

‘THERE IS HOPE IN RESISTANCE’ : REFRAMING OCT. 7TH, HAMAS, AND PALESTINE’ S ARMED FACTIONS

The narrative that equates Palestinian resistance with ISIS-style terrorism obscures a simple reality: Palestinians are fighting for a hopeful future, and Hamas and other armed factions have achieved far more than Gaza’s devastation might suggest.

BY [JU-HYUN PARK](#) NOVEMBER 22, 2023

- [Click to share on Twitter \(Opens in new window\)](#)
- [Click to share on Facebook \(Opens in new window\)](#)
- [Click to share on Reddit \(Opens in new window\)](#)
- [Click to email a link to a friend \(Opens in new window\)](#)
-



Gunmen from the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, during an

anti-Israel military march in Gaza City, Gaza Strip. Palestine. Photo by: Yousef Masoud/Majority World/Universal Images Group via Getty Images

The events of Oct. 7th, when Operation Al-Aqsa Flood began, have inflated Hamas into a terrifying bogeyman in the Western and Zionist imagination. The Palestinian resistance in all its diversity of thought and aims is reduced to the idea of Hamas, which is unquestioningly and breathlessly described as a terrorist entity. Thus, all Palestinian resistance becomes equated with terrorism, and all who act in solidarity with Palestine become terrorist-sympathizers. The purpose of this construction of the Palestinian freedom fighter into a 'profane figure' is not only to distort the reality of Palestinian oppression and justify Israel's wanton violence, but also to police the borders of acceptable discourse and thought among those whose sympathies lie with Palestine.

Many in the Western left have capitulated to this pressure, attempting to walk an often contradictory line between upholding Palestinian rights in the abstract yet spurning the actual methods deployed by Palestinians to achieve their liberation. A serious examination of the composition of the various Palestinian armed factions, what motivates them, what their political horizons are, and what Al-Aqsa Flood has achieved from the strategic perspective of these groups remains a taboo discussion. As an entry point to the complexity and perspectives of the Palestinian resistance, *The Real News* speaks with writer, lecturer, and PhD candidate Abdaljawad Omar.

Abdaljawad Omar is a writer, analyst, and lecturer, based in Ramallah, Palestine. He is a PhD student and part-time lecturer in the Philosophy and Cultural Studies Department in Birzeit University.

Editor's note: Shortly after this recording was completed on Nov. 16, Israel began bombing hospitals in the refugee camp of Jenin in the West Bank. The next day, on Nov. 17, the director of Al-Shifa hospital announced the deaths of all 39 premature infants removed from their incubators in the NICU after the Israeli military destroyed the hospital's electrical capacities. On Nov. 21, a partial hostage swap and four-day truce between Israel and Hamas was announced.

Studio Production: Cameron Granadino
Post-Production: David Hebden

Additional links:

- 'An unyielding will to continue': An Interview with Abdaljawad Omar on October 7th and the Palestinian Resistance – Louis Allday, *Ebb Magazine*
- Hopeful Pathologies in the war for Palestine – Abdaljawad Omar, *Mondoweiss*
- Resistance and Hope in Palestine with Abdaljawad Omar – *Millennials are Killing Capitalism*

TRANSCRIPT

The following is a rushed transcript and may contain errors. A proofread version will be made available as soon as possible.

Ju-Hyun Park:

Welcome to The Real News Network. My name is Ju-Hyun Park, and I'm your host today. Before I begin, I'd like to share our

gratitude with everyone listening on behalf of all of us here at The Real News. We are proud to be a source of independent media, covering the struggles of everyday people from Baltimore to Bangladesh, and we couldn't do it without your support. The Real News is a totally not-for-profit enterprise. We don't have corporate donors, and we don't take ad money. Our reporting is powered by listeners like you. If you love what we do and want to support us in our work, please take a moment and head over to therealnews.com/donate. Your donations mean more to us than you know. Today, we're turning our attention to Palestine. Since October 7th, the world has watched in horror as Israel unleashes a devastating campaign of collective punishment on the Gaza Strip, where more than 12,000 people have been killed by Israeli bombs, including more than 4,000 children.

As of the date of this recording, November 16th, there is only one hospital still operating in northern Gaza. Israel has bombed universities, schools, refugee camps, bakeries, grain mills, fishing boats, water supplies, mosques and churches, telecommunications infrastructure, and homes. More than half the residential buildings in Gaza have been damaged, and 40,000 homes have been completely destroyed. It is now estimated that more than 1.7 million people are currently unable to live in their houses. In the last 48 hours, we have witnessed the Israeli military lay siege to and raid Al-Shifa Hospital, Gaza's largest medical center, where thousands of people had taken refuge. As the hospital was deprived of water, fuel, food, and basic necessities, doctors and hospital staff were forced to make unthinkable decisions, to forego anesthesia, to disconnect patients from life-saving machinery, including 39 premature infants in incubators in the neonatal intensive care unit. Israel's war on Gaza makes no real discernible distinction between civilians and combatants.

Accusations of genocide and war crimes are growing across the world, and Israeli officials are none too shy about their intentions. Israeli defense minister, Ben-Gvir, has openly gloated that a second Nakba is taking place in Gaza. According to an Israeli news report, the government also attempted to offer to write off Egypt's outstanding IMF debt, should that country accept Gaza's more than 2 million residents as refugees in the Sinai Peninsula. Israeli intent to ethnically cleanse Gaza of its Indigenous Palestinian inhabitants could hardly be clearer. Through it all, Israel has justified its carnage to the world in the name of defeating Hamas. To date, the Israeli government has alleged that the hospitals it targeted were secret bases for Hamas, that the 42 journalists it has killed in airstrikes were propagandists for Hamas, and even accused UN relief workers of being secret Hamas agents. This rhetoric is mirrored almost perfectly by pro-Israel politicians in the United States across the political spectrum.

Democratic and Republican politicians alike have accused anti-genocide protestors of being pro-Hamas, decried the notion of a ceasefire as anti-Semitic and in violation of Israel's right to self-defense. They have also called for the suppression and investigation of student activists on college campuses and generally reflected the Maximalist rhetoric of the Israeli government in framing the current conflict as a fight to the death between Israel and Hamas, a framing that is replicated by the media with the term, "Israel-Hamas War." The specter of Hamas therefore plays a central role in how the public is being encouraged to think about this conflict.

Join thousands of others who rely on our journalism to navigate complex issues, uncover hidden truths, and challenge the status quo with our free newsletter, delivered straight to your inbox twice a week:

[Sign up](#)

Despite the weight that the name Hamas carries, few Americans, including those who hold elected office, could accurately describe who a Hamas is, where they come from, what they want, or what role they play in Palestinian politics, as one of many armed factions that make up the Palestinian resistance. To help orient us to these and other elementary questions, I'm joined today by Abdaljawad Omar, a writer, analyst, and lecturer, based in Ramallah, Palestine. He is a PhD student and part-time lecturer in the Philosophy and Cultural Studies Department in Birzeit University. Abdaljawad, thank you for joining us.

Abdaljawad Omar:

Thank you for having me.

Ju-Hyun Park:

I'm hoping you can start by introducing yourself in a little bit more detail to our audience, telling us about who you are and your work.

Abdaljawad Omar:

Well, I'm currently a student finishing my dissertation, almost done with it, at Birzeit University, and I also teach there in the Cultural Studies and the Philosophy Department, a core course on Western philosophy and Arab modern political thought. But my background, whether academically or having lived in Palestine for a long time, includes an interest in war on a philosophical level, but also its history and Palestinian

resistance and how it's formed. And actually, my dissertation takes aim to explain the evolution of Palestinian resistance during the first Intifada and the second Intifada and its interaction with Israeli policies, et cetera. So that's my background. I've been in the states, I studied in the States, in DC actually, and I, for one year, came back also in Europe. And yeah, that's a brief, let's say, explication of my background. Yeah,

Ju-Hyun Park:

Thank you so much. I would add as well that you're a frequent contributor to Mondoweiss and to The Electronic Intifada. I would really recommend our listeners go and check out some of your articles. I think you've provided a lot of insight into this current moment, as well as past moments that have flared up within Palestine itself. Now, before we kind of cut to the meat of our topic today, I'm hoping you can give us also a little bit of additional insight, being based in Ramallah, which is in the West Bank, for our listeners. We've been hearing a lot about Gaza, but how is the Israeli occupation responding to the crisis where you are? And what are you seeing?

Abdaljawad Omar:

Well, I think, in the West Bank, what's happening right now is that Israel, after the 7th of October attacks, have taken already ugly gloves off and has been intensifying a lot of its policies, including mass confinement of Palestinians. There has been around 3000 Palestinians arrested only in the past month. It's one of the biggest campaigns in the history of the struggle against Israel in terms of arrests. But more than that, it has cut a lot of villages and towns and cities from each other, through the checkpoint system that it has and the walls. There's a lot of the daily humiliation that doesn't ever make it to news of

passing through the checkpoint, of being searched. For some women, it's also being sexually harassed.

Things like what happened just the day before yesterday, when Israelis released 30 Palestinian prisoners, who finished their time in Israeli jails, naked, for instance, at the outskirts of Ramallah. So there's all these forms of daily humiliations, that are also there, but there's also an intensive Israeli military campaign against some of the armed movements in the north of the West Bank. So we have recurrent incursions in tents with dozens of people killed in these refugee camps, including in the Jenin refugee camp and the Nur Shams refugee camp in Tulkarem. Both towns are in the north of the West Bank. That has been happening in the past also couple of weeks. So there's around 200 Palestinians now killed in the West Bank as well, in clashes or outright Israeli incursions into the West Bank.

Ju-Hyun Park:

Thank you for that snapshot into the reality on the ground in the West Bank. I think we're starting to sort of delve into the basis of our conversation today. I want to start by thinking through the most common framing that we receive in the United States and probably in the West in general, about the Israeli occupation and those who resist it, which is one of democracy versus terrorism, Israel being the democratic entity and the Palestinian armed factions being the terrorist entities. Do you think this framing is correct? And if not, why?

Abdaljawad Omar:

I think this framing is a highly politicized framing. It's meant to make you feel a sense of affinity to Israel and also a sense of abhorrence and moral outrage at the Palestinians. And it

attempts to invert the structure of the reality that exists in Palestine. What I mean by that, it basically tells people that there is this liberal beacon and democratic state that is being attacked by Palestinians for no other reason, except for its values or culture or its identity. That's the framing that is positive here. But in reality, Palestinians are resisting, for at least 134 years, since the inception of the Zionist movement on Palestinian land, because there's a very elementary basic notion, which is that, if somebody's coming to what you see as your land and tries to take that land from you by force, anybody's reaction would be to resist.

So resistance is just an inherent natural reaction to this forced displacement, ethnic cleansing, that has been going on for long years, intensified in 1948, for instance, when Israel destroyed more than 500 villages, and still going on now in Gaza, as you outlined in the beginning of the podcast. So in many ways, this is a people, Palestinian people are defending their bare existence, and in many ways, that framing just belies the reality is that it's not about values, it's not about culture, it's not about religion. It's about, as a Palestinian, being completely, your mere presence is a presence that is [inaudible 00:10:18] to Israel.

And it's always searching for ways to confine you, to restrict your movement, and eventually to get rid of you. And I think what you have outlined, especially in Israeli politics right now, where you see a lot of Israeli national religious figures, like Bezalel Smotrich or people like Ben-Gvir in government, who speak consciously of a decisive plan, and that decisive plan is to basically render Palestinians homeless again, refugees again, ethnically cleansing from the West Bank and Gaza, and erect a pure state for Jewish people, even for Israeli citizens, Palestinians with Israeli citizenship, that they're not necessarily precluded from this notion of ethnic cleansing that some of

these political parties are exposed. And I think that reality is what Palestinian resistance is all about. It's just attempting. It's a self-defense against this onslaught that has been going on for decades and years.

Ju-Hyun Park:

I think a lot of our listeners may be more familiar with the frame that, which you pointed out as one that is incorrect, that sees the Palestinian resistance factions, Hamas in particular, as aiming to achieve the physical elimination of the Jewish people, of advancing a political project that could not lead to peaceful coexistence in the territory of Palestine. You've said some words already that aim to dispel that notion. I'm wondering if you can fill in the gaps that may remain for our listeners. What exactly are the resistance factions aiming to achieve, politically? What is the vision that is being put forward? And I understand that we're talking about more than one organization here, so if you feel that there are specific ones you want to expound on, please do so.

Abdaljawad Omar:

Historically speaking, Palestinians have offered various political projects, if you want, and you're right to point out that there's not one single resistance, that there's resistances, and they differ in terms of their outlook, their view, their ideological orientation, in terms of what is actually to be achieved. But I think, what I was trying to say, at least in the beginning, which I think that is the most important element, which is that there's a self-defense element here, just the element of maintaining your existence. In Palestine, we have a word called Sumud. Sumud in Arabic means or translated into English means steadfastness. So resistance is, in that way, not very proactive. It's not trying to say that, "I want to," for instance, "do something," rather than

it's just a reaction to an action, which is, in this case, occupation and settler colonialism, et cetera.

It's self defensive posture, that just wants to sustain Palestine. So that's what's shared among a lot of the Palestinian groups. And I think the various projects that have been put forward historically are numerous. Some people have agreed, for instance, including Hamas, for instance, has agreed to a two-state solution where Palestinian create a state on what is called the 1967 borders, which are the borders that Israel occupied in 1967. So it's the West Bank and Gaza primarily. So erecting a Palestinian state and independent Palestinian state, where Palestinians can have their self-determination and such. So Hamas has openly declared that this is now what its political project is, as the clearing of illegal settlements in the West Bank, the building of the state, and that, in that case and scenario, that there would be two states living side by side on different realms or through negotiations that would lead to such a case.

Historically speaking, there's also been projects like one Democratic secular state, that means that, from the river to the sea, you have one state for all its inhabitants, including Israeli Jews, Palestinian Arab Christians and Muslims, and other peoples who also live in this area of Israel Palestine, that they can be binding together in one state or a binational state or any other form of solution that could be found. But I think what is fundamental here at least is that Palestinians were searching always for ways to be recognized as fully human, within the area that they inhabit. And that resistance, generally speaking, is a project that attempts to do that. So it's not only a political project, in a sense that it has a defined political objectives, that could be attained, but it's definitely not about the identity of who occupies us. And what I'm trying to say here is that it's not a anti-Jewish sentiment that pervades Palestinians and that motivates them to resist the occupation.

It's the occupation that itself. I don't think Palestinians are that invested in the identity or the background of who occupied them or who came to Palestine as settlers or who occupied this land and slowly expanded on it, on the expense of the Palestinians. That is not the main or major contention for all Palestinians. If anybody else, if Ukrainians came to Palestine or Russians came to Palestine or, I don't know, dinosaurs came to Palestine, I think that, in many ways, you would just resist the mere fact that somebody's coming to take land by force and destroy your wellbeing and existence. So that is the major contention here.

It's not resistance directed against the Jewish world. Now, of course, because Israel at least declares that it represents the Jewish world, the Jewish religion, because it identifies itself as a state for the Jews or as a Jewish state, depending on who you ask in Israel, so because there's that entanglement and that entanglement is also related to this awful and horrific history of antisemitism in Europe and the West more broadly, culminating in the Holocaust, that is part of the story, that is part of the entanglement between Palestinians, Israelis. But I don't think that we, as Palestinians, are very invested in the identity of who's colonizing us or occupying us or putting us in prison, as much as we're interested in just the stopping, for this to cease.

Ju-Hyun Park:

I'm glad you brought in the dimension of the two state versus the one state solution, and I'm hoping that you can help us contextualize the current moment in some of the more recent efforts to achieve this kind of lasting solution. I'm referring to the Oslo Accords of 1993, which were supposed to establish agreements whereby a future Palestinian state could eventually arise. It was the Palestinian Liberation Organization, that was

the main party to these accords, that was the previously the main hub of the Palestinian resistance prior to Hamas. I'm wondering if you can help us understand what has happened since Oslo, that has brought us back to this return to armed struggle.

Abdaljawad Omar:

Well, I think the past 20 years or 30 years, since the signing of the Oslo agreements, there has been a lot of major events and major things, but one of the most problematic issues for the Oslo agreement was that the fact that it did not outline any stop for settlement expansion in the West Bank. And even at the time before at least 2005, and also, the settlements that existed within Gaza, because Israeli settlements did exist in Gaza, but they were taking down what was called then the Israel disengagement plan in 2005. The major problem is that you're discussing or you're negotiating for peace, while Israel continues to build settlements and eating up more land.

So the space, the actual physical space, for a Palestinian state was shrinking at the same moment that you're supposed to be negotiating for peace. This, coupled with the fact that American foreign policy has not always been very favorable towards Palestinians and was not an honest broker in any peace agreements and deals and has always taken a very Israeli line, in terms of how it approach Palestinians, that we should accept whatever is put on the table, because we're weak and we cannot fight back and because you should just accept the bare minimum of the negotiating position that was being placed by the Americans and the Israelis at that moment, that led to the also paradigm blowing up as a process that actually leads to peace.

And in the meantime, there was always, in Palestinian society, forces that never saw, in the Oslo agreements, any real hope for a actual solution to the political predicament that we find ourselves in, for a lot of reasons. Some are ideological. Some people believe that you can only have real justice with the return of all refugees from 1948 and for one state to arise, one secular democratic states, or whatever other proposal that is being placed forward, that true justice demands that Palestinians who were kicked out from their homes and villages in 1948, and their cities should return to what is now Israel. Other Palestinians who viewed the two state solution as not perfect, but also, the thing that you can manage or you can realistically get, and you can have a state where you can have your own political self-determination within.

So there was always that disagreement within Palestinian society, and some of these forces, who viewed that the also agreements are a sort of betrayal, were also strengthened slowly, because of the lack of actual improvement, in terms of life, freedom of movement, in terms of settlement expansion, in terms of water resources, agriculture, economy, and a lot of the other things that were happening in the past 30 years. And it's important to note that, in 2000, there was a big eruption of violence between Israelis and Palestinians called the second Intifada, which ended around 2005, 2006.

Led to the disengagement from Gaza, but led to also the deeper penetration and expansion of settlements within the West Bank. And it also led to the rise of a new project in the West Bank by the current Palestinian Authority and the PLO that you mentioned, which was the nation or state building notion, which is that, now, it's the moment to build our state, to build the institution of the state. Because all the time, the IMF, the World Bank, American policymakers, the Israelis were saying,

“You, Palestinians, are not ready for statehood, because you don’t have the proper institution for statehood.”

So actually for a lot of years, Salaam Fayyad was then the prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas, who’s the current president, also used to be involved in this institutional building project, the project of building the state, on the premise that, once this institutional buildup is completed, then Palestine is ready for statehood and can take its role as a state within this two state framework. And actually, in 2012, the IMF, the World Bank, the EU, every international organization declared Palestine ready for statehood. In their reports, they declared that this institutional buildup has been successful. In fact, at that particular moment of our history as well, 2012, there was not a single Israeli killed in any Palestinian operation happening from the West Bank at least. There was a two week war that happened between Gaza and Israel in that year. But there was not a single Israeli that was killed by any violent action from Palestinians at that moment.

So you had a whole year, and that was the only year that that happened since, I think, 1972 or something like that, for 30 years. So it was a moment of high deescalation of violence. There’s no violence existing, because there was that hope, that something will actually transpire from this institutional and state building project that was being advanced by the PA and that was being promised by the EU and the US and other partners of the current Palestinian Authority. But unfortunately, nothing came out of it, no real negotiations, no real engagement from the American State Department or the administration, then Obama. Very, very weak and feeble attempts. Israel was taking a very rejectionist approach with the then and still now government of Ben Netanyahu, that it will not see a Palestinian state. It’s not interested in a two-state solution. There will not be a Palestine.

Actually, a lot of articles during these years included an article by Danny Danon, who was the, I think, the Israeli ambassador to the UN Security Council, who said, “What’s wrong with the Palestinian surrender?” And what he meant by that is that there is no real need for a Palestinian state. The Palestinians are weak, they’re defeated, they don’t deserve to have a state. But also, why should we stop expanding the illegal settlements in the West Bank? Why should we stop the military tribunals and arrest of people without legal rights, with secret files, administrative detention? These are forms of detention where you don’t get actually to see what you’re accused of. So you’re just held in prison for months and months, renewable every six months, without even you, as a defendant, getting to know what you’re accused of. So all these policies, why stop with them? The Palestinians are defeated and they should just declare their defeat.

And Israel was announcing all the time that it’s not interested in seeing through a Palestinian state. So this was kind of like a big blow for all those voices within Palestinian society, that hinged their political bet on some sort of negotiated solution. And it was also a rethink, a need to rethink among Palestinian society, “What should we do now? What can be done now?” And I think this turned towards violence, if you want, and political violence, whether on the Palestinian side or whether in also in Israeli militarism at this moment, is also an indicative of this failed process, of failed promises, of basically placing Palestine as a non-issue. It was not even an issue for the Biden administration, who came to office, and he’s the biggest single or the most unengaged American president ever in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He did not give Palestine or the Palestinian issue any attention whatsoever, that is significant enough.

And everything blew up on the 7th of October. Suddenly, Palestine is the most pressing issue again. Suddenly, everybody

is talking about it. Suddenly, it's high on the global agenda. And I think part of that reason is that, because of that diplomatic failure, because of these failed promises, because that there's no horizon of hope for Palestinians, because those who hinge within Palestinian society on any negotiate solution failed in their wager, then you have this massive turn towards resistance and armed resistance, whether in the West Bank and Gaza, as symptomatic of this collective failure on the part of the European American and also Israeli governments in the past decade.

Ju-Hyun Park:

Thank you. Let's pivot now to the current military situation, starting with Al-Aqsa Flood, the name of the Hamas operation that began on October 7th. What, in your opinion, were the goals of Al-Aqsa Flood? And what has been achieved from the standpoint of the strategic aims of Hamas and the broader Palestinian resistance?

Abdaljawad Omar:

Look, I think, when it comes to what is aimed, I think there's a specific goal. One of the issues for us in Palestine, that harms and touches every family, is the issue of Palestinian prisoners. Palestinian political prisoners, some of them have been held up for decades in Israeli prisons in brute conditions. They don't have the right to communicate with their families on phone. There's a lot of pain around imprisonment, interrogations, torture, the arrest of children, the arrest of political leaders.

And I think the operation on the seventh of October aimed directly to find leverage and a way to release those prisoners en masse, to clear the Israeli prisons from Palestinian political

prisoners. So that was its main aim. That's why you saw a lot of, at least from the standpoint of these armed groups, the imprisonment of a lot of the Israeli soldiers and some of the civilians in the Gaza envelope, in an effort to trade them in an exchange deal, that historically happened with Israel in multiple occasions in the past, in which there is an exchange between soldiers that are held captive by Palestinian resistance or Lebanese resistance and the Israeli state, in return for the release of Palestinian Arab prisoners. So that was one element of this operation.

I think the second element is what I just said earlier. I think it had to do with returning Palestine as a pressing issue, in a moment that a lot of voices in the US, in Israel, were saying, "Palestine is a non-issue. It's manageable. It's a minute security issue that could be managed through economic aid and some sort of management of or corporation between Israel and Palestinians. Hamas is deterred by Israeli firepower and strength." There was that assumption that is going on. And I think part of the aim was to break that, to break this whole narrative, diplomatic, political, strategic, that existed even among the American administrations and political and foreign policy establishments, but also, among Israeli policymakers, et cetera, that Palestine is an issue. And I think that's the second part of why the Palestinian resistance did this operation.

And I think the third part of the element has to do with Gaza itself, with the attempt to actually create a new reality in Gaza, one where there's no siege, one where there's more economic relief, one where there's more autonomy for Palestinians to control their resources, their economic infrastructure, the gas in the shores of Gaza. So there's an attempt also here to also improve the conditions of what a lot of people have described the largest open prison in the world, the 2.3 million people that live in Gaza, in utter poverty, without a lot of the rights that

other people... Even people in the West Bank have it a bit better than in Gaza, in terms of at least economic relief, because the policy of the PA are more cooperative with Israelis and Americans than those of the armed groups and Hamas political governance in Gaza. So that was the other dimension that also existed and part of the aims of this operation, at least on a political level.

Ju-Hyun Park:

Thank you for taking us through that summary. So we have the dimension of trading the hostages for prisoners. We have the dimension of returning Palestine as an urgent issue before the agenda of the world, of kind of breaking through this image of Israeli military invincibility. I'm hoping that we can kind of look at the reality that's playing out today and help our audience understand it.

You wrote, for Mondoweiss, "Gaza lives in the present, is contemporaneous with itself, and yearns for the end of war, precisely because it is a war that it already won when it successfully humbled the God complex at the heart of settler colonial pathology. It won when it brought the empire hurrying to the region to affirm and reaffirm again and again. That way it would allow Israel to regain its godliness. It won when it made the Israeli lobby feel trivial when they told the world that Palestine did not matter, as regional and international developments. It won when it gave Palestinian prisoners a way out of prison. A small besieged city has made the region jittery and on the edge of an all-out war and has driven Israel to its moment of madness. Palestine is now alive everywhere." Some people might look at the indiscriminate destruction Israel has unleashed on Gaza and find it difficult to see a victory in that, how would you respond?

Abdaljawad Omar:

Look, historically speaking, of course, it's very painful to see that, and I think, for the people of Gaza specifically, living under constant bombardment and almost random targeting from the sky, it is horrific. But the thing about what history teaches us, at least when it comes to a lot of the struggles that happened across the world with settler colonialism or with the empire, whether it's Vietnam or Algeria or in other places across the globe, that the oppressed always pay a heavier price in terms of their blood. That's the case. The Algerians had to sacrifice 2 million people in the effort to liberate their homeland. The Vietnamese had to sacrifice 4 million Vietnamese in the effort to drive the Americans out of Vietnam.

And there's always been a big blood, let's say, bill, that those who are oppressed have to pay, before they can regain their liberty. So it's, in many ways, unfortunately, that's one of the scenarios that are happening here, because if you stay silent, you're just choosing slow death. It's not death that is that intense and that bloody and that, but it's still death. It's so difficult to explain living within the horizon of what our lives are in the West Bank and Gaza and other places, because you just don't see any horizon, except your own self negation or negation by the other, negation by the Israeli war machine. And it happens daily, slowly.

You have the killings of people every day. A day doesn't go past without people being imprisoned or killed, et cetera, more land being confiscated, the settlement that exists near Ramallah being expanded and taking up more land. So this kind of slow process, that is not newsworthy, doesn't make it to international headlines is the process that we see. We see the space of the Israeli settlements expanding and our space being shrunk. We see the rhetoric coming out of these ministers and political

leaders in Israel and military leaders that speak openly about a decisive plan. We see this horizon of loss that is being imposed on us. So in many ways, when we speak about the intensity of the violence now happening in Gaza, I think it's actually a sign of the fragility of Israel at this particular moment, despite the heavy bombardment and killing of a lot of Palestinians, en masse, most of them are civilians, a lot of them are children.

It's a way to attain some sort of respite and revenge. It's an attempt to destroy this notion that Palestine is alive everywhere, by killing Palestine again. And it hinges on the Palestinian people and a lot of their supporters to not make that happen. And I think, when you kill more, you make people more invested in their liberation, rather than actually defeating them. You make people more invested, of course, in attaining a solution, that at least helps them live a dignified life, that is and should be the standard for everybody in the world. So I think that, despite a lot of the pain and the blood that is being spilled at this moment, we can't look at political victory here just from the lens of how much destruction and how much lives have been lost, as tragic as they are. And I wish we didn't have to even think about death and destruction and war and violence.

I think this is always the worst side in humanity when it comes out. But I think, for anybody that wants to analyze the situation, they need to think about, "What is this a symptom of?" Now, Israel trying to gain its mastery, trying to gain its balance, and going and declaring its genocidal intent, its ethnic cleansing intent, still not being very successful in destroying resistance in Gaza, because it's not. It's what it did that destroyed the city. It destroyed buildings. It killed a lot of civilians, but it haven't really touched the nerve or the heart of the armed resistance, Hamas or Islamic Jihad or other groups that exist in Gaza. So far, it's also engaging in a military campaign that has not been really successful in eliminating what it's supposed to eliminate.

So we will see what this leads to. Of course, defeat is always possible, but I think there's also a hopeful pathology here, not only a doom and destruction one, despite all of the pain and horror that we're witnessing at this moment.

Ju-Hyun Park:

Thank you so much. I think you have addressed this already in a roundabout way, but I think there are may be members of our audience who may be grappling with the particularities of October 7th. I'm speaking about the killing of Israeli civilians that occurred on that day. How can our audience understand that within the framework of everything that you've just described?

Abdaljawad Omar:

Look, I do think part of the problem with a lot of the discourse that exists currently, at least in mainstream media, is that there's a specific image that is created around the Palestinian fighter, a profane figure, detestable, an object to be hated, to be feared, and that whatever this figure does or doesn't do is something that should be completely condemned, and morally, politically, et cetera. Now, this is not to say again, let me just start by saying this, this is not to say that the Palestinian fighters entering the Gaza envelope settlements did not engage in the outright killing of civilians. I'm sure that that happened. I'm not trying to challenge that narrative, but it's important to say that a very sensational event like this, for me, it was always kind of the Israeli reaction to it by talking about beheaded babies, that were denied later.

Sensationalizing a sensational event always seems a bit strange and eerie. Why should you create more sensation and around an

already horrific event? Just show the event itself. Why exaggerate? Why build up disinformation and misinformation around it? That creates another narrative. And I think there's that layer that also made me think, "Why would you create more of an image of horror than there was a lot of horror to actually go around with? Why create more? Why intensify it? Why create that image and spread it?" That even the American president himself spoke from the podium and then, later, withdrew it. So I think part of the elements here is that what I think your audience need to understand is that, if anybody's planning an offensive maneuver within Israeli territory, they have to go across walls. They have to trick or navigate at a very high, one of the best intelligence services in the world and intelligence communities in the world.

They have to, at the same time, actually physically enter through walls that are 24 hours monitored with cameras, with eyes on the ground, with electronic surveillance systems, with radars, with whatever you want, in terms of the wall that separated the Gaza envelope communities from the Gaza Strip. And they have to enter and engage with an entire division of the Israeli army and a lot of the police presence within the area to actually take hold of that area. So in the military logic of the things, of how you navigate this, most of the fighters were concentrated on these targets. So there's a big side of this operation that is a military operation, and that's why Israel has announced that it has around 470 soldiers killed in these actions, including the targeting of the bases, the police stations, and some of the intelligence bases that also existed around the Gaza envelope.

So in most of that operation, the biggest part of the fighting force entering the Gaza envelope was engaged there. They were entering to do that. The second element of it is that part of, I think, the Palestinian fighter's plan was to take some of the civic space, some of these settlements, and perhaps also, hostages, in

an effort to delay any retake of the Gaza envelope by the Israel military. So one side wanted to delay. The other side, the Israeli army and intelligence, they want to speed the process of the retake. And I think that a lot of the civilian Israelis that were killed were also killed in the crossfire that happened amidst the Israeli attempt that went on to retake the Gaza envelope. So there's that element to it. Again, this is not to say that, in other places, Palestinian fighters were not executing Israeli civilians or were not doing things that... But what I'm saying is that the toll also speaks to that element, the crossfire, and to the third element that Israeli society is very particular.

And again, I don't want anybody to understand that that makes civilians targets, legitimate targets, but it's a very particular society, where a lot of the people are in the army, a lot of people specifically in frontier areas, like the Gaza envelope, hold weapons. So civilians themselves, they can defend themselves. They're trained to defend themselves, and they have the ability to defend themselves, in many of these instances and cases. And for any planning, military planning, from the Palestinian side and perspective, aware of that, there's also policy that every organization, military or otherwise, would be doing, which is to not take any chances, in many of the cases, with able-bodied people that have military training and background, including the police itself, which also has military training and background and can fend themselves. And what I'm trying to point out that there's a bit of a more complicated picture than just simply that the fighters came in.

The whole military equation of this is not being discussed in the media at all, the targeting of the military base, how the Israeli soldiers left or some of them hurried out or some of them were killed or kidnapped. Most of that was the concentration of the fighters. The second element, although that is a discussion in Israel itself, but in the American media, it's not a big part of the

discussion, and the second element is what I just outlined is that it wasn't just necessarily people going in from room to room and just killing everybody they see. There's a more complicated picture that demands, at least for us all, to look at the actual events and what happened. Again, this is not to say that outright killing of civilians did not occur. I'm sure that that also happened. Why did it happen?

I can't really explain that fully, but I will say this, that, in many cases and instances, and specifically in this case, the fact that Palestinian fighters, for the first time, enter Israeli areas, part of it is revenge, part of it is excesses, part of it is the feeling of entering and creating havoc. I'm sure that that is also part of the rationale that existed at least on the part of the Palestinian resistance. But we haven't seen, at least from the declared Hamas official position, whether in the beginning of the attacks or with their leaders, that the plan was to go and to commit a massacre, that the intent was there. Was this more of an excess on the part of the fighters? Or was this an intent? It remains a question. I'm not saying. I just don't know. I'm not really sure what is the rationale there in terms of the Palestinian and the Palestinian military plans of this. But for me, I think there's a lot of legitimate question to ask and to understand also, in terms of the tactical side of things and the strategic and military objectives on this.

And I think, look, from my knowledge of Israeli society, I think what really angered a lot of the top [inaudible 00:47:37], the military [inaudible 00:47:37], the intelligence [inaudible 00:47:39], was the failures of intelligence and military on that day. That's what angered, and that's what felt like a defeat for Israelis. That's what felt like that needs respite and needs revenge more than anything else.

Ju-Hyun Park:

Thank you for walking us through that. I understand that this is a very complicated and difficult subject to be able to grapple with and fully explain, but we have really appreciate you for taking the time to do this. Before we leave today, I wanted to bring up this response you published in Mondoweiss replying to an article by Adam Shatz of the London Review of Books, in which you spoke about some of the problems in Shatz' analysis of the response from the Western left to the events of October 7th. The title of his work was Vengeful Pathologies, and you responded with Hopeful Pathologies. And I would really recommend folks check out this article to give your full argument the room to breathe that it deserves. And I'm not necessarily asking you to rehash that for us today, but I'm wondering if, as a parting statement, you have any sort of advice or perspective that you want to offer to those of us who are living in the United States, who are determined to see a ceasefire or are determined to see an end to the occupation?

Abdaljawad Omar:

Look, yeah, for sure. I think one of the things that need to be broached, and I think any topic that is made again as a taboo is made as an untouchable thing that you cannot touch it, because it's something that is scary if you touch it. That is exactly where thinking should start, even if we are talking about Palestinian resistance, even if you condemn Palestinian resistance, because believe me, in Palestinian discussions and internal discussions, we don't always celebrate our resistance. In many ways, there's a critique and there's a lot of elements. There's ideological battles and fights, and it's a living institution with a lot of pitfalls. It has its own ailments and problems, and it has its own issues as well. It's a nuanced thing, but I think, for me, what was surprising about, first of all, the mainstream response is an attempt to conflate any Palestinian group with also the likes of ISIS and others.

Just a very different context. Whatever the ideology that the resistant groups have, you might call them reactionary in some cases. You might call them Islamist. You might call them... But the fact that they have a lot of support among Palestinians, it's because they offer hope and they offer a way out of a brutal military occupation of structural violence, that I said is a slow process, that hurts our lives, that makes us anxious, that eats up our land, et cetera, et cetera. But at the same time, it's a hopeful pathology for us. Resistance is a way to see perhaps a different world. And I think, in the West, there remains at least a lot of conservatism, even among the left and the liberals, in attempting to understand this institution and its history. The people who have found resistance groups, what do they stand for really?

Why are they capable of gaining ground among Palestinians? Why they're legitimate and seen as legitimate in the Arab world, not only among Palestinians? Why everybody in the Arab world celebrate them and look for, or not everybody, but a lot of the people in the Arab world celebrate them and look and anticipate their statements? There's a reason that goes beyond simple hate and vengeance here and simple dislike of the other or xenophobia or racism. This is the association that is attempted to be made. There's a history of pain and trauma that exists on the Palestinian side. There's also that hope that we can break through that wall, through the prison in Gaza, and create a new reality that is hopeful, that gives us a sense of autonomy and life, not under the will and whims of another people who control us and control our lives and economy, et cetera.

So there's a lot of hope in resistance, and that's why resistance. And in fact, it's strange and it's so ironic, but the ones who recognize this mostly, even among Israelis, are the right wing settlers. In Bezalel Smotrich's plan, which is called a decisive plan, he doesn't say that Palestinians fight from desperation or

fight because they're deprived. He says, "Because they hope." Hope. Now, his hope, he takes it to a different level, of course, he thinks that our hope is to destroy Israel or to destroy the mere physical presence of Jews in Palestine, for instance, which is not necessarily the case, but what is at stake here is that he recognized, "These are people under control, subjugated, and they're looking for any meager sense of hope." And that hope is what the resistance offers or at least they attempt to offer. Again, this doesn't mean that Palestinians agree with everything that the resistance... There's a lot of critique around a lot of what happened also on October 7th.

There's a lot of people that do not necessarily see, in every action, that every resistance group ever did, a thing to celebrate or to fetishize. This is not the case. There's a lively debate among Palestinians about what forms of resistance. Also, it's important to note for your audience that Palestinians have resisted repeatedly in nonviolent manner, and they were met with brutal force, including in Gaza itself, by the way, with the great march of return, where a lot of people were and a lot of young kids were sniped and their legs were killed, hundreds of them were done. So that brutality, the brutality of violence, it does breed violence. But at the same time, what I'm actually trying to say is that we should never shy away from a conversation on any topic. The only people allowed to talk about Hamas on a tactical strategic level in mainstream conversations are people who want to defeat it, and it's in major think tanks in DC, it's in military think tanks, that these things are spoken about.

But among the left and among the liberals, there's very little discussion, because there's a fear. Again, a discussion does not mean condoning anything or not, but there's a fear that, if you even open this topic, it's something that shames you and assigns to you some sort of horrific image as a supporter of terrorism or

as a supporter of antisemitism or as somebody who supports the killing of civilians or anything like that. And I think this is intellectual laziness, at best, among Left and people concerned about also what's happening in Palestine and other places to not engage with this institution in a lively debate. And I think part of my problem with Adam Shatz' article is that he attempts to engage with it, but then, places a high dark tone around everything that has happened. It's not about only moral condemnation of the actions of the Palestinian fighters.

A lot of people condemn these actions. What mostly concerned me about his article is that the fact that he's also offering us only darker undertones, he's only speaking about the fascism that [inaudible 00:55:54], he's only speaking about this horizon of the nightmare. He offers us the nightmare. He doesn't offer us the dream. And I think the nightmare and the dream are both on offer here, not only the nightmare, and that's why I saw it important to intervene and write the article that I wrote, that we should look at both and we should have a more nuanced and complex understanding of dynamics. And we should also look at the history of military engagement between Palestinian Armed Resistance and Israel on a tactical level, on an operational level, how that kind of conversation by arm has taken place over. There's a long history around that. It doesn't start yesterday.

It doesn't start on October 7th either. And we should also have a more critical lens, as we look at these things. And fine, we can say, "Here, there is an ethical problem, Palestinian resistance, and there, there's a moral issue that you need to deal with. And why are you not doing more to do something else in terms of blah, blah?" But I don't think that engagement is happening. And I think, that is what is more worrying, that resistance, at least in the US, and discussing it openly or talking about it remains this very untouchable taboo subject that is highly politicized. And the moment you open it up, you're just accused

or there's an attempt to make you silent by fearmongering and a sort of new McCarthyism that is rising on these terms. So yeah.

Ju-Hyun Park:

Thank you. That's a wonderful explanation of and a nice cap to our conversation. Before we leave, could you share with our audience where they can find you?

Abdaljawad Omar:

You can find me on Twitter, I guess, and also, on Mondoweiss, I write regularly there, and Electronic Intifada, as you mentioned in English. But yeah, that's the three places where you can most likely find any new contribution I have written or otherwise, in the next coming days or in the next whatever.

Ju-Hyun Park:

Excellent. Thanks so much to everyone for listening. This has been Abdaljawad Omar with The Real News. I'm Ju-Hyun Park, your host, signing off.