

Israel and Its Allies Are Repurposing the Goals and Lies of 1948 – In Gaza in 2023

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History is repeating itself – and every politician and establishment journalist is pretending they cannot see what is staring them in the face. There is a collective and wilful refusal to join the dots in Gaza, even when they point in one direction only.

There has been a consistent pattern to Israel's behaviour since its creation 75 years ago – just as there has been a consistent pattern to the “see no evil, hear no evil” response of western powers.

In 1948, in events the Palestinians call their “Nakba”, or Catastrophe, 80 percent of Palestinians were ethnically cleansed from their lands in what became the self-declared Jewish state of Israel.

As Palestinians maintained at the time – and Israeli historians later confirmed from archival documents – Israel's leaders lied when they said Palestinians had fled of their own volition, on the orders of neighbouring Arab states.

As the historians also discovered, Israeli leaders [lied](#) when they claimed that they had pleaded, first, with the 900,000 Palestinians inside the new state's borders to stay and, later, with the 750,000 forced into exile to return home.

Rather, the archives showed that the new Israeli state's soldiers had carried out terrible [massacres](#) to drive out the Palestinian population. The overall ethnic cleansing operation had a name, Plan Dalet.



Palestinian refugees in 1948 Photo: Public Domain

Later, Israeli leaders even lied in minimising the number of Palestinian agricultural communities they had destroyed: there were more than 500 wiped from the face of the earth by Israeli bulldozers and army sappers. Paradoxically, this procedure was popularly known by Israelis as “making the desert bloom”.

Extraordinarily, reputable scholars, journalists and politicians in the West – those who dominate the mainstream conversation – ignored all this evidence of Israeli deceit and mendacity for decades, even after Israeli historians and archival documents supported the Palestinian account of the Nakba.

Various strategies were adopted to keep the truth out of view. Prominent observers continued peddling discredited Israeli talking points. Others threw up their hands, arguing that the truth could not be definitively determined. And yet more declared that, even if bad things had happened, there was blame enough to go round on both sides and that, anyway, it was an excellent thing the Jewish people had a sanctuary (even if Palestinians paid the price rather than the antisemites and genocidaires in Europe).

These defences started to crumble with the advent of social media and a digital world in which information could be disseminated more easily. Western elites hurriedly tried to shut down any critical discussion of the circumstances in which the state of Israel was birthed by labelling it as antisemitism.

Ever-shrinking space

All of this is the context for understanding the current “mainstream” debate about what’s happening in Gaza. We are seeing the same disconnect between actual events and the establishment’s crafting of a narrative to excuse Israel, except this time the deception and gaslighting are occurring while we, the audience, can see for ourselves the horrifying facts unfold in real time.

We don’t need historians to tell us what is going on in Gaza. It is live on television (or at least the more sanitised version is).

Let's just recount the known facts.

Israeli officials have called for the eradication of Gaza as a place where Palestinians can live, and said all Palestinians are viewed as legitimate targets for Israel's bombs and bullets.

Palestinians have been ordered out of the northern half of Gaza. Israel has attacked Gaza's hospitals, the last sanctuaries for Palestinians in the north.

Gaza was already one of the most crowded places on Earth. But Palestinians have been forced into the southern half of the strip, where they are being subjected to a "complete siege" that denies them food, water and power. The UN [warned](#) last week that Gaza's civilian population faced the "immediate possibility" of starvation.



A view from the area after Israeli airstrikes on Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza, on October 31, 2023. [Stringer – Anadolu Agency]

Israel has now ordered Palestinians to leave much of the largest city in southern Gaza, Khan Younis. Palestinians are gradually being forced to huddle in the narrow corridor at Rafah, next to the border with Egypt. Some 2.3 million people are being packed into an ever-shrinking space.

The majority have no home to return to, even if Israel lets them head north. The schools, universities, bakeries, mosques and churches are mostly gone. Much of Gaza is a wasteland.

For years Israel has had a [plan](#) to drive Palestinians out of Gaza, across the border, into the Egyptian territory of Sinai.

Media Blindness

Even more so than in 1948, what Israel is doing is staring us in the face in real time. And yet, just as in 1948, Israel's lies and deceptions dominate the West's media and political narrative.

Israel is openly carrying out ethnic cleansing inside Gaza. Most genocide experts conclude it is carrying out genocide too. The goal in both cases is to cause another Great Ethnic Cleansing, driving Palestinians outside their homeland as happened in 1948 and again in 1967 under cover of war.

And yet neither of these terms – ethnic cleansing and genocide – are in the “mainstream” coverage of, and commentary about, Israel's attack on Gaza.

We're still told that this is about “eradicating” Hamas – something that very obviously cannot be achieved because you can't eradicate an oppressed people's determination to resist their oppressor. The more you oppress them, the more resistance you provoke.

The West is now trying to focus public attention on the “day after”, as though this [wasteland](#) can be governed by anyone, let alone the chronically weak, Vichy-style regime known as the Palestinian Authority.

It is astonishing to see that what was true in 1948 is equally true in 2023. Israel spreads lies and deceit. Western elites repeat those lies. And even when Israel commits crimes against humanity in broad daylight, when it warns in advance of what it is doing, Western establishments still refuse to acknowledge those crimes.

The truth, which should have been obvious long before, in 1948, is that Israel is not a peace-loving, liberal democracy. It is a classic settler colonial state, following in a long “Western” tradition that led to the founding of the United States, Canada and Australia, among others.

Settler colonialism's mission is always the same: to replace the native population.

A Defining Moral Cause

After its mass ethnic cleansing operations of 1948 and 1967, Israel tried to manage the remaining Palestinian population through the traditional apartheid model of herding the natives into reservations, as its predecessors did with the remnants of the “locals” who survived their efforts at extermination.

Any caution on Israel's part derived from the different political climate it had to operate in: international law became more central after World War Two, with clear definitions of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The West wilfully mischaracterises Israel's process of dispossessing and ghettoising these remaining Palestinians as a “conflict” because they refuse to submit quietly to the apartheid, ghettoisation model.

Now, Israel's management approach to the Palestinians has broken down completely – for two main reasons.

First, the Palestinians, aided by new technologies that have made it more difficult to keep

them out of view, have attracted ever widening popular support – and most problematically, among Western publics.

The Palestinians have also managed to bring their cause to international forums, even gaining recognition as a state by a majority of members of the United Nations. Potentially, they even have redress in the West's international legal institutions, like the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice.

As a result, subduing the Palestinians – or maintaining “calm”, as Western establishments prefer to call it – has become more and more difficult and expensive.

And second, on October 7, Hamas proved that Palestinian resistance cannot be contained even under a siege enforced by drones, and an Iron Dome interception system protecting Israel from retaliatory rockets. In such circumstances, Palestinians have shown they will seek surprising and creative ways to break out of their confinement and bring their oppression into the spotlight.

In fact, given the West's dulled sensitivities to Palestinian suffering, militant factions are likely to deduce that headline-grabbing atrocities – mirroring Israel's own historic approach to the Palestinians – are the only way to gain attention.

Israel understands that the Palestinians are going to continue being a thorn in its side, a reminder that Israel is not a normal state. And the struggle to correct Israel's decades of dispossessing and brutalising Palestinians will become ever more a defining moral cause among Western publics, as the fight against apartheid South Africa once was.

So Israel is taking advantage of this moment to “finish the job”. The final destination is clearly in view, as, in truth, it has been for more than seven decades. The crime is unfolding step by step, the pace quickening. And yet senior politicians and journalists in the West – like their predecessors – continue to be blind to it all.

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