

- [Articles](#)
- [CP+](#)
- [Subscribe](#)
- [Donate](#)
- [Books](#)
- [Login](#)
- [Merch](#)
- [Archives](#)
- [Podcasts](#)



[Facebook](#)[Twitter](#)[Reddit](#)[Email](#)

DECEMBER 29, 2023

## [Dead End: Israel Gets Lost in Gaza](#)

BY [DANIEL BEAUMONT](#)

[Facebook](#)[Twitter](#)[Reddit](#)[Email](#)





Photo by [Gabriel Soto](#)

Until October 7 events in Gaza for the past nine years rarely made the headlines even in Israel. Some event would make Hamas fire some missiles into Israel and Israeli jets would respond by dropping bombs many times more destructive on ‘select military sites’ in Gaza. All of this was regarded as so unremarkable that the Israeli military referred to it as, “mowing the lawn.” Israel’s allies, The US, Britain, France and Germany also took little notice of these events. The situation of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza could go on indefinitely. The Palestinians had endured more than half a century of occupation and oppression—why not another half century? From the standpoint of the various governments in Israel since the 1978 Camp David treaty with Egypt, these were matters that could be managed, while Israel continued its slow, gradual theft of the West Bank. As far as Gaza was concerned, its conversion after 2004 into a prison holding 2.2 million prisoners had ‘disposed’ of that issue. But then something happened. On October 7 an eruption of violence occurred from that small piece of land that few people in Israel—or anywhere else—would have thought possible.

The shock in Israel that the Hamas attack caused says much about the complacency not only in the Israeli government and military but among Israeli citizens in general. An Israeli journalist remarked recently that most Israelis looked at Palestinians like furniture that could be moved around in their living rooms.

October 7 also dashed the complacency of the US and Europe. Many events in the last six or seven years had obscured the issue of the Palestinians. The war in Ukraine was obviously the main event. But even when attention was given to the Middle East it was focused on other matters. Iran and its influence on Iraq, the tension between it and Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. There were attempts in recent years to go around the issue of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and its virtual siege of Gaza. The latest attempt was ostentatiously christened ‘Abraham Accords. That—apparently a product of the brain the renowned Middle East expert Jared Kushner—was among the casualties of October 7.

After the twelve hundred people massacred by Hamas on October 7 the next casualties were the near god-like reputations of the IDF and the Mossad and its cousins in Israeli intelligence. To be fair, there were some in the Israeli intelligence establishment who sensed something might be afoot. The Israeli military intelligence Aman warned Netanyahu that the divisions in Israeli society caused by Netanyahu’s ‘judicial reforms’ could encourage an attack by Hamas or Hezbollah. But apparently the Israeli generals were as blinkered as Netanyahu whose first priority—rather like his American counterpart—is staying out of prison.

This failure accounts for the severity of the Israeli assault on Gaza. Netanyahu and the Israeli military have attempted to obscure their massive failure with a massive display of firepower that probably in its initial stages did little harm to Hamas—after all, if they’d had good intelligence before October 7, presumably with their massive advantage in firepower they would have prevented it. Also damaged were the vaunted intelligence services of Israel—Shin Bet, Mossad et al.

For Israel the Hamas attack on October 7 has been compared to 9/11 for the US. But there is a significant difference. Though US meddling and bungling in the Middle East created al-Qaeda, no one ever thought that George W Bush tried to create al-Qaeda. Not so with Netanyahu.

It is well-documented that he and others in Likud helped to create Hamas, gave financial support to it in order to fracture the Palestinians so Likud and other right-wing Israeli parties opposed to any Palestinian state could claim they had no party to negotiate with. This simply as a delaying tactic while the Israeli settlements metastasized throughout the West Bank. But on October 7 the folly of Netanyahu's connivance in the creation Hamas was lost for most Israelis in the mists of time. How clever he was until he wasn't.

Netanyahu's positive rating is about 25% as I write—take heart, Biden! He's already being accused in the Israeli press of using the war as a photo-op for his next campaign. Many of the families of the hostages are still voicing their anger with him. It took him three weeks to work up the nerve to meet with them. He has clearly given the all-out assault priority over negotiating the release of the hostages with Hamas. The two goals are not compatible.

Reducing Gaza to rubble will not free the hostages.

As if the reputation of the IDF hadn't suffered enough damage, they killed three hostages who had somehow escaped the clutches of Hamas. They were waving a makeshift white flag. An Israeli soldier shouted, "Terrorists!" Two were shot dead immediately. The third fled into a nearby building where they chased him down and killed him while he pleaded with them for his life in Hebrew. It is hard to think of a more glaring example of stupidity and criminal ineptitude.

In the meantime, the US has become concerned about civilian deaths in Gaza which stand at more than 20,000. That's apparently too many—the State Department has yet to announce what an acceptable number of dead civilians would be. Biden has described the bombing as 'indiscriminate'—it has emerged that more than 40% of the bombs Israel has dropped on Gaza are so-called 'dumb bombs.'

It would appear that Hamas has a better idea of what they are doing than either Israel or the US does. It is the guerilla strategy of avoiding pitched battles, setting small ambushes before melting away. In the case of Hamas fighters into their tunnel system. Or perhaps given the vast cityscape of shelled and deserted buildings created by Israel's bombing—the inhabitants having either fled per Israeli pamphlets to seek shelter elsewhere or lie dead in the rubble. Hamas fighters can at night exploit the ruins as an urban jungle. They know the streets and alleys and to really root them out will be very costly for the IDF.

Two other side effects of the Hamas assault of October 7 should be mentioned. The first is Netanyahu's crackdown on Israeli dissent. The Knesset recently passed an amendment to a counter-terrorism law making a crime of "the systematic and continuous consumption of publications of a terrorist organization," with a maximum penalty of one year's imprisonment. In other words, a journalist who simply reads the public statements of Hamas, Hezbollah, or even the Kurdish YPG could be thrown in prison for a year—presumably their "consumption" being caught by the Israeli company's famous Pegasus spyware used all over the world to 'combat terrorism' and to arrest dissidents.

Meir Baruchin, an Israeli teacher and activist who opposes the war on Gaza, was detained and investigated for "sedition and intent to commit treason." He spent four days in solitary confinement before he was released. For journalists, especially Palestinian journalists, it will certainly be worse. So much for what is billed as the only democracy in the Middle East.

The Israeli assault on Gaza has killed 53 journalists and their media assistants, 46 Palestinians, 3 Lebanese and 4 Israelis. The assault on the civilian people of Gaza is also an assault on reporters to cover up the assault on the civilians. The killing of the Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akhleh by the IDF last year shows the Israel has no hesitation at killing journalists to kill stories. In May of 2022 during the IDF assault on Jenin in the West Bank Abu Akhleh was shot in the head by an IDF sniper—it was not a stray bullet. Numerous investigations by non-Israeli groups, including the US State Department, concluded she was deliberately targeted. Her killer of course was never punished.

The second effect of the Gaza war has been a surge in settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank. Settlers have seized the opportunity, while the outside world is focused on Gaza, to increase their attacks on Palestinian towns, entering homes, beating people up, burning cars, destroying orchards. They terrorize small villages and in many cases succeed in driving all the inhabitants out so as to erase the villages entirely. If these actions sound like those of the Nazis in the 1930s it's because they are the same things. First acts of violence are committed to drive out people from a place they have lived in for eons. This is a prelude to a war on them to forcibly expel them and if they resist, to kill them. In this they are following a document written six years ago by the current Israeli minister of finance Bezalel Smotrich. The title of the

document was “The Decisive Plan.” The document only mentioned Gaza in passing, Smotrich advocated the annexation of entire West Bank, giving the Palestinians the choice of leaving or staying and living as non-people. Should any take up arms to resist then they should be treated as terrorists and killed. When Smotrich did a public presentation of his plan he was asked after if that meant women and children too, he replied “In war as in war.” Decisive Plan, Final Solution—for fascists there is no such thing as irony.

On December 6 the IDF recommended that Israeli civilians evacuate to a part of the southern of al-Mawasi. Now it is estimated that homes of up to 85% of the 2.2 million people have been destroyed. Al-Jazeera reported that the IDF told more than 1.5 million homeless civilians already deprived of water, food and medicine, many of them wounded and ill, to move to an area that is about the size of Heathrow Airport. One might think that such a proposal could not be taken seriously. But it should be taken seriously because its real message was: There is no room for you anywhere in Gaza. If you stay anywhere in Gaza, you will die.

The civilian death toll is usually taken to be a byproduct of a ruthless disregard for civilian by the IDF in their determination to destroy Hamas as a military force. But this is not the case. In fact civilians are a target too. This proven by an article published by small independent on-line journal called +972. The journal was started by four Israeli journalists in 2010 and now also employs a number of Palestinian journalists. The ‘+972’ is the country code assigned to both Israel and the West Bank and Gaza and may be taken as the journal’s commitment to a single state for Israelis and Palestinians.

On November 30 +972 published an article by an Israeli journalist Yuval Abraham. The title of article was ‘A mass assassination factory’: Inside Israel’s calculated bombing of Gaza.’ Abraham draws upon anonymous sources, whistleblowers, in both the Israeli military and intelligence.

Apartment buildings, schools, universities, banks markets are all targets—the idea being civilian deaths and wholesale destruction will, as one of the sources puts it, “lead civilians to put pressure on Hamas.” This dubious idea only shows the stupidity of Netanyahu and his settler allies. Another anonymous source in the article says, “When a three-year-old girl is killed in a home in Gaza, it’s because it wasn’t a big deal for her to be killed—that it was a price worth paying to hit [another] target.”

Another reason for the appalling numbers of casualty is the IDF's use of system called Hasbora (The Gospel) which uses AI to generate targets far faster than humans could. These targets disregard any number of civilians involved what a retired intelligence officer calls, "A mass assassination factory."

And this is central point of Yuval Abraham's article: Palestinian civilians are as much a target in the current onslaught in Gaza as Hamas—which makes any call for the IDF to be more precise in their targeting useless. They are being precise in their targeting. They have civilians right in their crosshairs. Nevertheless, the US continues to issue fatuous statements. On December 13 John Kirby the spokesman for the National Security said of the maps the IDF published showing which neighborhoods they would bomb, "That's basically telegraphing your punches...I don't know that we would do that." Of course that is hardly high praise coming from a military power whose recent legacy is Fallujah, Ramadi and Baqubah.

Subsequently Yuval Abraham was interviewed on PBS and he spoke of another change in Israeli military targeting tactics that has multiplied civilian casualties even when they are taking into account civilian casualties:

"So, in the past, according to sources, for a single assassination attempt, dozens of Palestinian civilians would be allowed to be killed. This has become 10 times or 20 times the number that was allowed in the past after October 7." On October 10 an IDF spokesman said, "the emphasis is on damage and not on accuracy." That same day, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant announced: "I have lowered all the restraints – we will kill everyone we fight against; we will use every means." The Defense Minister Yoav Gallant: "There will be no electricity, no food, no fuel, everything is closed. We are fighting human animals, and we are acting accordingly." The reference 'human animals' should not be taken as only referring to Hamas. Anyone who knows something about the views of many Israeli leaders knows that this is nothing new. Menachem Began, who won a Nobel Peace Prize for swindling Sadat in the 1978 Camp David Accords, referred to Palestinians as "animals on two legs." Nor should it be taken as something confined to right-wing politicians. The celebrated Golda Meir who belonged to the Labor Party, called Palestinians "cockroaches."

Now heavy rains are filling the streets of Gaza, and WHO, UNRWA and the many other agencies struggling to aid the Palestinians in Gaza are concerned

about the outbreak of cholera and other diseases. But in the view of a retired Israeli general Giora Eiland, who previously head of the National Security Council, this will help the Israel achieve victory. In an article titled “Let’s not be intimidated by the world” he wrote:

“The international community is warning us against a severe humanitarian disaster and severe epidemics. We must not shy away from this. After all, severe epidemics in the south of Gaza will bring victory closer.”

One of the prominent issues that, according to the mainstream media, is increasingly dividing the US and Israel as the war proceeds is that the Netanyahu government has no plan for Gaza after the war ends. This is wrong. Netanyahu and his allies have a sort of plan. The only problem is that it is preposterous and has zero possibility of realization.

The Israeli journalist Yuval Abraham, cited earlier, wrote in an article published on October 30 wrote:

“The Israeli Ministry of Intelligence is recommending the forcible and permanent transfer of the Gaza Strip’s 2.2 million Palestinian residents to Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula, according to an official document revealed in full for the first time by +972’s partner site Local Call yesterday.”

In its report the Ministry recommended that Israel “enlist international help” to carry out this transfer. Egypt is mentioned less than half a dozen times in the document. The two most significant are:

“A sterile zone of several kilometers should be created in Egypt.”

“Egypt has an obligation under international law to allow the passage of the population”

After the Israeli authors of this document generously donate Egyptian land to their preposterous scheme, they proceed with the breathtaking hypocrisy to speak of Egypt’s obligation under international law—which Israel has broken every day since its creation in 1948.

The plan is simple. According to Giora Eiland the plan is, “to create conditions where life in Gaza becomes unsustainable. Gaza will become a place where no human being can exist.”

Abraham goes on to say that a similar scheme was put forth by a right-wing think tank the Misgav Institute headed by a close associate of Netanyahu. The author was one Amir Weitmann who showed it to a Likud member of the Knesset Ariel Kallner who said, “the solution you propose, to move the population to Egypt, is a logical and necessary solution.”



Since these plans for Gaza dovetail nicely Smotrich's plan to empty the West Bank of Palestinians it can be assumed he and those enamored of his plan would endorse. Apart from the arrogant criminality of these plans, the plans show how divorced from reality are Netanyahu's ministers.

The possibility that the US would sign off on such proposals—and a fortiori any other country in the world—shows how out of touch with reality the Israeli right is. As I write Netanyahu is saying assault will “deepen” and “intensify.” At the same time Biden is getting pressure from careerists in the State Department and also Democrats on the House Intelligence, Armed Services or Foreign Affairs committees to curb Israel's assault. Biden must be weighing whether his long unconditional support of Israel will now cost him his reelection. He must know also that Netanyahu's two goals, crushing Hamas and getting the hostages back, are incompatible. The latter could be achieved by a ceasefire and negotiation. The massive assault and bombardment is more likely to kill hostages. Proposals to flood the Hamas huge tunnel system with sea water would drown them too. Biden through his career has always been inclined to compromise his ‘principles,’ but the time may be coming soon when the realpolitik of US interests and those of Israel diverge too far for compromises. Netanyahu is probably hoping for Trump's victory in 2024 though that could backfire too—Trump has no loyalty to anyone but himself. The MAGA mob is full of anti-Semites and evangelicals who hope that Jesus will blow up the world soon.

After a vote in the UN General Assembly calling for an immediate ceasefire—which the US and Israel opposed—Biden said that Israel, “has most of the world supporting it.” The vote went against the US and Israel 153 to 10. ‘Most of the world’ according to Biden consisted of Austria, Czechia, Guatemala, Liberia, Micronesia, Nauru, Papua New Guinea and Paraguay. The main European allies of the US all abstained out of embarrassed deference. Now the desperation of the Netanyahu regime is seen in the claim of the Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant. On December 26 he told a Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee meeting in the Knesset that Israel is facing a “multi-arena war” from seven different fronts including Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank, Iraq, Yemen, and Iran. Gallant said Israel has “responded and acted already on six of these fronts.” In fact the Netanyahu regime wants such a war that in their calculations would suck the US into another war in the Middle East.

The lies of Netanyahu and the IDF speak of desperation. On December 12 when the northern part of Gaza was supposedly secured by the IDF, Hamas ambushed an IDF unit killing ten Israeli soldiers. More importantly, there was the lie that Hamas had a headquarters beneath al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City. No evidence was ever produced for that. The video that the IDF looked like the work of an eight-year old. A *Washington Post* article of December 21 found no evidence to support it. Israel under Netanyahu's policy of no Palestinian state under any condition is on a collision course with reality. Now it appears that the Hamas attack on October 7 has not only changed Israel but the calculus of the Middle East. Israel is more isolated than ever. Its military response to October 7 is only increasing its isolation, even making more people in its most powerful ally the US question its relationship with Israel. October 7 has made one thing clear. The Palestinians will not go away. And the current Israeli leadership is deluded in thinking they can solve matters by military power. The idea that the surrounding Arab states would take in millions of Palestinians if they could—which they cannot since their economies are in crisis—is so far removed from reality that one has to wonder what alternate universe Netanyahu's settler ministers live in. From Morocco to Iraq, Arabs—both Muslim and Christian—have lived side by side in peace with Jews for centuries. But from Morocco to Iraq, the state of Israel is regarded as a Zionist apartheid entity implanted by a colonial power in the Arab World. The rise to power of the far right in Israel has laid bare what was always the core of the Zionist project. People from Brooklyn are telling Palestinians they have no right to the land where their ancestors have lived for thousands of years. Ami Ayalon, former head of Shin Bet the Israeli domestic security agency, said, "Israel after October 7 will be a different Israel... The current leadership will have to disappear from our lives, it led us with open eyes into the most terrible crisis."

That is a simple hard fact that US and Israeli politicians have tried to ignore for decades. There is no back door or side door that will lead to peace between the Arab World and Israel that does not lead through Palestine. The two-state solution has been for a long time a pipedream. The West Bank is now so cut up by Israeli settlements and walls that a Palestinian state there would look like jigsaw puzzle missing most of its pieces. The Israeli plan for Gaza is that it will be uninhabitable. The most realistic solution now is for Israelis and Palestinians to live together in one free state from the river to the sea.

**Daniel Beaumont** teaches Arabic language & literature and other courses at the University of Rochester. He is the author of [Slave of Desire: Sex, Love & Death in the 1001 Nights](#) and [Preachin' the Blues: The Life & Times of Son House](#). He can be contacted at: [daniel.beaumont@rochester.edu](mailto:daniel.beaumont@rochester.edu)