

In October, Israel returned to the policies of targeting or besieging hospitals, killing doctors and other medical staff, and targeting aid and civil defense workers. Still, Israel would not achieve any of its strategic goals of the war. Even the killing of Hamas' leader, Yahya Sinwar, in battle on October 16 would not, in any way, alter the course of the war. Israel's frustration grew by leaps and bounds throughout the year. Its desperate attempt to control the global narrative on the Gaza genocide largely failed. On July

19, and after listening to the testimonies of over 50 countries, the ICJ issued a landmark ruling that "Israel's continued presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is illegal." That ruling, which expressed international consensus on the matter, was translated on September 17 to a UN General Assembly resolution "demanding an end to Israel's occupation of Palestine within the next 12 months". All of this effectively meant that Israel's attempt at normalizing its occupation of

Palestine, and its quest to illegally annex the West Bank was considered null and void by the international community. Israel, however, doubled down, taking its rage against West Bank Palestinians, who, too, were experiencing one of the worst Israeli pogroms in many years. According to the Palestinian Health Ministry, by November 21, at least 777 Palestinians had been killed since October 7, 2023, while thousands more were wounded and over 11,700 arrested. To make matters worse, Smotrich called,

on November 11, for the full annexation of the West Bank. The call was made soon after the election of Donald Trump as the next US president, an event that initially inspired optimism amongst Israeli leaders, but later concerns that Trump may not serve the role of the savior for Israel after all. On November 21, the ICC issued its historic ruling to arrest Netanyahu and his Defense Minister Yoav Gallant. The decision represented a measure of hope, however faint, that the world is finally

ready to hold Israel accountable for its many crimes. 2025 could, indeed, represent that watershed moment. This remains to be seen. However, as far as Palestinians are concerned, even with the failure of the international community to stop the genocide and reign in Israel, their steadfastness, sumoud, will remain strong until freedom is finally attained.

*The article first appeared on Ramzi Baroud's website.*

## Year of shame, many more to come



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OPINION

*The shame concerning Israel's genocide against the Palestinians, specifically in Gaza, is an issue likely to dominate both the international conscience as well as the Israeli psyche for the coming century.*

*I will be addressing it from two angles: the external shaming, and the internal shame — the act of shaming Israel from without, and the sense of shame by Israelis themselves, forming itself after the nationalist hubris has been worn down.*

First, the external shame. Israeli Jews know very well what ongoing, inter-generational shaming of those who commit genocide is like. Until now, they have societally relished in doing this to Germany. Let me demonstrate this with a personal story. In the summer of 2002, when Germany was competing against Brazil in the football World Cup, I was on a family visit in Israel. Ahead of the match, my late wife, who was Danish, said that she was hoping Germany would win. A certain stillness took over, and a 'friendly suggestion' came from the side, that someone tell her 'how things work here'. In other words, it is a problem to root for Germany, no matter who plays against them. This precise idea was echoed by the Israeli sports commentators covering the match itself: "Of course, we root for Brazil because we don't root for Germany". That was well over half a century after the Holocaust, but the shaming over it is everywhere and down to sports. It's a national norm, and Israeli Jews do not seem very shy about it. As Golda Meir once told Shulamit Aloni, "After the Holocaust, Jews can do whatever they want." The Holocaust came to be a singularization of genocide — the genocide of genocides. While Israel was apparently interested in the term Genocide entering the sphere of international law (signing the Genocide Convention of 1948 in 1950), it was certainly not interested in becoming accused of it. That other countries could be accused of it was another matter. But that the country which has established itself with such centrality for the Nazi genocide itself become a genocidal culprit — that was not the idea. Israel itself committing genocide, constitutes a breaking of the singularity of Jewish victimhood relating to the Holocaust. The Holocaust has been a central instrument of protecting Israel against critique and condemnation, and now it risks losing its singular power. In other words, Israel risks losing its monopoly on genocide.

Now, the internal shame. So, through the Holocaust, Israel has been shaming the world in the manner referenced above, for decades, shielding itself from any forms of criticism or accountability. But the idea that Israel itself is committing genocide against the Palestinians, turns all this shame backward and inward. After having internalized the idea that we, Jews, are the singular victims of genocide, having applied eternal shame to those who committed it, the sword of shame turns the other way. And this is something that apparently very few Israelis are able to deal with. This is the explanation behind why the Israel chapter of Amnesty International could not accept the Amnesty International report on the Israeli genocide and went against it. It did not have any serious arguments to rebuff the 296-page report with, just the claim that there was not sufficient evidence and that perhaps Israel was involved in ethnic cleansing (a term that currently doesn't have a very clear definition in international criminal law, and therefore is sometimes used to tone down the Genocide claim, in a somewhat shallow manner) — but that it requires further investigation (which the report meticulously conducts). For Israelis, the recent statement of former defense minister Moshe Ya'alon, that Israel is committing ethnic cleansing in northern Gaza, was perhaps a shock to many, but it's still not as abhorrent as the crime of crimes — genocide. For Israelis, having the world call them genocidaires is akin to calling them Nazis because that's what they've often internalized as the main representation of genocide. Shame is not a rational matter; it is an emotional one. It is an emotional condemnation, a condemnation Israeli society is wholly unprepared and unwilling to confront. Israel has, as mentioned, strategically applied the notion of antisemitism and the Holocaust as a means of averting critique and condemnation. Since these have historically been effective to a large degree, Israelis have become quite used to the privilege of being able to rebuff critique that easily. Such a re-

ality can create hubris — anything you do, you are immune. Lack of accountability creates and perpetuates a reality of injustice. In 2002, Shulamit Aloni was asked by Amy Goodman on Democracy Now about people expressing "dissent against policies" of the Israeli cabinet and being called "antisemitic". Aloni, the late Israeli minister, responded: "Well, it's a trick. We always use it. When from Europe somebody is criticizing Israel, then we bring up the Holocaust. When in this country (USA) people are criticizing Israel, then they are antisemitic.... and that justifies everything we do to the Palestinians". Since the Israeli response has so regularly been to shame criticism and condemnation back with accusations of antisemitism, the Israeli societal psyche has accustomed itself to see pretty much any such criticism and condemnation as a manifestation of antisemitism, or at least anti-Israel bias, which under the notion of "the new antisemitism," is anyway akin to hate of Jews. So, the challenge for many Israelis is now not only the international shaming but the ability to measure reality beyond their own mental shields of bias, where "the world is against us." Although Netanyahu's likening of the ICC prosecutor to Nazi judge for requesting arrest warrants against himself is a caricature of this perception, still, many Israelis seem to be in the mindset that if the world sees crimes against humanity in Israel's deeds, it is the world that is wrong, not Israel. There is also a pushback of anger against all those many decades of impunity. After all, the ethnic cleansing of Palestine is by now a pretty mainstream understanding of what happened in 1948 — and Israel has en-

Members of the Jewish Voice for Peace and the If Not Now movement, two Jewish activist groups, stage a rally on October 18, 2023, in Washington, D.C., to call for a cease-fire in the Israeli war on Gaza. Their matching t-shirts read, "Not in our name."  
ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES



An aerial view shows activists painting a mural denouncing Israel's attacks on Gaza, next to the Rio Grande in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, on November 12, 2023.  
EPA

joyed great impunity for not rectifying that. The distance between that and genocide is actually not that great, and elements of ethnic cleansing are arguably genocidal in their very nature. The anger is inter-generational, not just about what Israel did and does, but about how little it has had to pay for it. This matter has been a persistent aggravation for Palestinians, but their rightful anger has been seen by many Israelis and Zionists as an annoying unwillingness to accept compromise, and unreasonable hate of Israel. This has been formulated as "the new antisemitism" by the Israel lobby. The man who pushed the "new antisemitism" idea in the 1970s, Israel's foreign minister Abba Eban, also quipped that the "Arabs don't miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity." Such taunting of the victims has been going on for decades, and so, the spilling-over of shame may be much more than just a reaction to what is occurring now in isolation. The "new antisemitism" is Israel's means of conflating critique and condemnation of Israel, and hate of Jews. It claims that Israel is the "Jew among the nations," and that Israel simply represents the Jew that was once discriminated against. Israel claims itself to be a representation of Jews internationally, as in the self-proclaimed "The Jewish State". The notorious IHRA definition of antisemitism only exacerbates the problem, with examples such as "accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations", or "holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of" Israel. This is a problem that is inherent to Zionism, which seeks to define Jews as a nation. Zionists themselves exaggerate the manifestation of Zionism among Jews worldwide, so as to say that Jews and Zionism are one and the same. But if they are one and the same, then critique and condemnation of Israel is tantamount to personal animosity against Jews. So how can anyone differentiate between the two (Jews and Israel),

and is it antisemitic to do that? And if the same shaming that Israelis know all about is to be applied against them, in as unnuanced a manner as they shame Germans for the Holocaust, will it be because they are Jews or because they are Israelis? And if people worldwide take the word of Zionists (who also created the IHRA definition) and believe that basically all Jews stand with Israel, will it be any surprise that some of them also end up shaming Jews? It is precisely Israel that is making all this so confusing. And this is the point of it all — in the confusion, people get worried that they might be considered antisemites if they criticize or condemn Israel, and many avoid it for that reason. I do not want to suggest an outpouring of shame against Israel for the next century, like Israel has done with Germany, as my first story described. Israel actively applies Holocaust guilt against Germany, at the state level, for political reasons. I do not think that shame and guilt should be drivers of foreign relations, and Israel's shaming tactics should not be a model for the future. I prefer justice to revenge, and I believe Israel must be brought to justice for its crimes against humanity — the current arrest warrants from the ICC against Prime Minister Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Gallant are just the beginning and cover the tip of the iceberg. But I do want to point out that the court of public opinion is another arena. Israelis have wanted to be spectators in that arena while it is only others who are being thrown to the lions. But no empire lasts forever, and no emperor's legacy is eternal glory. At some point, Karma steps in.

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