



● change.org



What Netanyahu's cabinet is doing in Gaza — dehumanizing a civilian population, forcing displacement, destroying infrastructure, and killing indiscriminately — is not a defense of the Jewish people. It is a betrayal of Jewish values, international law, and basic human decency.

Israel's narrative cannot survive truth

So it's silencing world


By Somdeep Sen
Author, researcher
O P I N I O N

We are living in truly extraordinary times. We recently witnessed the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories Francesca Albanese being sanctioned by the United States for doing her job — that is, documenting Israel's abuses against Palestinians during its ongoing military assault on Gaza. But with more than 58,000 Palestinians killed to date in Gaza, the case for Israel is weaker than ever. So, for Israel's sake, we need to silence and ban everything. Of course, silencing and censorship have been the modus operandi of the pro-Israel camp since October 2023. In the immediate aftermath of the Hamas attack on Israel, they came for all those who insisted that the history of Palestine and Israel did not begin on October 7, 2023, and for pointing to the longer history of occupation, settler colonialism, or the siege of Gaza since 2007 — they were silenced, censored, and punished. Those were the days of the now-discredited reports of "be-headed babies". Across the US and Europe, some faced death threats and social media attacks, while others were reprimanded by employers and line managers for criticising Israeli policies or publicly expressing pro-Palestinian views. In schools across Maryland, Minnesota, Florida, and Arizona, teachers were suspended and student clubs shut down for pro-Palestine activism. University professors in the US and the United Kingdom were reported to the police for "liking" or sharing pro-Palestinian social media posts. In May 2024, Maura Finkelstein became the first tenured aca-

dem to be dismissed for anti-Zionist speech. She was fired from Muhlenberg College after posting a Palestinian poet's work. Between October 2023 and now, there have been scores of such cases around the world. Only a few days ago, four adjunct professors at the City University of New York were dismissed for their Palestine solidarity activism.



● THE INTERCEPT

Then they came for the press. While the foreign press has been banned from entering Gaza, Palestinian journalists there have been treated as legitimate military targets by Israel. On average, 13 journalists have been killed per month — a toll higher than that of "both World Wars, the Vietnam War, the wars in Yugoslavia, and the United States war in Afghanistan combined". It is the deadliest conflict for media workers ever recorded. Elsewhere, journalistic voices — especially those of Middle Eastern or North African descent — have been systematically silenced for supporting the Palestinian cause or criticising the Israeli cabinet. This includes Australian radio host Antoinette Lattouf, who was dismissed in December 2023 after posting a Human Rights Watch report alleging that "Israel was using starvation as a weapon of war in Gaza". Palestinian-Canadian journalists Yara Jamal (CTV) and Zahraa al-Akhrass (Global News, during maternity leave) were both sacked in October 2023, following pressure from Honest Reporting Canada. Briahna Joy Gray and Katie Halp-

er were also fired from Hill News for statements critical of Israel. Gray announced on X: "The Hill has fired me ... there should be no doubt that ... suppressing speech — particularly when it's critical of the state of Israel." Beyond dismissals, Western media executives have shaped the narrative, repeating Israeli propaganda, mischaracterising Pal-

estinian activism as pro-Hamas or anti-Semitic, portraying Israelis as victims far more often than Palestinians, and whitewashing Israeli war crimes in Gaza. The BBC, in particular, has faced repeated criticism for its pro-Israel bias. From the language used in headlines to the disproportionate airtime given to Israeli officials, its reporting has consistently been accused of downplaying Palestinian suffering and mirroring Israeli cabinet talking points. Staff resignations, open letters, and public protests have all challenged the broadcaster's editorial stance on Gaza. At Upday, Europe's largest news aggregator owned by Axel Springer, employees were instructed to "colour the company's coverage of the war in Gaza with pro-Israel sentiment". Internal documents obtained by The Intercept revealed staff were told not to "push anything involving Palestinian casualty tolls" unless "information about Israel" was given "higher up in the story". There is more. After October 7, students at Harvard were subjected to terrifying doxxing campaigns labelling them anti-Semitic or terrorist

sympathisers, their photos and personal data shared publicly. As Israel's scholasticide continued in Gaza, the silencing spread on campuses across the US and Europe. Palestine solidarity encampments saw students demanding that their institutions cut ties with Israeli universities and the military-industrial complex. They faced brutal police crackdowns, suspensions, and some were denied graduation. Universities swiftly imposed new restrictions on gatherings and protests to curb student Palestine solidarity.



Journalists, relatives, and friends pray over the bodies of journalists Sari Mansour and Hassouna Esleem after they were killed in an Israeli bombardment at Bureij camp in the central Gaza Strip on November 19, 2023.
● MAJDI FATHI/NURPHOTO

Now, under a Trump administration, such suppression is public policy, extending to threats of arrest, denaturalisation, and deportation for pro-Palestinian voices, including lawmakers like NYC mayor Zohran Mamdani. Trump falsely labelled him "illegal", branded him a "communist", and threatened arrest if he obstructed Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) "operations" — echoing GOP Representative Andy Ogles's call for denaturalisation and deportation, citing alleged misrepresentations in Mamdani's naturalisation without any evidence. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt confirmed that the Justice Department had received related requests. We have also seen Palestinian flags banned at sporting and music

events. Individuals have been refused entry into public venues and businesses for wearing a keffiyeh. The International Criminal Court (ICC) Chief Prosecutor Karim Khan was warned that he and the ICC would be "destroyed" if they did not drop the case against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former defence minister Yoav Gallant. Four ICC judges were sanctioned by the US government. Academy Award-winner Susan Sarandon was dropped by her talent agency, UTA, for remarks at a Palestine solidarity rally.

Melissa Barrera was dismissed from the cast of *Scream VII* for social media posts describing Israeli actions as genocide and ethnic cleansing. Spyglass Media Group stated it has "zero tolerance for antisemitism ... including false references to genocide, ethnic cleansing, Holocaust distortion". Recently, performers like Bob Vylan and Irish group Kneecap used their platforms at music festivals to show solidarity with Palestine. The group now faces terror charges. Vylan's shows in Europe were cancelled, and his US visa revoked, putting an upcoming tour of the country in doubt. The pro-Israel camp also launched a campaign against the Glastonbury Festival after both artists performed there in June. They

targeted the BBC for airing the performances live and pressured organisers to distance themselves from the musicians. The backlash made clear that even major cultural institutions are not safe from censorship efforts. Adding to this troubling trend, widely respected Israeli-American historian and genocide scholar Omer Bartov has become a focal point of a fierce backlash. In an op-ed for *The New York Times*, titled "I'm a Genocide Scholar. I Know It When I See It", Bartov declared that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza, pointing to the systematic infrastructure destruction, forced population shifts, and rhetoric by Israeli leaders, arguing it matches both UN and legal definitions of genocide. Since then, he has been slammed by pro-Israel factions, accused of misapplying the term, and urged to be "cancelled," a campaign he rebuts by highlighting that many genocide studies experts share his conclusion. The reputational assault currently faced by Bartov demonstrates how even the world's leading genocide experts are now being targeted for naming Israel's actions in Gaza as genocide. This may already appear to be an extensive campaign of suppression. But consider: What does it say about Israel's position if it relies so heavily on censorship? Nonetheless, it remains insufficient. For Israel's sake, every student, academic, activist, musician, artist, or lawmaker who criticises its policies must now be branded a terror supporter. Every civil society organisation, human rights group, or international body documenting Israeli abuses must be labelled anti-Semitic. Only then can we claim we saw nothing. Only then can we say we heard nothing. And only then can we justify why we did nothing when the genocide was ongoing in Gaza.

The article first appeared on Al Jazeera.