

Project Nimbus that provides support to the genocide in Gaza, addresses the health and safety crisis among Google workers from being made complicit in a genocide, and finally, stops the harassment, intimidation, bullying, silencing, and censorship of Palestinian, Arab, Muslim Googlers.

Like us, users of Google and Amazon who thought these companies were better than helping a notorious cabinet recognize and profile the oppressed Palestinians, these workers were fooled. Specifically, they were fooled by the repeated claims of both companies to uphold human rights commitments. Amazon had once released Global Human Rights Principles, promising to “embed respect for human rights throughout our business”. Similarly, Google stated that companies “can make money without doing evil”. Now, were they always doing evil to make money or did they recently get stripped of cash and turned to evil? Judging by their unparalleled stock values, I don’t think the second possibility holds any weight, but I like or rather, have to be optimistic for my own sanity.

Not the first faux pas

The two companies have made untoward dealings with other parties before as well. The No Tech for Apartheid movement, with their inside knowledge, has listed a few.

Amazon helps power the deportation-detention machine of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and partners with over 2,000 US police departments to surveil and criminalize Black and brown communities through its doorbell camera Ring. Meanwhile, Google sold artificial intelligence to the Department of Defense to



An unidentified Google Cloud engineer (standing) disrupts a conference in New York City on March 4, 2024, to declare that he refuses “to build technology that powers genocide, apartheid, or surveillance”. The engineer was reportedly fired.

make its drone strikes deadlier and, despite ending this contract after public and worker pressure, Google still holds ties with the Pentagon.

In recent years, Google workers have objected to military contracts, challenging Google’s work with US Customs and Border Protection and its role in a defense program building artificial intelligence tools used to refine drone strikes. Workers have alleged that the company has cracked down on information-sharing, siloed controversial projects, and enforced a workplace cul-

ture that increasingly punishes them for speaking out.

If you think these were some shameful, upsetting revelations about your favorite companies, wait till you hear what they have been doing for years to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, where not only there’s no meaningful pushback to adopting horrible policies, but they are also almost surely incentivized by the Israeli cabinet. If you don’t believe this or can easily play the devil’s advocate for Google in the following cases, just remember that a few meters

away over the fence, in the illegal settlements, the realities are the total opposite.

Ahmad Abu Shammalh, a computer scientist based in Gaza, noted that selecting Palestine as your location on Amazon may well result in a big reduction in pricing, but the catch is that you have to be an Israeli residing in one of the illegal settlements of the West Bank. If, however, you’re a Palestinian, “Don’t even bother trying this if you’re Palestinian — your package will never be delivered.”

That is if you can load the website. As you may know, Palestine is stuck with 3G networks, and Gaza is still on 2G, while the world, including Israel, is anticipating the possibilities of 5G. “This leaves Palestinians with an underdeveloped and expensive connection, in direct contrast with the other side of the political fence.”

Let’s say you get over that hurdle, too — probably with an iron will and lots of free time on your hand, which, realistically, at least as a Gazan, you won’t have right now as you’re scavenging for food in the densely populated Rafah region. You’ll very soon realize that none of Google’s paid services are available in Palestine. “If you own an Android device, you will not be able to purchase apps,” Akram Abunahla, a Gazan graduate student in Linguistics, wrote to the movement. So, don’t wonder why there aren’t any news and videos coming directly from Gazan citizens. They simply don’t have access to the same apps that you and I do. And that is maybe for the better, since when they did have access, for example in 2018, Israeli forces arrested more than 350 Palestinians because of their posts on social media platforms, according to the Commission of Detainees Affair.

As I researched more and more about the recent scandal of Google firing 50 workers for participating in a protest over its cloud deal with Israel, the rabbit hole got deeper, but unlike Alice, I’m no happier than I was before; quite the contrary. I definitely know more, but it came at a slightly steep price. I lost the last piece of innocence that I had, the piece that allowed me to lean back and trust that at least Google directors have our interests in mind. Apparently, no, their pockets are deeper than any literal or metaphorical rabbit hole.

Google contract shows deepening deal with Israel Defense Ministry



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PERSPECTIVE

Google provides cloud computing services to the Israeli Ministry of Defense, and the tech giant has negotiated deepening its partnership during Israel’s war in Gaza, a company document viewed by TIME shows.

The Israeli Ministry of Defense, according to the document, has its own “landing zone” into Google Cloud — a secure entry point to Google-provided computing infrastructure, which would allow the ministry to store and process data, and access AI services.

The ministry sought consulting assistance from Google to expand its Google Cloud access, seeking to allow “multiple units” to access automation technologies, according to a draft contract dated March 27, 2024. The contract shows Google billing the Israeli Ministry of Defense over \$1 million for the consulting service.

The version of the contract viewed by TIME was not signed by Google or the Ministry of Defense. But a March 27 comment on the document, by a Google employee requesting an executable copy of the contract, said the signatures would be “completed offline as it’s an Israel/Nimbus deal.” Google also gave the ministry a 15% discount on the original price of consulting fees as a result of the “Nimbus framework,” the document says.



Hundreds of protesters gather in front of Google’s San Francisco offices, demanding an end to its work with the Israeli cabinet and protesting Israeli attacks on Gaza, on December 14, 2023.

● TAYFUN COSKUN/ANADOLU

Project Nimbus is a controversial \$1.2 billion cloud computing and AI agreement between Israel and two tech companies: Google and Amazon. Reports in the Israeli press have previously indicated that Google and Amazon are contractually barred from preventing specific arms of Israel from using their technology under Project Nimbus. But this is the first time the existence of a contract showing that the Israeli Ministry of Defense is a Google Cloud customer has been made public. Google recently described its work for the Israeli cabinet as largely for civilian purposes. “We have been very clear

that the Nimbus contract is for workloads running on our commercial platform by Israeli cabinet ministries such as finance, healthcare, transportation, and education,” a Google spokesperson told TIME for a story published on April 8. “Our work is not directed at highly sensitive or classified military workloads relevant to weapons or intelligence services.”

Contacted on April 10 with questions about the Ministry of Defense contract, a Google spokesperson declined to comment further.

The news comes after recent reports in the Israeli media have alleged the coun-

try’s military, controlled by the Ministry of Defense, is using an AI-powered system to select targets for airstrikes on Gaza. Such an AI system would likely require cloud computing infrastructure to function. The Google contract seen by TIME does not specify for what military applications, if any, the Ministry of Defense uses Google Cloud, and there is no evidence Google Cloud technology is being used for targeting purposes. But Google employees who spoke with TIME said the company has little ability to monitor what customers, especially sovereign nations like Israel, are doing on its cloud infrastruc-

ture.

The Israeli Ministry of Defense did not respond to requests for comment.

The Israeli Ministry of Defense’s attempt to onboard more units to Google Cloud is described in the contract as “phase 2” of a wider project to build out the ministry’s cloud architecture.

The document does not explicitly describe phase one but does refer to earlier work carried out by Google on behalf of the ministry. The ministry, the contract says, “has [already] established a Google Cloud Landing Zone infrastructure as part of their overall cloud strategy and to enable [the Ministry of Defense] to move applications to Google Cloud Platform.”

For “phase 2” of the project, the contract says, the Ministry of Defense “is looking to enable its Landing Zone to serve multiple units and sub-units. Therefore, [the Ministry of Defense] would like to create several different automation modules within their Landing Zone based on Google’s leading practices for the benefit of different units, with proper processes to support, and implement leading practices for security and governance architecture using Google tools.”

The consulting services on offer by Google are for the tech company to “assist with architecture design, implementation guidance, and automation” for the Ministry of Defense’s Google Cloud landing zone, the contract says. The estimated start date is April 14, and Google’s consulting services are expected to take one calendar year to complete.

Two Google workers have resigned in the last month in protest against Project Nimbus, TIME previously reported.

The article first appeared on TIME.