193-23ea-d707-a9d3-7ffb71c30000>; Jacob Kornbluh, "Your Complete Guide to Trump's Jewish Advisers and Pro-Israel Cabinet," *Forward*, November 13, 2024, <https://forward.com/news/674101/trump-cabinet-israel-rubio-huckabee-jewish>; Haley Ott, "Trump Win Fuels Discussion of Israel Annexing the West Bank. Here's What That Means," CBS News, November 19, 2024, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/will-israel-annex-west-bank-after-trump-takes-office>; The White House, "Proclamation on Recognizing the Golan Heights as Part of the State of Israel," March 25, 2019, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/presidential-actions/proclamation-recognizing-golan-heights-part-state-israel>.

<sup>78</sup> Claudio Francavilla, "International Court Rulings Require EU Action on Israel and Palestine: Sanctions, Trade Measures, Support for ICC Crucial to Comply with International Law," *Opinio Juris*, October 24, 2024, <https://opiniojuris.org/2024/10/24/international-court-rulings-require-eu-action-on-israel-and-palestine-sanctions-trade-measures-support-for-icc-crucial-to-comply-with-international-law>.

<sup>79</sup> Arthur Neslen, "EU 'Bending' Rules to Allow Trade With Israeli Settlements, Leaked Analysis Shows," *The Intercept*, October 23, 2024, <https://theintercept.com/2024/10/23/eu-israel-settlements-trade-gaza>; Andrew Gray et al., "EU Ministers Reject Move to Freeze Dialogue with Israel Over Gaza War," *Reuters*, November 18, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/eu-will-not-suspend-dialogue-with-israel-polands-sikorski-says-2024-11-18>; Stefan Talmon, "Germany's Reaction to the International Court of Justice's Palestine Advisory Opinion: 'The Opinion Confirms Our Positioning in Many Points,'" *German Practice in International Law*, July 25, 2024, <https://gpil.jura.uni-bonn.de/2024/07/germanys-reaction-to-the-international-court-of-justices-palestine-advisory-opinion-the-opinion-confirms-our-positioning-in-many-points>; *Le Monde*, "France Says 'Immunities Apply' to Netanyahu Regarding ICC Arrest Warrant," November 27, 2024, [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/11/27/france-says-immunities-apply-to-netanyahu-regarding-icc-arrest-warrant\\_6734304\\_4.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/11/27/france-says-immunities-apply-to-netanyahu-regarding-icc-arrest-warrant_6734304_4.html).

<sup>80</sup> *The Times of Israel*, "Full Text: The Israel-Hezbollah Ceasefire Deal," November 27, 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/full-text-the-israel-hezbollah-ceasefire-deal>.

<sup>81</sup> Al Jazeera, "Death Toll from Israeli Attacks on Lebanon Surpasses 3,000: Health Ministry," November 5, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/11/5/death-toll-from-israeli-attacks-on-lebanon-surpasses-3000-health-ministry>.