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With a Wide Angle Lens

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The semiannual periodical on international trends, “With a Wide-Angle Lens”, is published as part of the “Europe & World” thematic section of the Nicos Poulantzas Institute. Its aim is to present aspects of international developments and trends to the Greek public, engaging in dialogue without being dependent on current events. By utilizing contributions and analyses from a broad group of collaborators—both regular and occasional—from Greece and abroad, and incorporating diverse approaches and perspectives (scientific and political), the publication seeks to create what its title suggests: a wide-angle lens to approach the rapidly changing world we live in.

* The views expressed in signed articles are solely those of the respective authors.

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Issue 8 | December 2025

A tribute to Gaza

Editors: **Vasiliki Lazou**
Andreas Maratos

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Editorial
Gaza: Ground Zero
of a Global Moral Crisis
Vasiliki Lazou

Editorial

Gaza: Ground Zero of a Global Moral Crisis

Vasiliki Lazou

Vasiliki Lazou teaches modern political history in the Department of Political Sciences at AUTH. She is a member of the administrative and scientific board of the NPI.

This current edition is dedicated to Gaza, to a place that has become a global symbol of humanitarian disaster, geopolitical instability, and grave violations of the fundamental rights of an entire people. The Palestinian question is not just another regional conflict; it constitutes the longest-standing and most persistent open wound of the international system, a space where the right to self-determination was never applied and where the international order constantly fails to defend its own principles. At the heart of this failure lie the military intervention and the genocidal policies of Israel that flagrantly violate international law in the Gaza Strip. The systematic process of extermination targets not only bodies but also the possibility of collective life. In Gaza, «necropolitics»—as an exercise of power that decides who will live and who will be left to die within zones of absolute precariousness—manifests in an almost laboratory-like way: as a regime where an entire population is under the permanent management of death.

From the Nakba of 1948 to the present day, Palestinians remain a people without a state, trapped in a historical cycle of displacement, occupation, and limited sovereignty. The Israeli occupation of 1967, along with the gradual collapse of the Oslo Accords, highlighted the weakness of a «peace» plan that never addressed the deepest roots of the conflict. The shrinking of Palestinian territories and the continuous expansion of settlements created a regime of faits accomplis that makes the prospect of a just solution increasingly difficult. Instead of the international community enforcing respect for the law, it often legitimizes the occupation or accepts the prolongation of a condition of exception.

After 2001, the global rhetoric regarding «terrorism» functioned as a tool for equating the Palestinian national liberation movement with fundamentalist organizations. This is despite the fact that the proposal of the 22 Arab states for full normalization of relations in 2002—in exchange for Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories—was rejected without discussion. At the center of all this is Gaza: an area under prolonged blockade, repeated military attacks, and the destruction of critical infrastructure. International organizations now

speak of a «societal collapse,» as residents survive in an environment without security, without a state, without stable protection mechanisms. Despite Israel's absolute military superiority, no «victory» has proven capable of bringing an end to the cycle of violence; on the contrary, oppression reproduces new waves of resistance. International inaction acts as an accelerator of destabilization, leaving Gaza prey to powerful external actors who often bypass the core of the issue: the right of the Palestinian people to determine their own future. Within this environment, certain non-negotiable principles emerge: full respect for international law, an end of settlements and the lifting of the occupation, immediate humanitarian aid. The recognition of the Palestinian state based on UN resolutions, on the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, constitutes the only internationally recognized path to stability.

In the featured issue of this Wide-Angle Lens, Nikolas Voulelis highlights Gaza as a place where life is constantly «on the edge»: where everyday life intersects with destruction and where collective memory is built upon ruins.

The regional dimension, as examined by Sotiris Roussos, shows how the war in Gaza is intertwined with developments in Iran, creating a complex geopolitical chain of rivalries and compromises. Tehran, weakened and isolated, sees its strategy retreating, while a large part of its network of allies is being dissolved.

Panos Haritos illuminates the realignments that emerged after the attacks of October 7th, 2023, showing a region where balances are constantly shifting. Gaza today risks being disappearing from the map not only as a geographical space but as a community with political status. The so-called «20 Point Agreement» proposed by Donald Trump, despite its obvious weaknesses, is presented as a peace plan exclusively because no other viable proposal has been put on the table. However, Hamas has made it clear that no plan that does not recognize the right of self-determination of the Palestinians can survive. The uncertainty about the future of Gaza is not accidental; it is a structural element of a plan that tries to manage the population, not to allow it to rebuild its life. The possibility of a «freezing» of developments, as Haritos emphasizes, simply solidifies the faits accomplis.

Marina Eleftheriadou analyzes how Islamist hegemony in Gaza reshapes public myths and group identities, while simultaneously deconstructing the frequent—and often demagogic—equation of Hamas with globalized jihadism. Hamas, despite its Islamic discourse, remains a national-Islamist movement, different

from organizations such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS, which seek a supranational caliphate. The text warns that the collapse of Hamas—rather than its existence—would open the way for the reappearance of more extreme jihadist forms.

Nikos Christofis examines the «war of words»: the way in which criticism is identified with antisemitism, Palestinian narratives are marginalized, and mechanisms of information control undermine democratic processes. He highlights the function of «alethocide» (truth-killing) as a political practice that constructs a narrative of victimized nationalism, instrumentalizes the memory of the Holocaust, and cancels public dialogue, allowing the normalization of censorship policies.

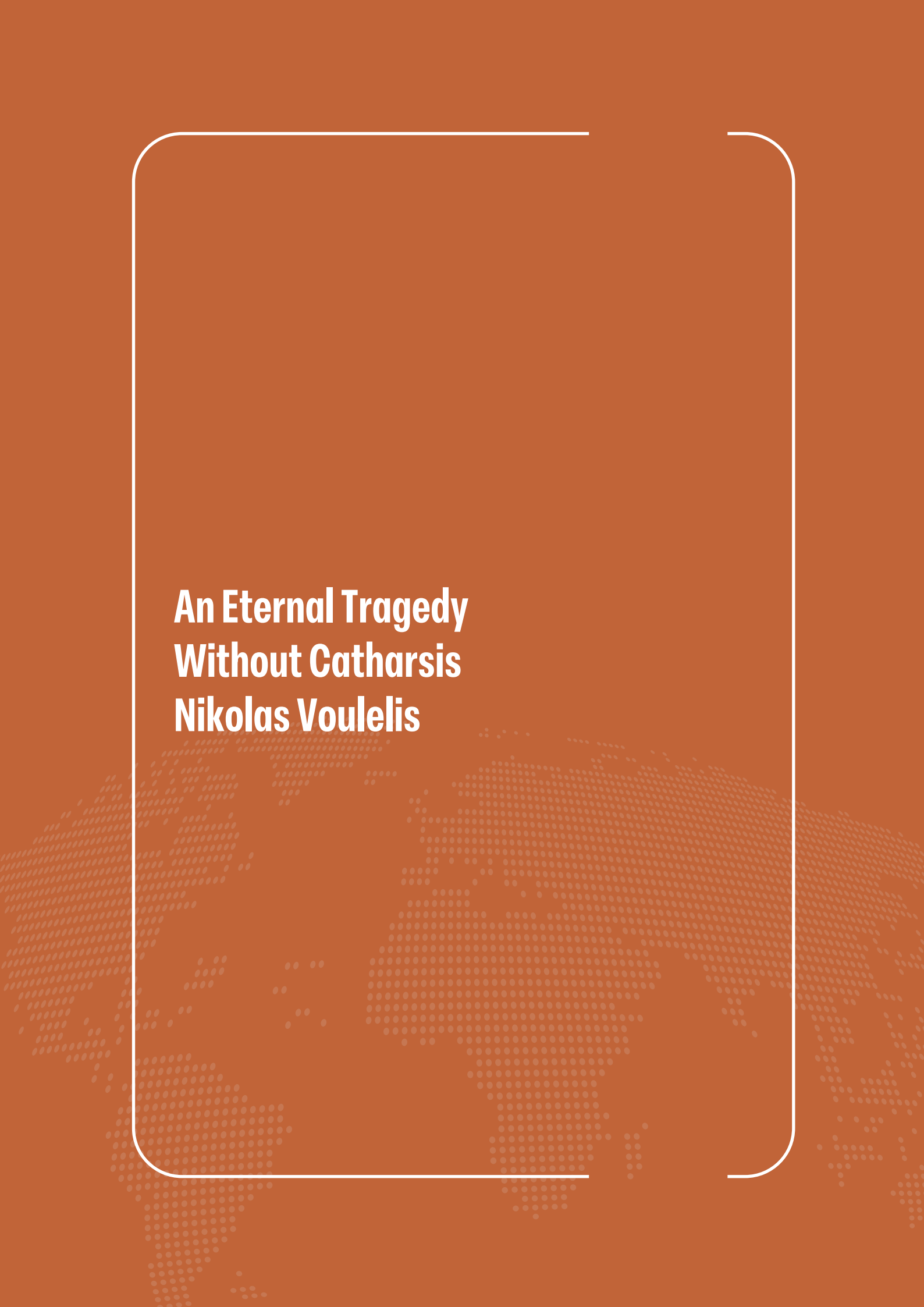
Kleoniki Alexopoulou sheds light on the crack in the Western narrative, which widens as images from Gaza reveal the reality of rights violations. She draws on the work of Francesca Albanese, who emphasizes that knowledge, documentation, and public information are prerequisites for genuine political action and defense against inaction. Her theoretical approach, with references to biopolitics and «bare life,» shows that oppression in Gaza is not accidental but deeply structured, integrated into a logic of control over the very life of the Palestinians.

The role of the seventh art is examined by Konstantinos Kaimakis, presenting Gaza as a place where cinema captures reality «on fire.» Seven films from Palestine and Israel record daily silent tragedies, moral dilemmas, and the weakness of international solutions. Cinema functions as a space of testimony, denunciation, and the shaping of collective consciousness, reminding us that behind every statistic there are human lives.

This edition seeks to contribute to a dialogue without a distorting lens. By analyzing Gaza through historical, political, social, legal, and cultural perspectives, it attempts to highlight not only the front of the conflict but also a space where rights, freedom, and the very possibility of a just and sustainable peace are at stake. In an era of deep crisis, understanding Gaza with a human, documented, and critical eye is not just necessary—it is imperative.



© Forced displacement of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip destroyed by Israeli bombardments, January 29, 2025.



**An Eternal Tragedy
Without Catharsis
Nikolas Voulelis**

An Eternal Tragedy Without Catharsis

Nikolas Voulelis

Nicholas Voulelis wrote international analyses in the newspapers Avgi, Kyriakatiki Eleftherotypia, and Epohi. He was Editor-in-Chief at the Athens-Macedonian News Agency (ANA-MPA) and Director at the Efimerida ton Syntakton (2012-2022).

In memory of Alekos Flambouraris

The Palestinians are the only people in the world who have been deprived by brutal force of the right to their national self-determination and to the founding of an independent state. Today, all former colonies of European states are included among the 193 member-states of the UN, even states with a few thousand inhabitants. The Palestinians are the only ones who were excluded from the process of decolonization, that swept through the Arab world during the 20th century, because their homeland, instead of being permanently rid of British colonialism, was massively colonized, with the support of Britain, the USA, and most Western states, by another people, the Jews of the diaspora, who, along with a small minority of Jews already residing in Palestine, ultimately established the State of Israel.

These developments did not occur peacefully, but «by fire and sword» in the first half of the last century, initially to suppress the Palestinian struggle for independence. Subsequently, however, after the Holocaust of the Jews by the Nazis, all these countries supported the mass migration of Jews to Palestine and the creation of a Jewish state there as «reparation» for the Holocaust, to have an advanced outpost in the Middle East, but also to atone for their own antisemitism, from which Jews suffered for centuries in Europe.

The Arab states attempted to prevent the establishment of Israel but were defeated, and the «Nakba» followed, meaning the «catastrophe,» with the violent expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homeland toward neighboring countries, while in the 1967 war, Israel also occupied the West Bank of the Jordan River, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. Since then, with successive resolutions, the UN has requested that Israel withdraw from all occupied Palestinian territories. Exactly these territories would constitute the independent Palestinian state provided for by the 1993 Oslo Accords!

This brief retrospective is necessary in order to integrate what is happening today in Gaza and the West Bank into the overall context of the Palestinian question. It

is not, therefore, a confrontation of a «model democratic state» with a «terrorist organization,» but one of the longest-running international confrontations with the main victim being the Palestinian people, who claim their inalienable right to the land of their ancestors.

The Palestinians are today a people of 15–16 million throughout the world. Of these, approximately 7.5 million live in their ancestral lands, that is, within the borders of the former British colony of Palestine. Over two million of these constitute a downgraded and strictly controlled minority within the state of Israel, although they make up over 20% of the population, being deprived even of their name: «Arab citizens of Israel» is their official designation. Nearly 5.5 million live in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967: the West Bank of the Jordan River, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem.

In these territories, which constitute about 22% of historical Palestine—the former British colony—a regime of inhumane military occupation, violence, repression, and «apartheid-type» discrimination have been established. The occupied territories in the West Bank of the Jordan have been steadily «gnawed away» for 58 years with the establishment of hundreds of Jewish settlements, with 750 thousand fanatical and mostly armed settlers, who steadily seize the most fertile lands, kill, threaten, or drive out the Palestinian inhabitants, destroying their homes and their fields, thus creating territorial and demographic faits accomplis which are difficult to completely overturn to create an independent Palestinian state on these lands.

The result of this continuous, creeping seizure of lands has restricted the extent of Palestinian territories even further. Correspondingly, in the Gaza Strip, since the Israeli settlers withdrew, a stifling blockade from land, sea, and air had been imposed on its two million inhabitants, until the Hamas raid on October 7, 2023. The aftermath is well known: 26 months of continuous bombardments, the leveling of cities and villages, ethnic cleansing, the imposition of starvation conditions, 80 thousand dead and 180 thousand wounded. A genocide which is now recognized even by leading Israelis: former Knesset speaker Avraham Burg, former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, former head of secret services Ami Ayalon, thousands of intellectuals, scientists, military personnel, and major human rights organizations.

The Netanyahu government—and all its supporters everywhere—invokes the right to self-defense to justify the genocide. Indeed, the UN Charter establishes

the right to defense for states. However, the Gaza Strip is not a neighboring state of Israel from which it received the Hamas raid. Based on International Law and unanimous resolutions of the UN Security Council, it is illegally occupied Palestinian territory by Israel. Again, based on International Law, its people, the Palestinians, are entitled to resist—even with arms—foreign occupation and the occupier. Just as the Greek resistance against the foreign occupier during the Nazi occupation was not terrorism. That is why the barbaric occupier did not claim any right to self-defense then, but responded with massive and blind reprisals. Here, let me emphasize that even in the struggle against the occupier, the killings of civilians and defenseless citizens are absolutely condemnable and constitute a war crime. National liberation movements do not kill helpless civilians and small children.

From the wars, however, of 1967 and 1973, decisive events intervened that shaped, in the long term, the unfavorable balance of power for the solution of the problem. After its first «heroic» period, the Palestinian liberation movement (armed struggle, hijackings) matures through mass peaceful demonstrations (First Intifada) and the National Palestinian Council recognizes, in November 1988, Israel within the 1967 borders and proclaims—symbolically—the state of Palestine.

It was a huge concession, which, however, opened the way for the peace negotiations that resulted in the Oslo Accords (1993), with mutual recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel and a commitment to a Palestinian state in five years. But Yitzhak Rabin is assassinated by a far-right Israeli, and essentially from 1996, Netanyahu, Sharon, and again Netanyahu successively undertake to completely reverse every negotiation process, to consolidate the expansion of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, with the steady goal of altering the situation so drastically and permanently that the creation of a Palestinian state would be impossible. And of course, without any international sanction against Israel. September 11, 2001, with the terrorist attack in New York, is the «heaven-sent» opportunity for Israeli propaganda to demonize the Palestinian movement as a whole and to integrate it into the global struggle against terrorism.

However, in March 2002, the Arab world offers Israel yet another concession. The Arab states—all 22 member-states of the Arab League—propose comprehensive peace to Israel with full restoration of relations with it, in exchange for its withdrawal and the creation of an independent Palestinian state. Israel

categorically rejected the proposal and simultaneously implemented a systematic policy of exploiting the conflict between Hamas and Fatah, strengthening the former in every way (which dominated Gaza) against the latter (which maintained the quasi-authority of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank). As Netanyahu emphasized in a meeting of his party in 2019: «Whoever does not want a Palestinian state to exist must support the strengthening of Hamas and widen the gap between the Palestinians of Gaza and the Palestinians of the West Bank.»

Today, after the leveling of 70% of buildings and infrastructure in Gaza, after 260 thousand dead and wounded in this small strip of land (365 sq. km., the size of Andros), its two million inhabitants are forced to live (?) in approximately half of its area, because Israel remains in the other half, bombing civilians at any moment, citing the existence of terrorists. All this despite the ceasefire agreed upon on October 20th...

The pinnacle of ambiguity, generalities, and undermining—to the point of cancellation—of all previous UN Security Council decisions is Resolution 2803 of November 17, 2025, with which the Trump plan for Gaza was essentially legalized. Without specifying the legal status for the notorious «Peace Committee» and the «International Stabilization Force,» and primarily without asking the Palestinians themselves, without any commitment to an independent Palestinian state, the decision essentially leaves it to the discretion of Trump and Israel to manage the fates of the inhabitants of Gaza. The resolution was passed by the Security Council after unbearable American pressure (with Russia and China abstaining) under the excuse that it includes the vague prospect for «Palestinian self-determination and statehood» (!) and that it will contribute to the increase of humanitarian aid to Gaza. Undoubtedly, we cannot reach safe and final conclusions after 26 months of Israel's genocidal campaign in Gaza. There are, however, enough elements to distinguish the deadlocks of Netanyahu, which cannot be concealed despite the unconditional and unstinting support—political, economic, and especially military—of Trump and his predecessor, but also the guilty tolerance of most European governments—including the Mitsotakis government.

On the military level, Netanyahu boasted a few months ago that Israel exterminated over 20-thousand-armed Palestinians in Gaza. Shortly after the ceasefire, Israeli military analysts stated that there are already almost 30-thousand-armed [fighters] there: meaning the losses were more than

replenished. To understand this, let us take into account that two-thirds of the population of Gaza, about 1.5 million, are under 25 years old. All these young people were born and raised in conditions of a stifling blockade of Gaza, with continuous raids and bombardments by the Israeli army. One may ask where their rage and despair lead?

But let us look at the situation as a whole. Whom did Israel defeat? For how much longer—with the current far-right to fascist Netanyahu government—will it be able to bomb Lebanon, Syria, Gaza, distant Iran, or Yemen and maintain the occupied Palestinian territories under an inhumane regime of racial discrimination? Until when will it humiliate all its neighbors with its military superiority? The tragic thing is that this government, which has as its central policy axis the dehumanization of an Arab people, the Palestinians, literally begs Trump to persuade the rich oil-producing states, led by Saudi Arabia, to restore relations with Israel so that «there may be prosperity for all» in the Middle East (!).

Total victory for Israel against all its Arab and Muslim neighbors cannot exist. The Palestinians proved decades ago that they will never submit. Even Trump, probably, realized that he will not acquire a «Riviera» in the Mediterranean. The Palestinians of Gaza, wounded, hungry, thirsty, and devastated, do not abandon their place. The only way out of the barbarity that an entire people suffers is the recognition of their inalienable right to have their own independent state in the occupied territories of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem; in what remains, that is, of historical Palestine and has been secured by successive UN resolutions. Besides, these territories are recognized by the 163 member-states that have proceeded with the symbolic recognition of the state of Palestine.

This solution of the coexistence of two states, Israel and Palestine, is the only one that guarantees the peace and security of all. Between the Jordan [River] and the Mediterranean, there is room for both peoples! What is superfluous is the «culture of death» that seeks the annihilation of one or the other...

For such a thing to happen, however, there must be a fundamental change in the stance of the USA and the powerful states of Europe, which continue to support or tolerate the genocidal campaign of the Netanyahu government. This change will inevitably contribute to a change of guard within Israel itself, or at least accelerate it. Because even within Israeli society, there are always forces that want peaceful coexistence with a Palestinian state, despite the fact

that the «trauma» of October 7, 2023, combined with systematic, long-term misinformation, has contributed to creating an extremely negative image of the entire Palestinian people. Even at the height of the organized genocide in Gaza, there were thousands of brave Israelis and Jews all over the world who dared to raise their voices and declare that the crimes against the Palestinians «are not done in their name»!

The responsibilities of Europe, but mainly of the USA, are enormous, because they contributed to creating a certainty in genocidal governments, like Netanyahu's, that they have absolute, almost «divine» power over land and people, beyond any concept of principles or law. However, for a substantial change to appear on the horizon, all democratic forces, everywhere on earth, must increase their practical solidarity toward the Palestinians. We cannot watch as spectators the annihilation of a people. No one can say anymore that they did not know. As for the Palestinians themselves, as their great poet Mahmoud Darwish wrote: «They can do nothing else, but to be and remain even more Palestinian!»



© The Nakba marks the mass displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in 1948, a turning point that shaped their identity and historical memory. Palestinian refugees board small boats bound for Lebanon or Egypt. Photo: Hrant Nakashian / UN Archive, 1949.



**The War in Gaza and the
Political Crises in Iran
Sotiris Roussos**

The War in Gaza and the Political Crises in Iran

Sotiris Roussos

Sotiris Roussos is a professor of International Relations and Religion in the Middle East at the University of Peloponnese and Head of the Centre for Mediterranean, Middle East and Islamic Studies (CEMMIS). (The article was delivered on 30 November 2025 and it was not possible to include an analysis of current developments in Iran.)

Iran experienced its own “spring” two years before the Arab Spring, in 2009. This refers to the Green Movement, which had a clear political character and, above all, succeeded for the first time in mobilizing large segments of society into an alliance with prominent clerics, such as Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri. It was the first time since the Islamic Revolution of 1979 that a political movement constituted an alternative political proposal supported by a broad political and social alliance. The severe repression by the regime and the confinement of the movement’s base to the educated middle classes of the large cities weakened the movement, which was eventually defeated (Reisinezhad, 2015) ¹. Subsequently, from 2019 until today, there have been two more major social outbursts. One, in 2019, as a reaction to the increase in gasoline prices, and the other, in May 2022, for the increase in the price of bread, which was however limited to the region of Khuzestan (Reuters 2022) ². Economic problems remained difficult to solve. In 2022, over 30 percent of the Iranian people live below the poverty line, while high inflation leads to a price increase in basic goods of around 40 percent (Ziabari 2023) ³.

The successive waves of sanctions imposed on Iran during the last decade had significant consequences for its economic performance, leading to a significant contraction of GDP, oil production, and exports. It is estimated that, in the period 2010–2020, the GDP growth rate was 12 to 19 percentage units lower compared to the hypothetical scenario of the absence of sanctions. Beyond the macroeconomic impacts, the sanctions also affected the distribution of income, worsening social inequalities. Particularly vulnerable proved to be rural households, low- and middle-income households, as well as those headed by elderly or unemployed persons, which showed an increased probability of falling below the poverty line. Conversely, households with members employed in the public sector and those possessing a higher educational level possessed greater resilience

and protection against the negative impacts of the sanctions (World Bank 2023) ⁴. On the other hand, according to research, generalized sanctions lead the strata of moderate reformers, who are also the majority according to electoral results, toward a rallying around the Iranian nation-state, lowering the flag of political change (RezaeeDaryakenari et al. 2025) ⁵.

In September 2022, a new uprising started not from economic factors but from a random tragic incident, the death of young Mahsa Amini at the hands of groups enforcing religious “correctness,” much like the Tunisian uprising [started] from the self-immolation of young Tarek al-Tayeb Mohamed Bouazizi, who was facing the corruption and oppression of the regime. In both cases, the demonstrations were organized on the basis of the spontaneity of the youth who belong to the middle strata of the cities through the use of social media. In neither the Arab Spring nor the Iranian uprising was there a coherent political subject, a party, an organization, a personality to unify and give direction and, above all, be in a position to chart strategy and tactics for the protest movement (Ottaway and Esfandiari 2022) ⁶. As in Egypt, so also in Iran, the regime is in transition. The “underground” process of Khamenei’s succession due to advanced age created instability at the top of power.

An important element of the Iranian uprising was that Iranian Kurdistan became the epicenter of bloody clashes with the police and paramilitary organizations, due to Amini’s Kurdish origin. The mobility in the Kurdish Issue, with the creation of the autonomous Kurdish zone in northeastern Syria and the political developments in Iraqi Kurdistan, created unrest in Iranian Kurdistan in recent years. The regime exploited Iranian nationalism, which is always present and strong, to win the support of a large part of society by brandishing the danger of the dismemberment of Iran (Hassaniyan 2014: 294-295) ⁷. The fear of the dismemberment of Iran is a dominant feeling throughout the twentieth century and returns today to the forefront due to the American policy of encirclement and blockade of Iran.

The failure to produce a political subject, a political leadership of the movement that could address social strata beyond the women’s movement and the urban

youth and the Kurds, and the absence of significant rifts within the regime, did not bring immediate subversive political results. It highlighted, however, that Iran has now followed a path of transformation into a classic one-party authoritarian state under a religious framework.

The Manichean analysis of international correlations adopted by the Islamic Revolution —mostazafan (oppressed) versus mostakbaran (oppressors)— provided a moral grammar for foreign policy activism. During the 1980s, Tehran cultivated networks that would later become permanent elements of the regional security architecture. This shift from inter-state to hybrid alliances of both state and non-state actors defined the subsequent conflicts and alliances, confirming early revolutionary predictions about the future of politics in the Middle East (Abrahamian, 2008: 48) ⁸.

The post-revolutionary strategy of Iran is based on five pillars that were constantly emphasized by the leaders and the organic intellectuals of state policy of the Islamic Republic:

1. Economic self-reliance to reduce the influence of foreign pressure — which was pursued through import substitution and the indirect or direct state control of strategic sectors of the economy. (Ansari & Aarabi, 2019: 5) ⁹.
2. The reframing of the Palestinian issue as an emblematic struggle for the rights of the global Muslim community, thus placing Iran at the forefront of Islamic solidarity that transcends the dividing lines between Sunnis and Shiites.
3. Continuous confrontation with the United States and Israel for influence in Western Asia.
4. Support for multipolarity, seeking the weakening of the unipolar influence of the USA through the cultivation of ties with alternative major powers and South-South networks.

5. Sunni-Shiite unity with extensive networks, including support for movements in Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, and elsewhere—decisive both for the deterrence of Western aggression and for the projection of revolutionary identity (Abrahamian, 2008: 48; Ansari & Aarabi, 2019: 5) ¹⁰.

These pillars are not a static system, but an evolving repertoire adapted to regional disturbances—from the civil war of Lebanon to the American interventions and the Arab uprisings. Iran's foreign policy must be examined based on four parameters.

The first parameter is the sense of isolation of the Islamic revolution that was created by the support of all the major powers and coalitions for the regime of Saddam Hussein in the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s. This feeling was rekindled with the imposition of harsher international sanctions in the 2000s. Tehran's response to isolation was the formation of fronts with non-state actors against the unjust Western-centric international order.

The second parameter is the conviction of the Iranian elite, Islamic and secular, that Iran constitutes an exceptional case, which due to its historical past is destined to be a natural regional hegemon in Western Asia. In the Islamic Republic, this conviction was strengthened by the character of militant political Shiism. A key element of this conviction is that imperialist powers, Britain formerly and today the USA, prevent Iran from assuming its natural role in the region and aim for the overthrow of the Islamic regime.

The third parameter is the "asianisation" of the Middle East, meaning the connection of the region with Asian and Eurasian powers—China primarily but also Russia, Central Asia, India, Malaysia, and Indonesia—and its parallel disengagement from Western influence. In this context, the agreement for the normalization of Iran's relations with Saudi Arabia, signed in Beijing in 2023, can also be interpreted. The use of the term "Western Asia" instead of the colonial-cut "Middle East" by Tehran and other Asian countries expresses this change.

The fourth parameter is the replacement of the current Western American-centric global order with another centered-on Asia or with a polycentric system ¹¹.

However, the greatest crisis of Iran's international position broke out with the Hamas attack against Israel on October 7, 2023, and the war of ethnic cleansing conducted by Israel in the Gaza Strip. Iran was extremely cautious about getting involved in a direct conflict with Israel because it estimated that this would give the pretext to the USA for an attack on its nuclear program. However, the involvement of Hezbollah and Ansar Allah (Houthis) in the conflict led—likely without planning and preparation—to what the “Axis of Resistance” called the unification of the fields.

Instead of this unification reducing Israel's deterrent capability, it gave Tel Aviv the opportunity to dismantle the operational capability of Hezbollah, to exterminate its leadership, and thus contribute also to the collapse of the Assad regime in Syria. These developments dealt a heavy blow to the “Axis of Resistance” and constituted a decisive defeat of the Iranian strategy of alliances with armed non-state actors in the region ¹².

Iran, in the present juncture, is deprived of a credible web of military alliances that could ensure it substantial external support. Despite sporadic and unverified reports regarding the possible involvement of Pakistan, there are no tangible data documenting systematic military assistance from third actors. Russia and China, although theoretically representing pillars of an alternative international system (BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organization), have not adopted binding security policies toward Iran. Conversely, the Western coalition continues to maintain a high degree of institutional and strategic cohesion, functioning as a “security block” with collective commitments and predictable lines of defense.

The hegemonic stability theory argues that powers seeking a hegemonic role must produce collective security goods, so as to cultivate dependencies and attract the alignment of state and non-state actors ¹³. In other words, the “promise of security” constitutes the exchange for politico-strategic compliance. Today, the only power that succeeds in performing this role on a global level is the Unit-

ed States; neither Russia nor China has managed to create corresponding zones of security and commitment. Consequently, while Western states offer institutionalized security through collective mechanisms, the alternative formations to which Iran looks remain fragmentary and non-binding. This sustains the isolation of Tehran and limits its ability to transform its regional power into broader strategic capital. Iran, as a regional power with limited security export capabilities, remains trapped in a framework of isolation.

The current situation can be compared with the experience of the Iran–Iraq war (1980–1988). Then, despite the absence of alliances, Iran possessed two factors that mitigated its strategic deficit: (a) the ideological and political dynamics of the revolutionary forces, which provided high legitimacy and social cohesion, and (b) the advanced arsenal that had been assembled under the Shah, which maintained relative operational superiority in the early stages of the war. In the current juncture, these factors have weakened. The socio-political legitimacy of the elites shows intense erosion, in part due to the penetration of foreign services and internal contradictions.

Iran's defense strategy was based on the network of armed non-state actors and on ballistic missiles combined with thousands of drones. T. Juneau includes the nuclear program in Iran's defense strategy as well, but the process of producing a nuclear weapon does not create deterrence¹⁴. One might even claim that instead of deterring, it creates a greater incentive for a preemptive strike. The basic lesson for Tehran from the invasion of Iraq in 1980 and the ten-year war was to push security threats away from its borders. The rapid weakening of Hezbollah and Hamas and the fall of the Assad regime seriously hit the network of armed non-state actors, and the attack by Israel destroyed a large part of the missile arsenal and the anti-aircraft defense of Iran.

On a geopolitical level, Iran continues to frame the world through the prism of opposition to the West, the search for alternative structures of cooperation and collective security, and the pursuit of regional hegemony. The pillars of its post-revolutionary strategy remain active, but their effectiveness decreases in an era when the allies of the “Axis of Resistance” receive serious blows and al-

ternative security structures cannot compete with the resilience of the Western system. The crisis that arose after the war in Gaza in 2023 revealed the limits of the Iranian approach through armed non-state actors, leading to a significant retreat of its regional power. The basic question that arises is whether the Islamic Republic can transform itself institutionally and strategically so as to survive in an environment with intense internal pressures and international confrontations.



**The Middle East in the
Aftermath of October 7th
Panos Haritos**

The Middle East in the Aftermath of October 7th

Panos Haritos

Panos Charitos is a journalist, television presenter, and commentator, distinguished as a war correspondent and reporter for ERT.

On October 13, 2023, a few days before the start of the IDF operations in the Gaza Strip, a Hamas official, Ghazi Hamad, with whom I had been in contact long ago, finally picked up. I had called him dozens of times in the previous days; however, the phone was switched off or he was not answering.

“Do you realize what you’ve done?” I asked him, he replied that “we did exactly what Israel has been doing to all Palestinians for decades.”

“Yes, but here we are talking about women and children among the dead,” I told him.

“We here have lost count of the number of women and children who were killed by Israel,” he answered. When I asked whether he could imagine what would follow, he said that “whatever the answer may be, we are ready.” The telephone line cut off and the discussion stopped there. I tried again in the following days to find him, but the line was dead.

On the opposite side, I had spoken with several Israelis, mainly friends and colleagues, to understand how Israeli society viewed the attack on the Gaza border. Alex Levac, a photographer and critic of Israel's policies that had led to a breakdown in negotiations with the Palestinians, had told me that it was the first time in his life that he was so afraid. “I don't know what Israel's answer might be, but in any case, I don't want to imagine it,” he had said. Another Israeli, who in the past worked in Shin Bet (Security Service), was telling me that the leveling of Gaza was a real possibility.

Twenty-six months after that attack of the 7th of October, nothing is the same in the region of the Middle East. Gaza has effectively been erased; its inhabitants describe themselves as living dead. Wandering, skeletal silhouettes, with losses greater than at any previous stage of the conflict between the two sides.

The operation of Israel in Gaza received many names during its different phases of implementation; yet its true name was never used. Namely: Genocide.

Society in Israel supports, even today, the way in which its forces acted in Gaza and all that is happening in the West Bank. The majority, even today, declares itself opposed to coexistence with the Palestinians and they consider that their displacement constitutes the only viable option for their security, while they consider the moment ideal to close whatever pending matters exist in the wider region.

The Palestinians, on the other hand, remain divided and lack a clear vision, since on the political scene Hamas has been declined sharply, Fatah remains synonymous with corruption and defeatism, while the only personality who could unite [them], Marwan Barghouti, is in an Israeli prison; and because a capable and reliable interlocutor is not a requirement for Tel Aviv, he will remain imprisoned.



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The Future of Gaza

The two years of Israeli military operations in Gaza show that 84% of the urban fabric has been destroyed, over 90% of hospital infrastructure is non-functional, and 80% of the population are internally displaced. The 20-Point Agreement of Donald Trump, although characterized as problematic due to the lack of timelines and ambiguity for the involved parties regarding the implementation of the articles, still represents a potential opening for peace.

The first phase is completed with the delivery of all the bodies of the dead hostages that is pending, and in the next phase things become difficult. The assumption of power by the technocratic government that has been agreed upon is correlated with the deployment of a foreign military force that will oversee the disarmament of Hamas.

Hamas has already rejected its disarmament provided that Palestinian self-determination does not constitute part of the Trump plan. Another issue is the deployment of foreign forces as, beyond Turkey—which is not acceptable by Israel—there are so far no other countries that declare themselves willing. Hamas, although it knows that for this time will be required, aims for its regrouping and estimates that the presence of Turkey in Gaza would serve its purpose.

Israel has withdrawn from 50% of the territories of Gaza and in the area where it maintains its forces are found a few thousand Palestinians who had conflict with Hamas, or cooperated with Israel. The Trump plan for the reconstruction of Gaza (skyscrapers, shopping centers, luxury residences) concerns the piece that is located east of the yellow line—that is, the piece where the IDF forces are located today and borders with Israel.

Israel does not view it favorably. It remains unclarified if the residents will be able to return there, what checkpoints will exist, and who will control [them]. Although today Netanyahu influences Trump's decisions very little, he understands that Gaza does not constitute a priority for the American president as he throws his weight into Ukraine, and after December 15, it is estimated that he will turn also to Venezuela, at which point there will be a period of inactivity on the issue of the implementation of the Agreement for Gaza.



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Internal issues in Israel

Internally, voices calling for the expansion of Israel here and now have intensified. In October, the Knesset passed a resolution for the annexation of the West Bank, while the uncontrolled actions and attacks by settlers in the occupied territories in Hebron, Bethlehem, the outskirts of Ramallah, and Jenin are troubling the residents of these areas, who are left to face the situation alone and amid widespread international indifference.

On the other hand, Netanyahu has to deal with increasing criticism from society demanding an independent investigation into the fiasco of October 7th. The army's initial investigation revealed the responsibilities of IDF officers, who were discharged. However, the families of the victims want a full investigation and accountability at the political level as well. Netanyahu is trying to avoid this; he wants the investigation to conclude with the army's responsibilities and not to proceed to the level of political handling. At the same time, he faces pressure to hold elections. His confrontation with the ultra-Orthodox and the draft law for their conscription has also become a thorny issue.

A separate issue that has become a point of contention between the Israeli prime minister and the IDF leadership is the possible continuation of the wars, a scenario opposed by the military leadership. On the one hand, the exhaustion of financial resources (they have already transferred funds twice from other budget codes to cover the costs), as well as the physical exhaustion of professional and reserve soldiers (some have served 250 days without leave), lead to a veto by the IDF heads.

Possibility of a new war with Lebanon

Despite the fact that a year has passed since the ceasefire agreement with Lebanon, Israel has never stopped operating. More than 400 people have lost their lives in attacks in southern Lebanon and Beirut during this period. The majority of these were members of Hezbollah and Hamas; however, there are reports of civilians as well, whom the Israeli government wants to keep away from their strongholds in the south of the country. There is a sense in Tel Aviv is that Hezbollah is trying to return to the field, even though operationally it is weakened. The return is related to the claim of control over the territories in the south and the gradual recovery of its role in the country's political affairs.

This is reportedly emerging from Israeli and American sources within Lebanon, and Donald Trump had informally shown understanding for the attacks carried out by the Israeli air force and artillery. According to leaks in the Israeli press, the possibility of renewed action in Lebanon is being considered, but military analysts believe that the leak may be a warning so that the Beirut government will definitively remove Hezbollah from the picture. In any case, a new round of operations would be limited to remote attacks and not ground forces.

Iran

The twelve-day war with Iran proved how vulnerable Israel is without U.S. support. Even with the full deployment of American forces, Israeli cities experienced real war for the first time. The air defense proved inadequate, and only thanks to the early warning system were the casualties limited.

Iran emerged heavily wounded from its confrontation with Tel Aviv on many levels. Regardless of whether its nuclear program was destroyed or not, it suffered a massive blow, and its military infrastructure was devastated. It also saw its country's security and intelligence mechanisms turned into a sieve by the Mossad, while its infrastructure and financing mechanisms, as well as support for states and armed groups friendly to Tehran, were struck beyond its borders.

Beyond the military losses, Iran sees, as a result of Israel's coordinated action, a political challenge to the regime that, for now, is not alarming, but the characteristics it could take are causing concern. In any case, today Iran is experiencing absolute isolation, as even countries like China and Russia kept their distance when it sought support. However, this does not mean they will not try to take advantage of the situation it has found itself in.

Συρία

The Syria chapter and the fall of Bashar al-Assad were a simultaneous blow to Iran and Russia, and the next day, as it unfolded, highlighted Ankara as a capable power to impose figures and situations.

Turkey appears upgraded in the wider region. From Yemen or Somalia and from Libya to Syria, its diplomatic and military presence has borne fruit. Its support for Sarraj (Al-Jolani) to bring him to power in Damascus was underestimated by Moscow and Tehran but not by Tel Aviv, which was monitoring it and had already established a communication channel with a more pragmatic jihadist figure.

The U.S. also recognized the opportunity to wean Syria away from the Russo-Iranian axis, and in May, the first Trump-Sarraj meeting took place in Riyadh. The next step was the lifting of sanctions that had been imposed and the announcement by the American president of U.S. involvement in the reconstruction and reactivation of the country's oil fields.

For his part, Netanyahu declared his presence in Syria's next day from the

outset. He expanded the IDF's presence south of the occupied Golan Heights, and when armed confrontation broke out between Sunni Bedouins and Druze in the Suweyda province and Sarraj sent the army to restore calm, Netanyahu declared that he would not allow the army to deploy south of Damascus, directly challenging Syria's sovereign rights.

Last week, the Israeli Prime Minister visited the occupied territories in Syria, sending a message to all involved parties and to Sarraj that Israel sees the rapprochement with Damascus.

Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the USA

Israel and Turkey are unquestionably the two winners of the crises in the Middle East over the past two years. However, Netanyahu repeatedly made the same mistake. He "sold" Trump publicly, and the American president holds it against him.

The turning point in the Trump-Netanyahu relationship was the strike on the residential and office complex of Hamas's representation in Qatar. It was the red line that caused the rift in their relationship—time will tell for how long and at what cost.

Trump's reception of Mohammad bin Salman at the White House was a message to "friend Bibi," as the planet's leader calls Netanyahu. We knew that the F-35s were on the menu of discussions between the two men, but Trump's announcement after the first handshake—that he would give the F-35s to Saudi Arabia, even before Salman brought it up—was the second slap in Bibi's face...

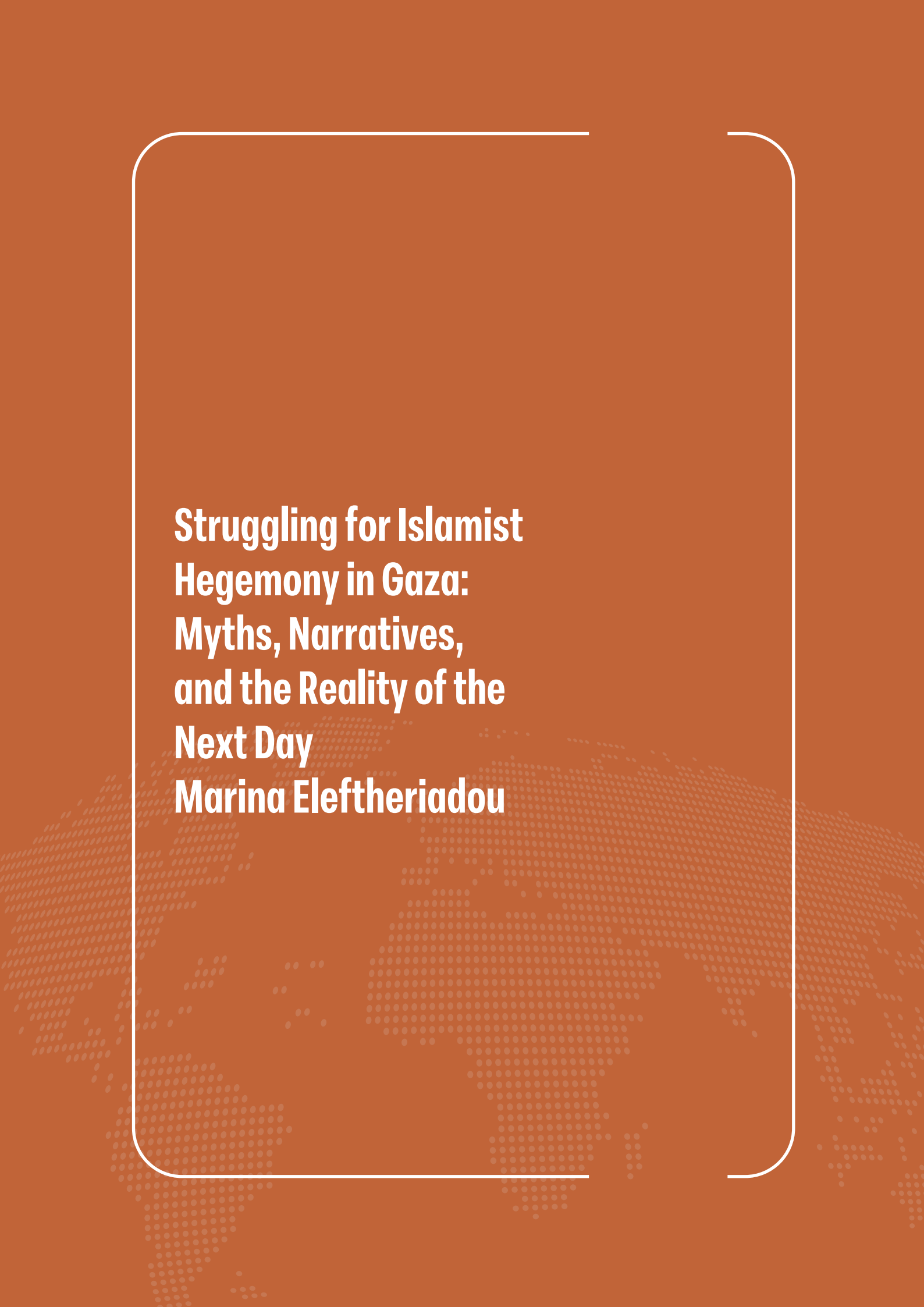
Never, not even under the Democrats or even under Jimmy Carter, had Israel been treated with such blunt dismissals. Instead of pressures for normalization of relations with Tel Aviv in exchange for the commitment to sell the F-35s, Israel heard Salman declare that examples of goodwill toward the two-state solution would be needed for relations with Riyadh to normalize. Of course, Trump is unpredictable, moody, and his actions are characterized by ambiguity depending on his mood, the hour, and the day. At the end of the day, there is one element that always constitutes his basic parameter in interpreting things: the

business plan, deals... And according to an Israeli colleague, Trump reportedly confided to an Israeli diplomat that "Bibi is harming our interests. Support for Israel cannot be a blank check"...

The situation in the Middle East following October 7th has never been so complex and fluid in a broader field that is being shaped by correlations and balances not only at a regional but also at an international level. The aftermath of the wars that have been fought in the region so far may show greater dynamism for some of the involved parties; however, the people of the Middle East know more than anyone else that unpredictability and upheavals are the dominant and only enduring elements of the region.



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**Struggling for Islamist
Hegemony in Gaza:
Myths, Narratives,
and the Reality of the
Next Day**
Marina Eleftheriadou

Struggling for Islamist Hegemony in Gaza: Myths, Narratives, and the Reality of the Next Day

Marina Eleftheriadou

Marina Eleftheriadou is an Assistant Professor of International Relations and Contemporary International Politics in the Department of Political Science at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

The day after the October 7, 2023 attack, social media—especially X—was flooded with hashtags such as #HamasisISIS. A few days later, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, at a press conference, stated that « Hamas is ISIS, and... should be treated exactly the way ISIS was treated.»¹⁵ Since then, the equation of Hamas with jihadist organizations, as well as the comparison of the October 2023 attacks to September 11, 2001, have become a recurring theme in the statements of Israeli officials. However, beyond the obvious political expediency it serves, this comparison rests on a fundamental misunderstanding and oversimplification of diversity within political Islam.

Despite the use of Islamic rhetoric, Hamas is not a jihadist organization, nor does it share the globalized worldview of Salafi-jihadism. As evidenced by its founding texts and historical trajectory, it is primarily a national-Islamist movement that places Palestinian national liberation at the core of its agenda. This element radically differentiates it from organizations such as al-Qaeda and ISIS, whose ultimate goal is the establishment of a global caliphate and the overthrow of the state-centric international system. Hamas, on the other hand, accepts the concept of Palestinian statehood and focuses on the mechanisms of occupation that prevent its realization. This does not mean that Palestine is absent from jihadist narratives, nor that Gaza has not been—and, most importantly, risks becoming in the future—a field of action for jihadist groups.

Palestine in the Jihadist Imagination and the Ambivalent Relationship with Hamas

A review of Al-Qaeda's texts, speeches, videos, and internal correspondence is enough to demonstrate the importance of Palestine in the jihadist narrative. Thomas Hegghammer's study of the organization's texts from 1990–2002, identifies 158 references¹⁶, while the occupation of Jerusalem is included among the reasons al-Qaeda listed in its declaration of jihad against the USA (1998), ranking third after the American military presence in Saudi Arabia and the sanctions against Iraq¹⁷. A similar picture emerges from the internal correspondence found in bin Laden's hideout in Abbottabad, where systematic instructions for strengthening references to Palestine in the organization's propaganda are recorded¹⁸.

The centrality of Palestine in the global jihadist narrative, however, does not translate into direct jihadist involvement on the ground but is limited to its symbolic and propagandistic value. Palestine, therefore, functions as a «mobilizing tool» thanks to the religious significance of Jerusalem and the emotional resonance of the Palestinian issue in the Muslim world, which makes it ideal for constructing a narrative of a global attack against Muslims. Moreover, despite the notable presence of Palestinians among jihadist ideologues (e.g., Abdullah Azzam, Abu Qatada al-Filistini, and Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi), the number of Palestinians in jihadist ranks is not high compared to the Palestinian population and certainly is lower than Egyptians and Saudis. In any case, jihadist ideologues place much greater emphasis on doctrinal purity and «correct» Islamic governance, as evidenced by the harsh criticism they have leveled at Hamas. As Hegghammer and Wagemakers characteristically note, referring to al-Maqdisi, « he prefers to leave Palestine occupied by Israel than to have the PLO, Ḥamās, or any other non-Salafis rule it.»¹⁹

Jihadists have always viewed Hamas with suspicion, as it originated from the ranks of the Muslim Brotherhood, with whom they shared deep doctrinal and ideological-political differences. Nevertheless, during the Second Intifada (2000–2005), they often expressed their support, with a characteristic example being bin Laden, who declared in 2001 that «our fight does not differ from the fight of our brothers in Palestine such as Hamas. We fight ... to relieve the oppression of the downtrodden in Palestine and elsewhere.»²⁰ Hamas's participation in the 2006 Palestinian elections was a turning point. Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri accused Hamas of participating in what they called «polytheistic councils,» emphasizing that the acceptance of democratic institutions amount to accepting «another religion,» incompatible with Islamic law. The criticism escalated in 2007, after the signing of the Mecca Agreement and the acceptance, on the one hand, of coexistence with Fatah and, on the other, of the agreements signed by the PLO, which signaled indirect recognition of Israel²¹. Even harsher was the stance of ISIS, which not only rejects Hamas but treats it as an apostate from Islam. In addition to al-Qaeda's usual accusations—which, apart from participation in elections, includes Hamas's inability/unwillingness to impose Sharia in Gaza—ISIS also adds Hamas's cooperation with the Shiite «apostates» (rafidha), that is Iran and Hezbollah, highlighting the group's strong anti-Shiism.²²

The confrontation is not limited to the ideological field. Hamas has repeatedly violently suppressed Salafist-jihadist groups that have emerged from time to time in Gaza. Although the presence of peaceful Salafists dates back to the 1970s²³, jihadist groups made their appearance in the second half of the 2000s, mainly exploiting the chaos created by the conflict between Fatah and Hamas for control of the Strip (2006–7). Groups such as Jaysh al-Islam, Jund

Ansar Allah, and Jaysh al-Ummah initially participated in actions against Israel, launching rockets or taking part in the abduction of the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit and Western journalists. Other groups, such as Suyuf al-Haq and Jaljalat, focused on «enforcing Sharia», attacking internet cafes, video clubs, and anything considered «anti-Islamic.»²⁴ Once Hamas managed to consolidate control in Gaza, it moved against these groups, also alarmed by what transpired in the summer of 2007 with the jihadist group Fatah al-Islam in the Palestinian refugee camp Nahr al-Bared in Lebanon.

The rise of ISIS gave new momentum to the jihadists, who, taking advantage of the power vacuum in Sinai after the Arab uprising in Egypt, attempted to regroup. Older groups were reactivated (Jaysh al-Islam), and new ones, such as the Sheikh Omar Hadid Brigade, emerged and, from 2014, operated under the umbrella of the «Islamic State—Sinai Province.» However, they failed to establish themselves in Gaza due to the suppression launched by Hamas, resulting in the epicenter of their activity remaining in Sinai until Egyptian authorities crashed them.

The October 7 Attacks and the Gaza War

The «Al-Aqsa Flood,» as the October 2023 attacks were named, and the subsequent Gaza war inevitably reignited the interest of the global jihadist movement. Al-Qaeda almost immediately rushed to appropriate the October 7 attack, presenting it as part of the broader conflict against «Crusaders-Zionists.» On October 13, it issued a statement in which it described the attack as the «gem in the battles of Islam in the modern history of our Ummah» and called on Muslims worldwide to carry out attacks against American and Israeli targets in the region. Similar statements followed from al-Qaeda affiliates, such as Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wa-l Muslimeen (JNIM), al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and Hurras al-Din²⁵. Meanwhile, Saif al-Adl, the unofficial leader of al-Qaeda after al-Zawahiri's death, published a series of articles in which he described the events in Gaza as the «final nail in the coffin of the colonialist, Crusader-Zionist West,» attempting to link the local conflict with the global jihadist agenda.²⁶ In its statements, al-Qaeda remained faithful to the distinction between Hamas's military (al-Qassam Brigades) and political wings, praising the former and avoiding any reference to the latter.²⁷ However, from time to time, it issued condolence messages for the assassination of high-ranking Hamas officials, including its former political leader Ismail Haniyeh.²⁸

ISIS, on the other hand, was more cautious. It took almost two weeks to officially comment on the events, and in its first reference published in al-Naba, it avoided any mention of Hamas. While it made generalized calls for attacks against Jews worldwide, it noted the dangers of focusing exclusively on the Palestinian front.²⁹ Similar uneasiness, doctrinal rigidity, and entrenched hostility toward Hamas can be observed in the broader jihadist movement,

with a characteristic example being al-Maqdisi, who, after a hesitant and half-hearted support in the early period, subsequently engaged in relentless criticism of Hamas and al-Qaeda's new milder stance.³⁰

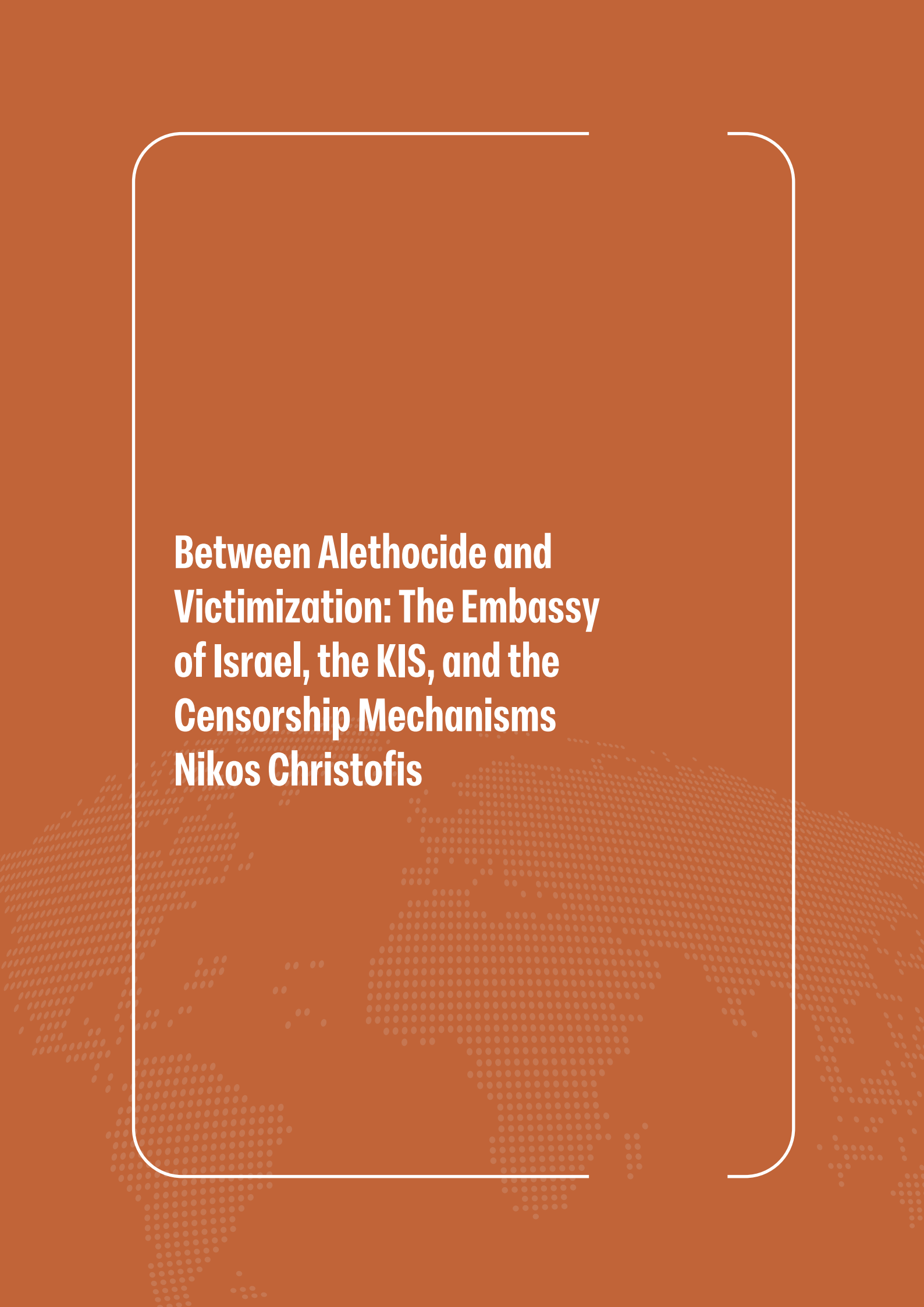
In any case, despite their rhetoric, jihadist organizations were limited in their capacity for direct involvement in Gaza. Unlike Afghanistan, Iraq, or Syria, where jihadists could enter relatively easily and establish local alliances, the blockade of Gaza by Israel and Egypt, the lack of local networks, and active suppression by Hamas make it impossible for fighters to enter. Additionally, the relative weakening of al-Qaeda and ISIS and their simultaneous focus on local conflicts, for example in West Africa, limited their ability to plan attacks outside Gaza. The small number, low complexity, and unclear operational connection and guidance of the attacks carried out in the name of Gaza since 2023 are proof of this weakness.

The Uncertain and Ominous Future of Jihadism in Gaza

Jihadism in Gaza, therefore, is linked to Hamas, but in the opposite way to how it is often portrayed. Hamas has often acted as a bulwark against the local development of jihadist cells. The real danger for Gaza's future lies, therefore, in the potential collapse of Hamas and the complete dissolution of Gaza's governance institutions. The experience of the 2005–2009 period is highly indicative. After Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 and the Hamas–Fatah clashes, a power vacuum emerged, allowing the rise of jihadist groups. In fact, these groups were partly staffed by disillusioned members of Fatah and Hamas, while some of them were organized around powerful tribes and criminal networks. A characteristic example is Jaysh al-Islam, which is linked to the Dughmush tribe, which, among other things, developed significant involvement in arms smuggling.³¹ The recent emergence of tribal militias in Gaza, including the Dughmush tribe, and their open support by Israel in their conflict with Hamas³² raise concerns not only of Gaza turning into a field of chaos and lawlessness but also of the exploitation of the situation by jihadist groups. If anything, the experience of Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and dozens of other countries has taught us that jihadism thrives under these conditions, where it reinvents itself in increasingly more extreme forms.



© Palestinians in the ruins of the Aklouk Tower destroyed in Israeli airstrikes on Gaza City on October 8, 2023.



**Between Alethocide and
Victimization: The Embassy
of Israel, the KIS, and the
Censorship Mechanisms
Nikos Christofis**

Between Alethocide and Victimization: The Embassy of Israel, the KIS, and the Censorship Mechanisms ³³

Nikos Christofis

Nikos Christofis is an Assistant Professor of International Cultural Relations at the University of Thessaly.

The genocide ³⁴ carried out by the state of Israel since October 2023, following Hamas's attack on October 7, 2023, has brought to the forefront the competing discourses and practices mobilized to shape historical truth and collective reality ³⁵. Indeed, alongside the military conflict on the ground, an equally intense conflict has unfolded at a level of narratives—a confrontation that, according to Ilan Pappé, could be characterized as a «clash between the pretext and the context.» ³⁶

In other words, beyond the specific or broader geopolitical dimensions of the war, the ideological-political dimension of the confrontation—with particular emphasis on the instrumentalization and weaponization of narratives about victimization, identity, and the legitimization of violence—plays a decisive role. In this context, the case of Greece, especially through the Embassy of Israel and the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KIS), serves as a characteristic example of the battle of narratives and the struggle for hegemony in the public sphere. It is important to emphasize from the outset that the Embassy of Israel and KIS are separate entities with different roles and should not be conflated or confused. While the Embassy of the State of Israel represents the State of Israel at the political, consular, and diplomatic levels, KIS is a Legal Entity of Public Law, meaning it is a state organization under the Greek Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs, and Sports, expressing the issues and positions of Greek Jewry and dealing with matters of culture, memory, religion, and combating antisemitism. In this text, however, and considering the documented convergence of views, the coherence of their rhetoric, and their homogeneous approach to the current situation since October 2023, we will examine them as a unified, functionally interconnected «discourse» that operates with a clearly defined and shared purpose.

The current Greek government now ranks among Israel's warmest supporters. Within this pro-Israel framework, it is particularly noteworthy that prominent

roles are played by individuals who have previously been associated—at least in public discourse and dialogue—with far-right or even antisemitic positions, such as the Minister of Health and Vice President of New Democracy, Adonis Georgiadis. This dynamic can be interpreted in connection with the nascent political strategy of the European and Greek far-right, which reshapes its stance through a strongly Islamophobic lens. Georgiadis himself declared in May 2025 that:

«I am proud that Israel is an ally of Greece. It is a state that I admire greatly and is by far Greece’s best international ally.»³⁷

Alethocide/Hasbarah as a Weapon

To frame the present analysis, I utilize Marc Owen Jones’s concept of «alethocide», meaning the deliberate destruction or extermination of truth³⁸. If truth is the first casualty of war, then disinformation is the «bullet» that kills it. As Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan point out, disinformation constitutes the deliberate spread of false or misleading information with the intent to cause harm, and thus functions as a weapon in the field of ideological and communicative confrontation.³⁹

Since the beginning of Israel’s military operations on Gaza in October 2023, a parallel and shadow war has unfolded in the realm of information—a war that targets reality itself and seeks to shape, manipulate, or even erase it.

Alethocide is not merely a clash of interpretations; it is a struggle over truth, voice, and recognition, the outcome of which will determine both the contemporary understanding of events and their historical imprint after October 7. However, simply describing it as a «war against reality» risks underestimating the scale and systematic nature of the lies produced and circulated.

The information war is not a new phenomenon.⁴⁰ In the Israeli context, the concept of hasbarah («explanation») describes the state of Israel’s public diplomacy communication practices, which aim to promote its political and strategic positions to the international public. These practices include the systematic use of both traditional and social media, cultural diplomacy programs, and a range of other communication strategies designed to shape public opinion and defend Israel’s image against what are perceived as negative or hostile representations.⁴¹ Some scholars have noted that hasbarah is linked to broader processes of information and meaning management, which can, under

specific conditions, be understood through Jones's concept of «alethocide»—the systematic undermining of truth for the benefit of a particular political narrative.

Indeed, for decades, violence against the Palestinian people has occurred not only on the ground but also at the level of discourse, through Israeli and Western pro-Israel journalistic narratives. These narratives tend to disconnect events from their historical and political context, thereby reproducing Israel's propagandistic frameworks. In this context, Palestinians are consistently portrayed either as aggressors or as a people without legitimate rights, in contrast to Israel's «undisputed» right to self-defense. Such representations shape public opinion in a way that leads to the gradual normalization—or even acceptance—of extreme acts of violence, such as ethnic cleansing or genocide. At the same time, they contribute to the perpetuation of an institutionalized colonial framework in the West, which, through coercive practices or more subtle disciplinary mechanisms, systematically deprives non-Western subjects of political and moral agency, ultimately leading to their dehumanization.

Since October 2023, the government and its mechanisms have made silencing and censorship central components of their communication strategy. Indicative is the demand for sanctions against Francesca Albanese, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories, due to her public statements.⁴² The unprecedented scale of Israel's asymmetric response since October 2023 has been accompanied by a corresponding escalation of alethocide, which functions as a critical tool for political legitimization. As one researcher notes, «disinformation becomes necessary when it is no longer possible to present events truthfully without acknowledging violations of universally accepted ethical principles or even international law.»⁴³

In this light, the term «disinformation» may function as a euphemism—a mild way to describe a much harsher reality. The term «weaponized lie» better captures the systematic deception of the public aimed at promoting or legitimizing political choices that would otherwise face widespread social rejection—choices such as maintaining an apartheid regime or the genocidal extermination of a people. In other words, when unethical and indefensible positions cannot be justified, lies are mobilized as a mechanism for the survival of the narrative.

The current crisis of representation has reshaped even language itself. New concepts have entered public discourse to describe aspects of violence that were previously inadequately captured. The term *domicide* describes the deliberate

destruction of homes and infrastructure renders entire areas uninhabitable.⁴⁴ Similarly, the concept of epistemicide refers to the eradication of knowledge systems through the destruction of universities, archives, and cultural institutions, undermining a people's ability to preserve their memory, identity, and historical continuity.⁴⁵

Focusing exclusively on the cognitive violence of the current conflict overlooks the long history of attempts to dismantle Palestinian existence since the Nakba (Catastrophe) of 1948. These efforts extend far beyond the geographical boundaries of Palestine: they are also produced and reproduced within the discourses, power structures, and symbolic fields of Israel's Western allies, where Palestinian voices are often marginalized or delegitimized.

The Embassy of Israel and KIS

Since October 2023, when Israeli military operations began, any form of criticism against the State of Israel tends to be stigmatized—both by KIS and the Embassy of Israel, as well as by their affiliated bodies—as antisemitism, a term that, under current conditions, risks losing its meaning and becoming an empty ideological label and reduced to an empty ideological construct. As historian Tasos Kostopoulos has noted, the Greek public debate around antisemitism increasingly reveals a troubling erosion of both the content and gravity of the term.⁴⁶

In recent public discourse, there has been a systematic attempt to stigmatize solidarity movements with the Palestinian people—even spontaneous protests against mass civilian casualties—as manifestations of antisemitism. At the same time, pro-Israel voices in Greece seek to portray such forms of protest as a threat of «the Greek society's return to dark times,»⁴⁷ implying that any condemnation of Israel's policies automatically translates into hostility toward Judaism as a whole.

These claims, published by KIS and reposted through news articles since the early weeks of the conflict, intensified after protesters disrupted an event organized by the Embassy of Israel at the Thessaloniki International Book Fair (TIBF) on May 10, 2024, which was allegedly «prevented by force.» However, the phrase «by force»—according to the statement by publishing houses titled «Literature Does Not Whitewash Genocide»—is nothing but another distortion of truth: this claim is refuted both by the fact that other presentations by Israeli authors took place and by eyewitnesses who attended the fair.⁴⁸

The British-Israeli writer, screenwriter, and actress Hadar Galron, in reference to another event in Edinburgh—republished on the KIS website—described this trend as a «redefinition of antisemitism as justice,» noting that «ancient hatred is presented as human rights activism.»⁴⁹ In this way, she expressed a perspective that echoes Huntington’s «clash of civilizations» thesis, where Arab hostility toward «Western liberal democracies and values» is interpreted as timeless and culturally predetermined.

The discussion—which was characterized by Israel and its allies in Greece as «antisemitic» rather than merely «anti-Israeli»—initially peaked in the academic sphere and subsequently in online and print media⁵⁰ when historian Anna Maria Droumpouki, through a post on her personal Facebook account, promoted a call for papers on the topic of contemporary antisemitism in Greece, which is expected to focus «particularly on its modern resurgence in Greece and internationally after October 7.»⁵¹ Additionally, Ms. Droumpouki, as the editor of the proposed publication—which was also promoted on the KIS website, creating the impression of some form of involvement —posted on her personal Facebook account on June 15, 2025, that «my collaboration with a Greek university was abruptly terminated by a professor with whom I was cooperating for teaching and my overall academic presence in the department» due to this specific case.

⁵²

Within this context, Ms. Droumpouki implied that the termination of her collaboration with the specific professor was due to his «antisemitic stance,» which, according to her, functioned as a form of censorship against her. In the Greek reality, such accusations could lead to administrative—and potentially criminal—consequences, effectively legitimizing state repressive intervention in the name of combating hate speech. Her observation on July 18 on her personal account that «the academic community has not only failed to marginalize Giorgos Margaritis for his unacceptable behavior over the years but continues to offer him a public platform in scientific collective volumes, such as one recently published,» referring to the historian whose post sparked the relevant discussion without naming Ms. Droumpouki, is directly related to the previous analysis regarding the silencing of criticism. Of course, Ms. Droumpouki herself is not the focus of this analysis; however, we could say that her identification with the rhetoric of the State of Israel highlights how the apologist for the perpetrator disguises themselves as the victim, seeking to garner sympathy for themselves

and, by extension, for the perpetrator.

Beyond individual incidents, the broader—and more significant—issue concerns the political consequences of systematically equating solidarity with Palestinians with antisemitism. This is a strategy built on the instrumental use of antisemitism and the memory of the Holocaust⁵³, that is, an extremely traumatic historical legacy, in a way that presents the modern State of Israel as an eternal victim and political criticism against it as morally impermissible.

Simultaneously—as the Greek context also demonstrates—Israel and its supporters appear to exploit the argument of the «Islamic threat.» In the polarized international environment of recent decades, shaped by the terrorist attacks of September 11, the rise of violent jihadist organizations, and refugee flows from wars in the Middle East (which were largely created by the West itself), Islamophobia functions as a mechanism for delegitimizing Palestinian claims and their supporters. The demonization of Islam as a monolithic and «inherently» hostile entity to the West contributes to the creation of a political framework within which Israeli actions are presented as necessary and indisputable.

Within this climate, the impressive shift in the stance of bodies such as KIS toward politicians with a documented history of involvement in far-right or antisemitic rhetoric—such as Adonis Georgiadis, the Minister of Migration and Asylum Thanasis Plevris,⁵⁴ and Makis Voridis,⁵⁵ who has served as a minister in successive governments since 2011 and has historically been linked to far-right circles—can be observed. The revision of the stance toward these individuals by organizations traditionally seen as guardians of Holocaust memory raises legitimate questions about the priorities, alliances, and mechanisms of political expediency shaping today's public discourse.

Both in Greece and internationally, Muslim communities have often been constructed in public discourse as an «internal» and/or «external» threat to the Western way of life at the political, religious, and cultural levels. Some scholars have noted that Islamophobia in the 21st century functions, *mutatis mutandis*, as an ideological scheme analogous to 19th-century antisemitism: it presents a heterogeneous set of populations as a unified and inherently threatening category, constructing collective categories of guilt and exclusion.

The Hamas attacks in October 2023 further reinforced this framework of generalized suspicion. In the context of the political and communicative

confrontations that followed, dangerous simplifications and generalizations have been observed, such as equating all Palestinians with the perpetrators of the attack and presenting them as subjects who «deny Israel’s right to exist.» Such rhetorical schemes have been particularly recorded in the discourse of far-right supporters of Israel in Greece, reinforcing dynamics of targeting and delegitimizing an entire population.

KIS itself has historically exhibited a tendency toward public denunciations. As Yannis Androulidakis aptly observes, «[rather] than engaging in supporting a culture and a collective national consciousness, [KIS] is concerned with identifying or inventing its enemies and publicly denouncing them for their actions or writings. Something, we might say, akin to a “gendarmerie of Proper Thinking.»⁵⁶

This tendency became particularly evident in July 2025 when KIS demanded—and the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs «complied,» as revealed following a parliamentary question by New Left MP Sia Anagnostopoulou—the removal from a school textbook of a decades-old excerpt by journalist Petros Papakonstantinou concerning the Palestinian Intifada, on the grounds that it constituted «antisemitic incitement.» Such a form of censorship—unthinkable without Greece’s ever-increasing political and economic dependence on Israel—illustrates how accusations of antisemitism can be used to silent criticism of Israeli policies.

In September 2025, KIS issued a new statement condemning the «pervasive antisemitism» in Greece. Its rhetoric combines elements of distortion and self-victimization: KIS equates peaceful demonstrations, slogans such as «Death to the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF),» and even consumer boycotts with antisemitic pogroms.⁵⁷ However, the statement avoids direct comparisons with the Night of Broken Glass or Nazi expulsions of Jews; instead, it prefers references to the violence of Tsarist Russia as a point of reference.⁵⁸ Furthermore, while KIS—through continuous reposts—emphasizes the «starving hostages» of Hamas, it deliberately avoids mentioning the starvation of the Palestinian population, treating it as something normal or, worse, nonexistent.

As Holocaust survivor Benjamin Albala argued in an article in the Jerusalem Post, republished by KIS:

The conflict has become a convenient pretext for extremist circles in Greek society—especially those aligned with pro-Palestinian positions—to express hostility toward Israel. About 80% of this stance comes from progressive left-wing ideologies, with the Communist Party often leading the way. Their actions resemble what we might call «red fascism.» We are seeing an increase in demonstrations and blockades targeting Israelis and even the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF).

As Albala characteristically stated:

The events of October 7 can be considered a «mini-Holocaust,» and we must remain vigilant. People should be cautious about uncritically accepting left-wing ideologies that target Israel and the Jewish people.

⁵⁹

What is most striking is that KIS and its allies insist that even the mere discussion of the Israeli attack on Gaza as genocide constitutes an expression of antisemitism, as—according to them—it «profanes» the uniqueness of the Holocaust. This accusation has been directed not only against activists and researchers but also against the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, whom Israeli officials accused of «supporting Hamas» after his statements about the massacres of civilians. Clearly, the attempt to silence him is due to the fact that he did not fail to remind us that what is happening today has a historical continuity spanning more than half a century.

This rhetorical strategy is by no means unprecedented. Successive Israeli governments have equated criticism of Zionism or the interpretive framing of Palestinian resistance with antisemitism, thereby weaponizing the memory of the Holocaust to delegitimize dissent.⁶⁰ Indeed, scholars note that categorizing criticism of Israel as antisemitism constitutes a form of «weaponization of antisemitism,» a political maneuver of directed exploitation of the concept of antisemitism to silence criticism.

Through distortion and the «murder» of truth—or by applying a double standard, where what applies to Israel itself does not necessarily apply to others—Israeli governments attempt to control the flow of information and present Israel and its people as the perpetual, and perhaps unique, victims. While antisemitism was previously defined primarily as hostility toward the State of Israel, questioning the moral legitimacy of Zionism, or Holocaust denial, today even the attempt to historicize or contextualize violence upon Palestinians has become grounds for accusations of antisemitism.

In November 2023, for example, President Isaac Herzog declared during the March for Israel in Washington:

Eighty years ago, Jews emerged from Auschwitz and swore «never again.» ... Forty days ago, an army of terrorists invaded Israel and massacred hundreds of people in the largest mass killing since the Holocaust. Let us all shout together: Never again. «Never again» is now.

The assertion—that «the October 7 attack was presented... as equivalent to the Holocaust»—is indeed found in statements by Isaac Herzog. For example, in a «discussion on antisemitism,» he states that the attack is «a «wake-up call» for us» and links the ongoing threat against the Jewish people to the past of the Holocaust:

While our loved ones are held captive in Gaza and our soldiers fight for our beloved Israel, Jews around the world are being attacked simply because they are Jews. The hatred, the lies, the brutality, these shameful displays of ancient antisemitism are an affront to every civilized person and nation. ⁶¹

It did not take long for the Embassy of Israel, through its ambassador, to adopt similar rhetoric. During a Holocaust memorial ceremony in Volos in February 2025, Noam Katz argued that:

When we reflect on antisemitism, we must fight against the teaching of hatred that led the Nazis to their crimes against humanity. A similar antisemitic hatred led Hamas to commit the massacres of October 7 in Israel. This is the extremism we face and must all confront together. Never again. ⁶²

The most recent example involves the intense confrontation between the Israeli ambassador to Greece and the mayor of Athens, Haris Doukas, regarding the appearance of graffiti on buildings in the Greek capital. The ambassador publicly condemned this graffiti as antisemitic, arguing that it targets Israeli identity and causes «discomfort» to Israeli visitors to Athens. At the same time, he criticized municipal authorities—including the Municipality of Athens—for their alleged failure to address «organized» antisemitic incidents in public spaces.

This statement provoked a strong response from the mayor of Athens, who dismissed the embassy's concerns as an overemphasis on «marginal details,» ignoring—according to him—»the genocide being committed by Israel in Gaza.» Mr. Doukas emphatically noted: «We do not accept lessons in democracy from those who kill civilians and children waiting in lines for food.»

Such rhetoric—repeated by Israeli diplomats in Greece—deconstructs the historical distinctions between genocide, armed resistance, and civilian protest. It transforms the slogan «Never again» into a generalized signifier through which any criticism of Israel is equated with an existential antisemitic threat. «Never again» thus becomes a «memory shell»—a political tool through which states legitimize contemporary political agendas and monopolize the right to historical memory of suffering.

Epilogue

The convergence of alethocide—as systematic destruction or manipulation of truth—with victimized nationalism seeks to monitor public discourse and silence dissent. By equating any criticism of the State of Israel with antisemitism and weaponizing the memory of the Holocaust as a tool of moral exceptionalism, the Embassy of Israel, along with KIS, with the open support of the Greek government, not only obscures the historical complexity of the Palestinian issue but also contributes to the normalization of censorship—and self-censorship—and authoritarian practices in the Greek political and academic spheres.

The amalgamation of victimized nationalism with cognitive violence transforms the memory of past atrocities into an ideological shield for legitimizing contemporary state violence. In Greece, as elsewhere, where political figures with a documented far-right or even antisemitic past now present themselves as guardians of Israel's moral legitimacy, a dangerous realignment of political alliances and public narratives is underway. Islamophobia, accusations of

antisemitism, and invocations of «Western cultural values» collectively construct a narrative that delegitimizes solidarity with Palestine while simultaneously absolving and legitimizing the exercise of state power. In this way, the colonial dimension of the Palestinian issue is not only concealed but perpetuated.

Such rhetorical strategies transcend the boundaries of propaganda; they constitute a moral and political form of alethocide, through which history itself is rewritten to serve the demands of nationalism and geopolitical alliances. As the Greek case demonstrates, what is at stake is not solely Israel or Palestine; it concerns the erosion of the democratic public sphere, the criminalization of dissent, and the transformation of memory into a tool of social control and repression. Resistance to this process requires confronting both the lies that sustain the war and the nationalisms that feed on them, insisting on historical truth as the foundation of justice—and not as a weapon of political expediency.



**The Crack in the Western
Narrative: Why Support
for the Palestinian People
Is Becoming a Political
Necessity**
Kleoniki Alexopoulou

The Crack in the Western Narrative: Why Support for the Palestinian People Is Becoming a Political Necessity

Kleoniki Alexopoulou

Kleoniki Alexopoulou is a visiting professor of economic history at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and a member of the coordinating committee of the GSF. (The article was delivered on 30 November 2025 and it was not possible to include an analysis of current developments in the Middle East.)

The nighttime operation by the Israeli army in the northern West Bank, accompanied by the declaration that «we will not allow terrorism to take root,» was yet another act in a drama that has been escalating uncontrollably for two years. Despite the fragile ceasefire in Gaza, acts of violence in the occupied territories have not only failed to subside but have surged to record levels: over a thousand Palestinians have been killed in attacks by soldiers and settlers, while tens of thousands have been displaced in 2025 alone from refugee camps that have turned into battlegrounds. The figures from Human Rights Watch leave no room for misinterpretation.

Palestinians are experiencing the largest displacement since 1967, and daily life is sinking into a state of permanent emergency. In this environment, the official rhetoric of «counterterrorism» functions as a pretext—a legitimizing framework that covers the systematic targeting of civilians and the stripping of Palestinian society of any sense of protection. Meanwhile, the international community continues to display a silent tolerance that borders on complicity. Impunity, as organizations like B'Tselem point out, has become the most consistent political tool of the occupation: it not only allows the repetition of the same crimes but also tears apart the global moral fabric that once defined the boundaries of the permissible.

However, amid this dark and devastating reality, a shift is underway: for the first time in decades, large segments of Western public opinion are openly questioning the dominant narrative and turning toward a more critical, human-centered understanding of the Palestinian issue. Mass anti-war mobilizations, university occupations, and polls recording historically low levels of support for Israel in the U.S., the U.K., and Europe show that the foundations of Western foreign policy have finally begun to shift.

«When the World Sleeps»

It is precisely in this context that Francesca Albanese's new book, *When the World Sleeps: Stories, Words, and Wounds of Palestine*, intervenes. With her direct experience as a UN Special Rapporteur and the theoretical clarity of a legal scholar who understands the historical structures of colonialism, Albanese does not merely describe the current conditions; she situates them in a broader continuum in which Gaza and the West Bank serve as mirrors of global hypocrisy and as catalysts for the formation of a new global vision of justice. Her voice resonates in a world where more and more citizens refuse to accept the state of exception as «inevitable» and seek a new moral-political framework that recognizes Palestinian lives as worth protecting.

Francesca Albanese's book *When the World Sleeps* is not just a record of humanitarian crises. It is a crucial political analysis and a call to international institutions, governments, and citizens to redefine their moral priorities in the face of a people living under constant violence and exclusion. Albanese combines legal documentation, testimonies from field research, and analysis of political strategies to highlight that indifference is not a neutral choice—it is part of the system that allows injustice to continue.

Albanese's argumentation is grounded in a rich legal framework that includes the Geneva Conventions, the Convention Against Apartheid, and recent jurisprudence from the International Court of Justice. Israeli policy is not merely a political issue but a matter of violating fundamental rules that govern the international order. And impunity is not an «accident» of the system but a stable mechanism that enables it to function. Howard Zinn argued that «you cannot be neutral on a moving train.» In conditions where institutional violence is asymmetric and systematic, inaction ceases to be neutrality and becomes complicity. Zinn, along with Hannah Arendt's critique of the «administrative normality» of injustice, remind us that the law can function as a cover for injustice rather than a bulwark against it.

After decades of blockade and war, Gaza remains a stark example of humanitarian crime that international mechanisms and governments struggle—or lack the will—to address effectively. Citizens of Western societies watch images of destruction that they cannot ignore, and polls confirm that this sentiment is translating into political consciousness. Recent YouGov surveys record feelings of «favorability» toward Israel at historic lows in the U.K., France, Germany,

Denmark, Italy, and Spain, while sympathy for the Palestinians is increasing. Similarly, Pew Research Center surveys show that 59% of American citizens now have a negative view of the Israeli government.

This shift is not superficial; it is deep and politically significant. It embodies a new understanding that the security of one state cannot justify ignoring the human rights of other populations. Citizens now recognize that Gaza is not just a battlefield but a place where policies of exploitation, infrastructure destruction, and systematic violence are applied, resulting in an ongoing humanitarian crisis. Albanese reminds us that acknowledging this reality is a prerequisite for any solution that could be considered sustainable and just.

However, polls also reveal the extent of social divisions. In the U.S., Democrats and younger age groups are clearly shifting toward support for Palestinians, while segments of the conservative electorate remain steadfast in their support for Israel, citing security and counterterrorism reasons (Pew, 2025). Nevertheless, the overall trend shows that even in the most polarized societies, moral sensitivity transcends narrow strategic logic and shapes a field of political pressure.



© Cover of Francesca Albanese's book. The cover artwork is by Palestinian painter Malak Mattar.

The Information Crisis — Why Solidarity Requires Knowledge

Through her book, Albanese demonstrates the importance of knowledge and public information. Access to reliable sources, documentation of violations, testimonies, and international journalism serve as tools that transform sympathy and compassion into action. The updating of this information, combined with the shift in public opinion, forms the basis for a new political dynamic: public opinion is no longer a passive observer but a lever for change.

Albanese emphasizes that reconstruction, ensuring the self-determination of the Palestinian people, and recognizing their right to statehood are not merely moral issues. They are fundamental components of a sustainable and practically implementable political solution. The international community, and especially the West, has the ability to implement policies that go beyond crisis management to the restoration of rights. Public opinion polls and pro-Palestinian social movements highlight that there is room for such a shift: collective consciousness can drive policy change.

The role of the media is also critical. Research on the impact of algorithms on news searches has shown that access to information is shaped by geographical and cultural factors (Digital Gatekeeping, Arxiv, 2025). This means that the global image of Gaza can be biased or fragmented, resulting in public consciousness being shaped selectively, often through fragmented data. Albanese insists that a proper understanding of reality requires polyphony, source verification, and analytical approaches—processes that contribute to the maturation of international political thought.

Studies such as Herman and Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent* already anticipated, back in the 1980s, the selective construction of consensus around geopolitical issues, while more recent interventions, such as Lindsey Hilsum's speech on the importance of the «Digital Witness» or analyses of «algorithmic filtering,» explain how digital media overturn information control and give space to narratives that were previously marginalized. Visual documentation by citizen-journalists, networks of independent correspondents, and digital international communities have played a decisive role in shaping a new ethical perception that challenges the official Western narrative.

From a theoretical perspective, sociologists and political analysts note that polling

trends often foreshadow institutional changes. Even neorealist international relations scholars argue that moral crises and shifts in public opinion can lead to a strategic reassessment of national policies, even if the pressure comes from civil society rather than state mechanisms. In the case of Palestine, Albanese directly links democratic pressure to the need to secure international justice. And Omar Barghouti, co-founder of the BDS initiative, describes how collective action can transform political reality through nonviolent means.

Solidarity Movements – When Citizens Become Protagonists

Solidarity movements from unions and labor associations in the ports of Genoa and Piraeus, educational initiatives, and international campaigns have already achieved tangible results: pressure for the suspension of arms exports, increased humanitarian aid, and the formation of internal pressure on governments to comply with international rules. Initiatives like the Global Sumud Flotilla freedom flotilla have proven that political and activist action can complement international journalism as well as consumer practices like boycotts, even if the practical impact in delivering aid are limited.

The message is clear: the international community cannot remain passive in the face of an illegal naval blockade and a people living under colonial occupation, an imposed famine regime, and a permanent state of emergency, under what can be described in biopolitical terms. Agamben's concept of «bare life»—human existence stripped of legal protection—accurately describes the conditions under which millions of Palestinians live without guarantees, rights, or access to justice mechanisms. At the same time, Foucault's concept of biopolitics illuminates how the control of a population—its movement and circulation, access to medical care, and even the infrastructure and natural resources themselves—functions as a tool of power. Albanese indirectly draws on this theoretical tradition to demonstrate that oppression is neither random nor fragmented; its goal is the regulation of life itself.

In practice, the awakening described by Albanese translates into specific political consequences: pressures to limit military presence, demands for transparency in armaments, the establishment of accountability mechanisms, and international calls for the recognition of Palestine at national and international levels. No peace agreement at the diplomatic level will be sustainable unless it is based on social justice practices.

Albanese's book functions simultaneously as a moral and political compass: it

reminds us that injustice is not merely the result of local or regional conflicts but the product of global, systemic strategies and political choices. The international community has the opportunity to activate the awakening recorded in the polls, turning it into political action and substantive change. The success of this process also depends on the operational capacity of citizens to shape and participate in organized collectives that demand governments and international organizations apply international law.

This awakening is not accidental. It comes after decades of blockade and human rights violations that, for a long time, were silenced or justified as strategic necessity. For example, in the cases of Greece and Cyprus, Israel is considered a strategic ally by all political forces that have governed over the past three decades. Albanese's work reminds us that the world's silence facilitates the perpetuation of injustice. At the same time, public opinion polls in the West show that people there are also beginning to recognize injustice and demand solutions: the sense of compassion is transforming into pressure on governments, and awakening into a change of strategy.

In conclusion, Albanese does not limit herself to theory: the practical application of her ideas comes through citizen movements, organized solidarity campaigns, demands for international accountability mechanisms, and public expression of opinion. The shift in Western public opinion, as recorded by polling tools and institutional bodies, forms the foundation for this change. The Palestinian people are not demanding gratitude and praise but rights, recognition, political participation, and security. The world's awakening—the moment when the world stops «sleeping»—is the opportunity to shape a new ethical and political order in which justice is not a secondary condition but a prerequisite and guarantor of peace.



© Photo from the Global Sumud Flotilla mission with ships heading to Gaza.



**Gaza on Fire:
Filming a living Hell
Konstantinos Kaimakis**

Gaza on Fire: Filming a living Hell

Konstantinos Kaimakis

Konstantinos Kaimakis is a film critic.

Perhaps there is no more long-suffering region on the entire planet in recent decades. Cinema has captured the drama of the Palestinian population living in Gaza in many different ways.

The terrifying transformation of a Mediterranean paradise into an earthly hell has mobilized many directors from around the world. Most have chosen to document reality in a highly illustrative manner—documentary films dominate—quite a few directors focused on both moral and physical perpetrators of a longstanding crime. The well-known figures, that is, who, while presenting themselves as victims and... peacemakers, in reality, are planning a final phase of destruction and dreaming of establishing their own «Riviera» on the ruins and graves of Gaza.

Fraternal Cries of Protest

In 2020, the film *Gaza mon amour*, by Nasser Brothers, Tarzan and Arab (pseudonyms of the twins Mohamed and Ahmed Abu), was released in cinemas. A romantic story between a 65-year-old fisherman and a seamstress in Gaza. The anxious man tries to figure out how to confess his feelings to her when an ancient statue of the god Apollo is caught in his nets, causing unexpected trouble, as Hamas desperately is eager to acquire the valuable treasure. The bittersweet humanity and romance strike at the heart of the Middle Eastern society and sharply criticize the stereotypes, oppression, and conservatism that affect both communities, revealing that Palestinians and Israelis have more in common than they imagine. The restrained approach of the two Gaza-born directors is welcome as it presents the harsh experience of daily life in the Palestinian territories (the struggle for survival at the forefront) as well as the right to a dignified life. Five years later, in May 2025, the brothers return to the scene of the crime, and their film *Once Upon a Time in Gaza* participates in the «Un Certain Regard» section, managing to steal the show. The film is a clever political comedy that focuses on the time when Hamas began to gain power, causing headaches for Israel's leaders. With a style reminiscent of an intellectual Tarantino (vitriolic humor combined with a political eye), *Once Upon a Time* is set in 2007 when Hamas's appeal in Gaza peaked, leading to the first reprisals from Israel. There was quite a stir at the festival during the film's screening, as the leveling of the long-suffering area by Israel was being covered daily by global television networks at that time.

No Other Crime Like This

The most famous film about the crime in Gaza (even winning the Oscar for Best Documentary) was *No Other Land*, directed by Basel Adra, Hamdan Ballal, Yuval Abraham and Rachel Szor. The day after the Oscar ceremony, more than a hundred filmmakers in Israel issued a statement expressing their unwavering support for the award-winning film, which is an Israeli-Palestinian co-production. The artists' response to the action of Israel's Minister of Culture and Sports, Miki Zohar, who urged cultural institutions to boycott the film's screening because it constitutes a «sad moment in the history of cinema that defames Israel on the world stage.» The documentary documents Israeli demolitions in the Palestinian community of Masafer Yatta in the West Bank. There, a young Palestinian activist, in collaboration with an Israeli journalist, struggles against the destruction of the village and the displacement of its residents by the Israeli army.

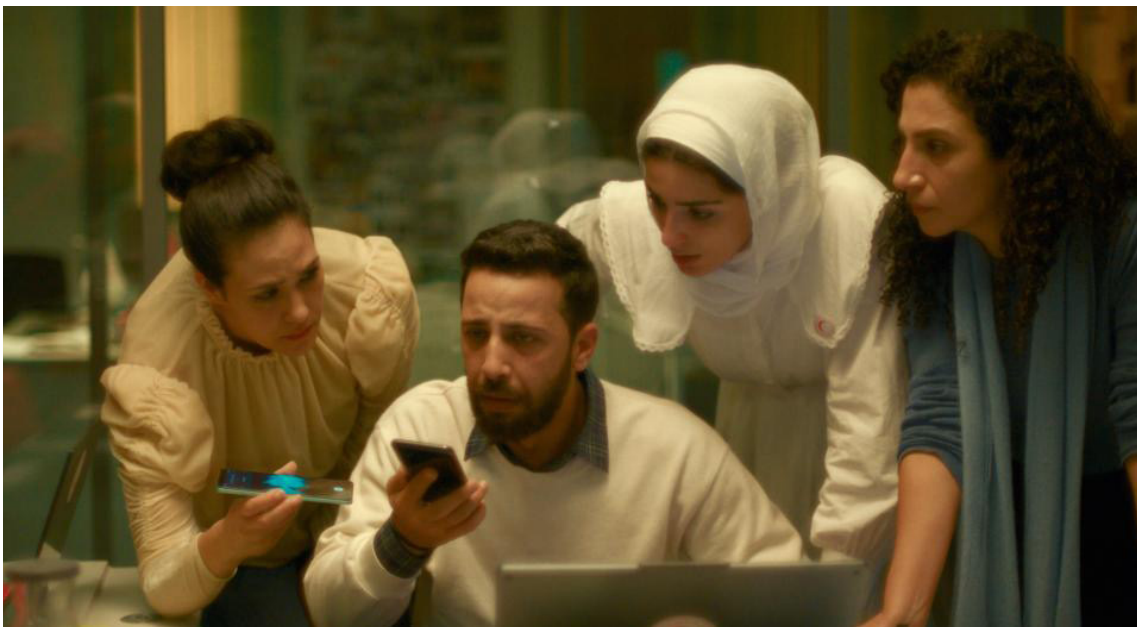
Even if you have become accustomed to the daily images of horror in Gaza from television screens, it is hard to remain unmoved by the harsh reality. The activists from Palestine and Israel accurately depict the mechanisms of destruction of the Palestinian village by the Israeli occupation forces, listen to the reactions of the displaced residents, and share their reflections on how such an injustice can be met with apathy of global public opinion. In their Oscar acceptance speech, Palestinian co-director Basel Adra criticized the «ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people,» while Israeli co-director Yuval Abraham called for an end to the «unequal» treatment of Palestinians by Israel. Many Israeli government officials, as well as some pro-Israeli activists, reacted strongly to these statements. They even criticized the film as biased, arguing that, in their opinion, it does not present—except minimally—Israel's positions and does not give enough attention to the bloodshed of Hamas's attack on October 7, 2023.

With Bated Breath

One of the most shocking films made in recent years—and which has the privilege of having direct access to real life in bombed Gaza during the 2024–2025 biennium—is Iranian Sepideh Farsi's documentary *Put Your Soul on Your Hand and Walk*. A testimony of bombed Gaza through video calls between Farsi and young Palestinian photojournalist Fatma Hasounah. The depiction of daily horror in Gaza through live conversations and the photographs of the young Palestinian is the subject of Farsi's politically and emotionally charged documentary, which found in Fatma a stunning protagonist. The perpetually smiling and optimistic young woman becomes a symbol of resistance and

guiding us into a world of horror without the film ever losing its humanity. A work about the multifaceted power of cinema, especially in conditions of absolute darkness, and a voice of courage when most choose to remain silent. Tragic irony: On the same day the director learned that her film was selected to be screened at the Cannes Festival, tragically Fatma and her family members were killed by an Israeli bomb that struck their home.

Another film released at the end of 2025 that stands out not only for its power but especially for the heart-wrenching way its creator approaches a real tragic event that occurred in Gaza in January 2024 is *The Voice of Hind Rajab*. Tunisian Kaouther Ben Hania (*The Man Who Sold His Skin*) skillfully directs a fictionalized version of the story of little Hind Rajab, who was trapped in a car in Gaza that came under Israeli fire. All the action of this theatrically structured film unfolds within the offices of the Palestinian Red Crescent, whose members communicate with 6-year-old Hind and simultaneously make desperate efforts to organize her rescue operation. This blend of fiction and reality is so captivating that the viewer forgets they are watching a chamber thriller. A thriller that unfolds with unique «weapons»: telephone conversations and the disagreements of the Palestinian service officials regarding the management of the case. The script of *The Voice of Hind Rajab*, with its clearly topical political character, is used effectively by Kaouther Ben Hania, who uses the authentic audio recordings with the voice of the six-year-old girl in a powerful anti-war statement that was honored with the Silver Lion at the Venice Festival.



© Still from the film *The Voice of Hind Rajab* by Tunisian director Kaouther Ben Hania.

See Also

Films from both sides of the Gaza Strip that vividly sketch the grim daily life and emphasize the failure to find a sustainable solution for decades.

I Shall Not Hate (2024)

In the Canadian documentary by Tal Barda, based on the eponymous book by Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish—who has lived in Canada for years but spent his childhood in Palestine—shocking documents from his life are presented. Most notably, and certainly more harshly, those concerning the familial and personal loss of his loved ones. First came the tragic loss of his wife on September 16, 2008, and four months later, on January 16, 2009, his three daughters were killed in a bombing of their home by an Israeli tank.

Paradise Now (2005)

Two young Palestinian friends, childhood companions, after spending a night with their families, are led on a suicide mission to Tel Aviv with bombs strapped to their bodies. Palestinian Abu-Assad tells the story from the bombers' perspective, attempting to delve into their character and thoughts to understand what transforms them into suicide bombers. He condemns their actions but simultaneously emphasizes the Israelis' responsibility for it, as by occupying Palestinian lands, «they make the local population foreign in their own land, resulting in reactions in whatever way possible,» as he said in an interview. The film, which won the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival, was shot with Israeli funds and was nominated for the Best Foreign Language Film Oscar in 2006, representing Palestine.

Amira (2021)

A 17-year-old Palestinian girl was born using sperm her imprisoned father, Nawar, smuggled out of his prison cell. But when it is revealed that Nawar is sterile, young Amira and her family are left reeling. After depicting contemporary Egyptian socio-political reality with *Cairo 678* and *Women of the Bus 678*, Egyptian director Mohamed Diab explores a powerful drama that presents the Israeli-Palestinian rivalry through a different lens, based on a story that seems improbable but is entirely true. This form of immaculate conception not only provides an aura of mystery and tension that intensifies

as suspicions shift from one person to another but also becomes the primary tool for sketching a paranoid world trapped in blind hatred and regression.

Omar (2013)

The titular hero is a young Palestinian arrested for the murder of an Israeli soldier and finds himself caught between the blackmail of the occupying forces and the suspicion of his fellow fighters. A gripping drama, nominated for a Foreign Language Oscar, which not only realistically depicts a dead-end daily life (one of the most thrilling cinematic portrayals is the depiction of the West Bank as a place of martyrdom) but also keenly shows how an ideologue is forced to transform into an informant. Crucial moral dilemmas are intertwined with the harsh reality of the Occupied Territories by the renowned Palestinian director Hany Abu-Assad, who focuses his critique on the destructive division among his compatriots, which stems partly from Israeli intervention.

The Time That Remains (2009)

The most famous Palestinian director, Elia Suleiman, gained fame in 2002 with the multi-award-winning *Divine Intervention*, an idiosyncratic comedy about the life of a man in love in Ramallah. Nearly two decades after that film, Suleiman «gets serious» and narrates an almost epic drama about the life of his family over decades, starting from 1948—the year of the founding of the State of Israel—and culminating in an inevitable cycle of pain and death that continues to this day. With his characteristic sparse and «autobiographical» cinematic style, Elia Suleiman keeps his distance and remains an observer of the theater of the absurd played out in the ruins of his once-beautiful country, consciously expressing his evident discomfort and the acceptance that things can only get worse from here. And in the end, he seems to wonder where every act of violent resistance leads: closer to liberation or as a pretext for even more violent and inhuman reprisals?

1341 Frames of Love and War (2022)

The portrait of Israel's most famous war photographer, Micha Bar-Am, is presented through a series of 1341 snapshots, mostly black and white, depicting the entire modern history of his country, with a particular emphasis on the violent depiction of

the Middle East. A rich and useful film, it highlights the history of the Israeli-Palestinian war through the selected photographs from Micha Bar-Am's vast archive, which represent a rare blend of raw violence and high art. The on-camera soul-baring of the 92-year-old artist, who started as a fervent Zionist only to end up in a stance of neutrality because «some things are better forgotten,» as he characteristically tells director Ran Tal's camera, is moving.

The Lemon Tree (2008)

When the Israeli Minister of Defense moves next to the home of a Palestinian widow living in the West Bank, on the border between Israel and Palestine, the Israeli army decides to cut down the lemon trees in the lonely woman's garden because they could potentially serve as hiding places for terrorists, and they are concerned about the minister's safety. The woman (a stunning Hiam Abbass from *Succession*), despite attempts to persuade her otherwise, reacts and decides to sue the minister, launching a legal campaign that reaches the Israeli Supreme Court. The film's Israeli creator, Eran Riklis, considers *Lemon Tree* a symbol of the struggles of people who protect their principles, home, and history. The allegorical dimensions of the script regarding the history of the Middle East, written not only in blood but also in terms that test human logic, are evident.

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