

Big Brother without borders: Israel's psychopathic warfare in Lebanon

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OPINION

Israel, on September 17, remotely detonated hundreds of handheld pagers used by members of Lebanon's Hezbollah, killing at least 12 people. Two children were among the fatalities of the terror attack, which also wounded thousands and overwhelmed Lebanese hospitals.

The following day, walkie-talkies exploded across the country, ending 20 lives. Two days after that, on September 20, an air strike on a densely populated neighbourhood in the Lebanese capital of Beirut killed scores of people. And on September 23, the Israeli military commenced a patently psychopathic bombing spree over various sectors of Lebanon that has killed more than 700 people, including 50 children.

In addition to the physical bombardment, Lebanese phones are also being bombarded with evacuation warnings courtesy of Israel - a form of terror in their own right given Israel's history of ordering folks to evacuate and then bombing them when they comply.



A week of attacks on Lebanon has revealed Israel's Orwellian surveillance terror tactics are now being deployed beyond the occupied Palestinian territory.



This video grab shows a walkie-talkie that was exploded inside a house, in Baalbek, east Lebanon, on Sept. 18, 2024.
● AP



Ambulances arrive at American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC) as people were wounded and killed when the pagers they use to communicate exploded across Lebanon on September 17, 2024.
● MOHAMED AZAKIR/REUTERS

During Israel's 34-day war on Lebanon in 2006, for example, 23 residents of the southern Lebanese village of Marwahin were slaughtered at close range by an Israeli military helicopter as they followed Israeli instructions to abandon their homes. Most of the dead were children.

To be sure, the very existence of Israel has always been predicated on mass killing - an arrangement that has produced, inter alia, the continuing genocide in the Gaza Strip, where officially more than 41,000 Palestinians have been killed in less than one year but the true death toll is, no doubt, many times higher.

And yet the sudden onslaught of exploding Lebanese electronic devices and ramped-up psychological warfare is taking Israel's destructive ef-

forts in an even more Orwellian direction than usual.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word Orwellian as "characteristic or suggestive of the writings" of British author George Orwell, especially of the "totalitarian state depicted in his dystopian account of the future, *Nineteen Eighty-four*". The book was published in 1949 - incidentally one year after Israel's bloody self-invention on Palestinian land - when the year 1984 was still 35 years away.

By the time 1984 actually rolled around, Israel had already expanded its experiment in inflicting regional dystopia to encompass Lebanon, as well, where the 1982 Israeli invasion of the country killed tens of thousands of Lebanese and Palestinians.

And what do you know? It was this very apocalyptic invasion that occasioned the formation of Hezbollah, thereby ensuring another handy enemy whose acts of legitimate resistance would be exploited to justify Israeli aggression for the foreseeable future.

Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four* is also the source of the phrase "Big Brother is watching you" - a comment on surveillance regimes and one that has long applied to Israel, particularly in

light of its position at the vanguard of the global spyware industry. As with other components of Israel's arsenal of repression, the marketability of Israeli hacking technologies is bolstered by the fact that all such expertise is battle-tested on Palestinians. In an essay for the *Jerusalem Quarterly*, titled *Strategies of Surveillance: The Israeli Gaze*, the late Palestinian sociologist Elia Zureik noted that Israel's punitive surveilling of Palestinians had predated even the founding of Israel when data on Palestinian villages was compiled in order to facilitate conquest and dispossession.

Nowadays, Israel's draconian checkpoints in the West Bank constitute one of the many faces of Big Brother, while in Gaza, Israel's implementation of an extensive facial recognition programme simply adds insult to genocide.

Over in Lebanon, meanwhile, we are seeing what happens when Big Brother is also capable of making your personal electronic devices explode - a crime that merits categorical denunciation as terrorism but that has nonetheless been hailed as a "sophisticated" attack in certain awestruck Western media outlets.

According to international humanitarian law, it is "prohibited in all circumstances to use any mine, booby-trap or other device which is designed or of a nature to cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering". As per the law, "other devices" means manually-emplaced munitions and devices including improvised explosive devices designed to kill, injure or damage and which are actuated manually, by remote control or automatically after a lapse of time".

Then again, international law also prohibits the deliberate targeting of civilians, which has never stopped Israel from doing just that.

In the 2006 war on Lebanon, the Israeli military eliminated approximately 1,200 people, the vast majority civilians, and in the final days of the conflict, fired millions of cluster munitions at Lebanon, many of which failed to explode on impact and continued for years to wound and kill. So much for the prohibition on mines and boobytraps.

As in the case of the exploding pagers, unexploded cluster bombs are not only weapons in and of themselves; they are also armaments of psychological warfare, designed to keep civilian populations good and terrorised.

With Israel now undertaking to normalise lethal surveillance and unrestrained psychopathy in both Gaza and Lebanon, admirers of the "sophisticated" attack would do well to keep in mind that dystopia is a slippery slope.

Israel's fundamental role in shaping surveillance infrastructure and fortifications on the United States-Mexico frontier is proof enough that Big Brother knows no borders. And as walkie-talkies blow up against a background of US-backed genocide, how will anyone ever draw the line?

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