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Who Gets to Be Human?

The “Moral Dilemma” at the Heart of the Ongoing Palestinian Genocide

What we are witnessing, in Gaza and Palestine as a whole, is nothing short of a humanitarian catastrophe—a stain on the so-called “rules-based international order”.



When will it stop, the unabated carnage?

The killing, displacement, and destruction go by many names: genocide, ethnic cleansing, a land grab. Whatever the label, the justifications for Israeli actions offered by world powers ring hollow, revealing a global complicity rooted in political expediency and moral bankruptcy.

It is clear that most people, at least in the civilized world, with few exceptions, take for instance, South Africa and Yemen, are complete hypocrites. The moral West is willing to turn a blind eye to the mass murder of the Palestinians and others, both Arab and Christians alike.

Gaza's population remains trapped in what many describe as an open-air prison—movement restricted, resources controlled, history erased

Now, with Israeli airstrikes reaching as far as Damascus, Yemen, Lebanon, and soon even Iranian territory, one cannot help but ask: **Is there a method in this madness?** The pattern is too calculated, too far-reaching, to dismiss as “reactive self-defense”.

The real scandal is global silence. As Palestinians—Muslims and Christians—are slaughtered and expelled, the so-called civilized world looks away. Their lives are treated as worthless, their suffering mere background noise.

This is not just about the idea of a **Greater Israel**—it's about a broader, more sinister geopolitical vision that demands ethnic homogeneity, permanent war, and total impunity.

And just as the world forgets Gaza, it has already forgotten Syria and Lebanon. Who now speaks of the mass slaughter of Alawites and other civilians during the height of that conflict? Who remembers the sectarian cleansing, the international meddling, the use of proxy forces to destroy a nation from within?

Memory fades. But justice delayed—or denied—comes at a cost. And history is watching. **As Caitlin Johnstone so concisely:**

The holocaust in Gaza has been reignited after a brief intermission. The bodies are piling up again. Food is running out. Netanyahu and Trump are working to end the existence of Palestinians in their historic homeland. The suffering is unfathomable. And it's all being supported by the western empire under which we live.

Having personally visited sites of mass executions in Ukraine, such as Babya Yar, and having walked the silent halls of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, stood with my two young sons before the dim-lit exhibits at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, and wandered through the emotional labyrinth of memorials dedicated to the Armenian Genocide, I have often found myself wrestling with the same question:

What is the purpose of remembrance if not to prevent repetition?

Yet here we are, watching the slow and systematic annihilation of a people—the Palestinians—while the so-called “morality police” remain absent or complicit. The global institutions, watchdogs, and governments that rose in the wake of the 20th century's most infamous genocides are silent, indifferent, or worse, justifying atrocities as collateral damage. A fair question, then, is: **Who gets to be the arbiter of memory and morality?** And: **What happens when moral outrage is reserved only for politically convenient victims?**

The answer stares us in the face in Gaza, where over the last 16 months, the façade of humanitarian law, including, the doctrine of R2P, has crumbled. Palestinians are not counted among the world's "worthy" victims, or, it seems, even as human, but the rulers of the west. Their history, their dispossession, and their very humanity have been dismissed as inconvenient truths and not worth being allowed to live by the same standards as the rest of the world.

History of Palestine

One only has to look back to the **mass expulsions**, village demolitions, and targeted killings that followed the 1947 UN Partition Plan and the creation of Israel in 1948, known to the Palestinians as the Nakba (catastrophe in Arabic). The ethnic cleansing of historic Palestine is well-documented by both Palestinian and Israeli historians—yet those who dare to speak this truth are ostracized, ridiculed, or labeled fringe.

Those Jews, including myself, and a younger generation of American Jews, are considered as self-hating Jews, or not even real Jews. Norman Finkelstein, a Jewish scholar whose mother survived the Warsaw Ghetto. Finkelstein has stood almost alone in the American intellectual mainstream, shining light on the crimes committed in the name of Zionism.

He has exposed the grotesque contradiction embedded in the phrase **"A land without a people for a people without a land,"** calling it not just ahistorical but morally obscene.

Gaza will be no more!

Finkelstein's critiques go further. He points to the normalization of genocidal attitudes within Israeli society—views so deeply ingrained they no longer shock. This is no longer the ideology of fringe settlers or ultranationalist factions; it is the consensus across a political spectrum that has shifted so far right, it can no longer be meaningfully called a "spectrum" at all. What was once radical is now mainstream.

The result

The casual dehumanization of an entire population is paramount. Palestinians in Gaza are not seen as civilians—they are "human shields," "terrorist sympathizers," "future terrorists" or simply collateral damage. This twisted logic absolves everything. "They brought it upon themselves," we are told. Even the deaths of children are rationalized as unfortunate necessities.

"They all get what they deserve"—this is not the voice of a fringe group; it is the soundtrack of a society unmoored from its own humanity.

And it is a cruel joke—almost surreal in its grotesqueness—to insist that the atrocities unfolding in Gaza are the result of what happened on October 7, 2023. As though the killing

of 1,200 Israeli civilians, tragic and indefensible as it was, somehow justifies the indiscriminate bombing of refugee camps, hospitals, and schools.

“Two wrongs don’t make a right,” we teach children. Why does this moral axiom not apply to nations?

We are told that Israel has the right to defend itself. But Gaza has no right to exist, and the West Bank will be solely for Israeli settlers, apparently.

We’re often told Israel has the right to defend itself. Yet, Gaza is denied the right to exist, and the West Bank appears destined solely for Israeli settlers. Gaza’s population remains trapped in what many describe as an open-air prison—movement restricted, resources controlled, history erased.

With 50,000 people, or more, including at least 15,000 children, are dead. Entire families have been annihilated, many still buried beneath rubble. And that’s a conservative estimate. Of particular concern is Donald Trump’s recent remark about relocating 1.6 million Gazans. Before October 7, 2023, Gaza’s population stood at 2.2 million. That might mean as many as 600,000 are dead from Israeli military actions.

Where are the morality police now?

The answer is as damning as it is simple: They never came because they were never meant to. Not for the Palestinians. The world remembers only the victims it chooses. The rest are silenced, their suffering deemed too abstract, their humanity negotiable, and their existence soon forgotten.

One thing is certain—even the NGO community agrees: when it is neither politically nor financially expedient, leaders like Netanyahu, accused by the ICC of war crimes and crimes against humanity, must no longer enjoy perpetual impunity—no holds barred.

Yet, there is still hope that history can’t be so easily buried. As Hitler allegedly said in 1939:

“Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?”

He counted on the world forgetting. And for a time, it did.

Let us not make that same mistake again!

Jeffrey Silverman, April 12, 2025

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