

The Desperate Hamas Gamble: Will Mass Slaughter Allow Palestinians a Future?

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Why is no one asking what would make thousands of young men commit suicide, in effect, and bring what they know will be horrific death and destruction to hundreds of thousands of their families? Commentators appear mystified: surely everyone knows that Hamas fighters have no chance, ultimately, against the country with the fifth largest military in the world. Why would they risk every Palestinian's future by such an act?

The reality — censored by our media and ignored by our governments — is that Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip have no future to look forward to.

No one is pointing out the slow genocide that Israel is imposing on the millions of Palestinians literally caged in Gaza and the total lack of hope for any future that differs from Israel's periodic slaughtering of their families and devastation of their homes, schools, mosques, hospitals, and civic buildings. Along with constant attacks on fishermen, farmers and anyone thought to be in the resistance, Israel ensures that Gazans have limited electricity and little fuel. When I visited Gaza in 2006, (before the Israeli attack), it already looked apocalyptic, with people reduced to traveling on donkeys amid ruined buildings and traffic lights that no longer worked.

No one is pointing out that millions of Gazans have been facing a humanitarian siege — clearly patterned after the notorious two-year Nazi siege of the Warsaw Ghetto — that is now in its eighteenth year. This siege limits food to barely above starvation calories, blocks necessities of life including medicine and medical supplies, building materials, textbooks, and at one point even soap and detergents: a clearly genocidal act in the world's most densely-populated enclave.

No one is pointing out that the occupied Gaza Strip is virtually uninhabitable, with its land declared by the United Nations to be too contaminated to sustain life, and with

virtually no potable water in Gaza (thanks to Israel's use of the aquifer so that sea water is pulled into Gaza's taps). Israel ensures that there is little fishing by limiting the agreed-upon territorial limit of 20 nautical miles to 3 and shooting on fishing boats anyway. Israel has declared a "buffer zone" taking in a third of Gaza's agricultural land, but shoots at those farming, as well.

Israel is not only stealing Palestinian water and land, it is stealing Palestinian gas off the coast of Gaza: gas that Israel's Supreme Court once ruled belonged to Palestinians. A 2021 UN General Assembly resolution called on Israel to end its theft of Palestinian resources: apparently in vain.

Palestinians throughout the occupied West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza voted for Hamas leadership in their 2006 election because of its reputation for honesty and its call for international law as a basis for a just peace. Israel promptly labeled Hamas a "terrorist" entity *because* of its legitimate positions, despite the fact that Hamas has tried to follow international law far more closely than Israel ever has.

Gazans have been dying as a result of Israel's treatment with their deaths unremarked and ignored. They held peaceful weekly protests in their "Great March of Return", during which time Israeli snipers shot thousands of the civilians — including medics and journalists — crimes that western media largely censored and governments ignored. Although Israel has killed hundreds of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank already this year, few in the west have been made aware of the outrageous killings.

As responsible leaders that face an openly genocidal Occupying Power, Hamas has been left with little choice but to bring their situation to world attention by inviting a horrific slaughter that will (hopefully) force the world community to take notice and honor their obligations under international law. The blood on Israel's hands is shared by all countries that have ignored their contractual legal obligation under the Fourth Geneva Convention to hold Israel's leaders to account for their flagrant war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The initial public response has not been promising, with even Palestinians' supporters fearful of speaking out to defend the desperate Hamas gamble. This must change: those who understand this reality must confront their governments and media to demand an end to Israel's apartheid, ethnic cleansing and slow genocide. There must be a just peace and security for Palestinians as well as for Israelis.

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