

Another Expert Report Finds Israel Is Committing Genocide. The West Yawns. Jonathan Cook

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Global Research, December 29, 2024

[Jonathan Cook](#) 25 December 2024

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

Three separate reports published this month by leading international human rights and medical groups have detailed the same horrifying story: that Israel is well advanced in its genocide of the Palestinian population in Gaza.

Or, to be more accurate, they have confirmed what was already patently clear: that, for the past 14 months, [Israel has been slaughtering](#) tens of thousands of Palestinians with indiscriminate munitions, while at the same time gradually starving the survivors to death and denying them access to medical care.

Genocides can happen with gas chambers. Or with machetes. Or they can be carried out with 2,000lb bombs and aid blockades. Genocides rarely look the same. But they are all designed to arrive at the same endpoint: the elimination of a people.

Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) agree that Israel is striving for extermination. It has not hidden its intent, and that intent is confirmed by its actions on the ground.

Only the willfully blind, which includes western politicians and their media, are still in denial. But worse than denial, they continue to actively collude in this, the ultimate crime against humanity, by supplying Israel with the weapons, intelligence and diplomatic cover it needs for the extermination.

Last week, MSF [issued its report](#), titled *Life in the Death Trap That is Gaza*, concluding that Israel was intentionally “unravelling the fabric of society”.

The medical charity observed: “The violence unleashed by Israeli forces has caused physical and mental damage on a scale that would overwhelm any functioning health system, let alone one already decimated by a crushing offensive and a 17-year-long blockade [by Israel].”

MSF added: “Even if the offensive ended today, its long-term impact would be unprecedented, given the scale of the destruction.”

Rebuilding the society and dealing with the health consequences will “span generations”.

Intention Proven

MSF’s findings followed hot on the heels of an [185-page report](#) by Human Rights Watch, which concluded that Israel was committing “acts of genocide”.

The organisation limited its focus to one Israeli policy: its systematic effort to deprive the population of access to water – a clear measure of intentionality, the critical yardstick for judging whether mass killing has crossed into genocide.

At a news conference, Lama Fakhri, HRW's Middle East director, [said their research](#) had proved Israel was “intentionally killing Palestinians in Gaza by denying them the water that they need to survive”.

Israel had done so in four coordinated moves. It had blocked pipelines supplying water from outside Gaza. It had then cut off power to run the pumps that Gaza's own supplies from wells and desalination plants depended on.

Next, it had destroyed the solar panels that were the backup to deal with such power cuts. And finally, it had killed crews trying to repair the supply system and aid agency staff trying to bring in water supplies.

“This is a comprehensive policy preventing people from getting any water,” HRW's acting Israel and Palestine director, Bill Van Esveld, concluded. He added that the group had made “a very clear finding of extermination”.

‘Pattern of Conduct’

HRW echoed a much wider-ranging report by Amnesty International, the world's best-known international human rights organisation.

In a [296-page report](#) published in early December, Amnesty concluded that Israel had been “brazenly, continuously” committing genocide in Gaza – or “unleashing hell” as the organisation phrased it more graphically.

The period of Amnesty's research ended in July, five months ago. Since then, Israel has further intensified its destruction of northern Gaza to drive out the population.

Nonetheless, Amnesty described a “pattern of conduct” in which Israel had deliberately obstructed aid and power supplies, and detonated so much explosive power on the tiny enclave – equivalent to more than two nuclear bombs – that water, sanitation, food and healthcare systems had collapsed.

The scale of the attack, it noted, had caused death and destruction at a speed and level unmatched in any other 21st-century conflict.

Budour Hassan, Amnesty's researcher for Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, said Israel's actions went beyond the individual war crimes associated with conflicts: [“This is something deeper.”](#)

Agreeing with major Holocaust and genocide scholars, Amnesty concluded that the high bar needed to prove genocidal intent in law was crossed last May when Israel began destroying Rafah, the area in southern Gaza that it had herded Palestinian civilians into as a supposedly “safe zone”.

Israel had been warned not to attack Rafah by the world's highest court, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), but went ahead anyway.

'Mass Denial'

For some time, leading Holocaust and genocide scholars – among them Israelis – have been speaking up to warn not only that a genocide is unfolding, but that it is nearing completion.

Last week, [Omer Bartov](#) even managed to get his message out on CNN. He [told Christiane Amanpour](#) that Israel was carrying out “a war of annihilation” on the Gaza Strip. “What the IDF [Israeli military] is doing there is destroying Gaza,” he said.



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[Amos Goldberg](#), another Israeli Holocaust expert, [noted that](#) Raphael Lemkin, a Jewish-Polish scholar who [coined the term “genocide”](#), described its two phases.

“The first is the destruction of the annihilated group and the second is what he called ‘imposition of the national pattern’ of the perpetrator. We are now witnessing the second phase as Israel prepares ethnically cleansed areas for Israeli settlements.”

Goldberg added: “Like in every other case of genocide in history, right now we have mass denial. Both here in Israel and around the world.”

Bartov’s invitation by CNN appeared to have been provoked by [an article in Haaretz](#), Israel’s most liberal newspaper. It published last week testimonies from Israeli combat soldiers, in which they described committing and witnessing war crimes in Gaza. They paint a picture of systematic erasure that, even from their limited perspective, looks ominously like genocide.

The soldiers describe shooting dead anyone who moves inside undeclared so-called “kill zones”, even children, and then claiming them to be “terrorists”. The dead are left to be eaten by packs of dogs.

The only words one Israeli reservist found to describe Israel's repeated and intentional killing of children in Gaza was "pure evil".

According to a senior reserve commander recently returned from the enclave, the Israeli army has created "a lawless space where human life holds no value".

Another says units compete to see who can kill the greater number of Palestinians, indifferent to whether they are Hamas fighters or civilians.

Others describe these units as operating like "independent militias", unrestrained by military protocols.

'Everyone Is a Terrorist'

How the Israeli army implemented the Gaza genocide is alluded to in the Haaretz article. After the Hamas attack on 7 October 2023, the military leadership devolved normally centralised decision-making to local field commanders.

Many of those commanders live in the most religiously extreme of the illegal Jewish settlements in the West Bank. Not only are they Jewish supremacists, but they follow rabbis who believe all Palestinians, even babies, pose a threat to the Jewish people and must be exterminated.

Notoriously, a group of influential settler rabbis formalised their genocidal teachings into a book called [The King's Torah](#).

One senior commander identified by Haaretz is [Brigadier General Yehuda Vach](#), a settler from Kiryat Arba, possibly the most extreme of all Israel's West Bank settlements.

For many years, Vach headed the military's officers training school, passing on his extreme views to a new generation of officers, presumably some of whom are now making decisions in Gaza.

Today, he heads Division 252, in which many of the soldiers who spoke to Haaretz have served.

One of his officers recounted how, after Hamas' military leader [Yahya Sinwar was killed](#) in October, Vach held an official meeting to determine what to do with his body. He wanted to strip Sinwar's corpse naked, put it in a public square, dismember it and pour sewage over the remains.

In an address to soldiers, he is reported to have echoed a genocidal view widely shared in Israel, that "there are no innocents in Gaza". Even Israel's supposedly liberal President Isaac Herzog [has said as much](#).

But according to one officer, Vach has made this view an "operational doctrine".

Vach's view of Palestinians is that "everyone's a terrorist". And that means, given Israel's current, explicit aims in Gaza, everyone must be killed.

Nothing Sticks

None of this should surprise us. Israeli leaders from the very start announced their genocidal intent. And more than a year ago, Israeli soldiers serving in Gaza [began telling us](#) of the [systematic nature](#) of Israel's war crimes.

But like everything about this genocide, those accounts made no impact on the western political and media consensus. Nothing has stuck, even when it is the soldiers themselves documenting their atrocities, and even when it is Israeli Holocaust experts concluding that these crimes amount to genocide.

It has been nearly a year since the ICJ, comprising more than a dozen internationally respected judges, decided that a ["plausible" case had been made](#) that Israel was carrying out a genocide in Gaza.

The judiciary is amongst the most conservative of professions.

The situation in Gaza is incalculably worse than it was last January when the court issued its ruling.

But the wheels of justice are required to turn slowly, even though Gaza does not have time on its side.

How is this permanent condition of mass denial possible? There is nothing normal or natural about it. The denial is being actively and furiously manufactured.

Only because we live in a world where billionaires own our politicians and media do we need courts and human rights groups to confirm what we can already see quite clearly being live-streamed to our devices.

Only because we live in a world owned by billionaires do those same courts and rights organisations spend long months weighing the evidence to protect themselves from the inevitable backlash of smears aimed at discrediting their work.

And only because we live in a world owned by billionaires is it possible, even after all those delays, for our politicians and media to ignore the findings and carry on as before.

The system is rigged to favour the imperial hub of the United States and its client states.

If you are an African dictator, or an official enemy of the so-called West, the most minimal evidence suffices to prove your guilt.

If you are under the protection of the US godfather, [no amount of evidence](#) will ever be enough to put you behind bars.

It is known as realpolitik.

Always Another Story

For many months, the western media's role has been to gaslight us by pretending the genocide is something else.

First, the mass slaughter of Palestinians was presented simply as a natural desire by Israel

to eliminate “terrorism” on its doorstep following the Hamas attack of 7 October 2023.

It was chiefly a story of Israeli “self-defence” that conveniently overlooked the preceding decades in which Israel had driven Palestinians off their land, either out of their homeland entirely or into ghettos, then colonised the land illegally with apartheid-style Jewish settlements, and subjected the Palestinian ghettos to brutal Israeli military rule.

In the coverage after 7 October, the Palestinians – long the victims of an illegal occupation – were viewed as squarely to blame for their own suffering. To suggest anything else – to worry that a genocide was unfolding – was a sure sign of antisemitism.

Then, as the slaughter intensified – as Gaza was levelled, hospitals wrecked, the population collectively punished with an aid blockade – the official story faltered.

So a new narrative was advanced: of international efforts to reach a ceasefire ending “the cycle of violence”, of the focus on securing the release of the hostages, of Hamas intransigence.

We were back to the familiar framework of an intractable conflict, in which both sides were to blame – though, of course, the Palestinians more so.

Now, as it becomes impossible to continue pretending that Israel wants peace, to ignore the fact that it is expanding the slaughter, not reining it in, the media strategy has shifted once again.

As the genocide reaches its “[final stage](#)” – as the Israeli Holocaust scholars Omer Bartov and Amos Goldberg warn – the media have largely lost interest. If there is no way to both-sides the genocide, then it must be disappeared.

And in media-land, there is always another story that can be promoted. There will always be another front-page lead rather than the most disturbing one of all, in which western leaders and the media are full participants in the live-streamed extermination of a people.

BBC Buries the News

That is the context for understanding the media’s collective yawn as the three genocide reports dropped one after another this month.

Israel’s accusations that Amnesty’s report was antisemitic were entirely expected. What should not have been was the media’s largely indifferent response.

The BBC was a case study in how to bury bad news. Its flagship television news programmes – the dominant news source for Britons – ignored the story completely.

Meanwhile, its poor cousin, the 24-hour news channel, which draws a far smaller audience, did mention the Amnesty report, [but captioned it](#): “Israel rejects ‘fabricated’ claims of genocide.”



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Look at the BBC News wording when covering Amnesty International's new genocide report.



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In other words, when the BBC did offer very limited coverage, it skipped the news story of Amnesty's findings and went straight to Israel's predictable, outraged reaction.

In an [investigation for Drop Site News](#) last week, Guardian columnist Owen Jones spoke to 13 current and recently departed BBC staff. They said the corporation's coverage of Gaza was heavily skewed to present Israel's actions in a favourable light.

In a WhatsApp chat for senior BBC Middle East editors, correspondents and producers, one participant – incensed by the “fabricated claims” caption – wrote: “FFS! – It's an open goal for those who say we're frit [afraid] of upsetting the Israelis and keep on couching our stories in an 'Israel says' narrative'.”

The BBC's website, by far the most influential English-language online news source, [inexplicably ignored](#) the Amnesty report for 12 hours after the embargo was lifted. Read [this](#).

Even then, it appeared as the seventh item. For the following week, it was not included in the “Israel-Gaza” index on the website's front page, making it unlikely it would be found.

This pattern has long been true in the BBC's coverage of Israel and Palestine, but it has

become far more glaring since the stakes were raised for Israel by its genocide.

As Jones's investigation discloses, BBC management has tightly restricted control over the Gaza coverage to a small number of journalists known to hew closely to Israel's view of events - and despite their editorial role provoking what Jones calls a "civil war" in the BBC newsroom.

Notably, Jones did not publish his investigation in the Guardian, where there have been similar [reports of staff indignant](#) at the paper's failure to give proper weight to the genocidal nature of Israel's actions.

Rigged Algorithms

What the BBC has been doing is not exceptional. As soon as a light is shone into the dark recesses of the state- and billionaire-owned media, the same picture always emerges.

Last week, an investigation revealed that Meta, the company that owns Facebook and Instagram, intentionally [rigged its algorithms](#) to suppress reports from the biggest Palestinian news sources after the Hamas attack of 7 October 2023.

Palestinian news outlets saw their views on Meta platforms fall significantly after the attack - on average by 77 percent - when they should have expected to see far greater interest. By contrast, views of Israeli news outlets rose sharply.

Paradoxically, the investigation was published by the BBC, though notably the research was initiated and carried out by the staff of its Arabic news service.

Also last week, more than a dozen whistleblowers from Deutsche Welle, Germany's equivalent of state broadcaster the BBC, [revealed to Al Jazeera](#) that a culture of fear reigns in the newsroom when it comes to critical coverage of Israel.

Similar reports from whistleblowing staff have exposed the rigged nature of the coverage - always in Israel's favour - in other major outlets, [from CNN](#) to the [New York Times](#) and the Associated Press news agency.

In reality, the same skewed news agenda can be found in every newsroom in every corporate media outlet. It just requires whistleblowers to come forward, and for there to be someone willing to listen and in a position to publish.

Why? Because a genocide unfolding in plain sight cannot be made to appear normal without an enormous expenditure of effort from institutional media to close the eyes of their audiences. To hypnotise us into indifference.

State of Anxiety

Too many of us are susceptible to this process - and for a number of reasons.

In part, because we still trust these institutions, even though their chief function is to persuade us that they are there for our benefit - rather than the reality that they serve the interests of the larger corporate structures to which they belong.

Those western structures are invested in resource theft, asset-stripping and wealth concentration – all, of course, pursued at the expense of the global south – and the war industries needed to make this pillage possible.

But also, it is part of our psychological makeup that we cannot sustain attention on bad news indefinitely.

To watch a genocide unfold week after week, month after month, and be unable to do anything to stop it, takes a terrible toll on our mental health. It keeps us in a permanent state of anxiety.

The corporate structures that oversee our media understand this only too well. Which is why they cultivate a sense of powerlessness amongst their audiences.

The world is presented as a baffling place, where there are inexplicable forces of evil that act without any comprehensible causation to destroy all that is good and wholesome.

The media suggest international affairs are little different from a game of whack-a-mole. Whenever the good West tries to solve a problem, another evil mole pops up its head, whether it be Hamas terrorists, Hezbollah terrorists, Syria's former dictator Bashar al-Assad, or the mad mullahs of Iran.

With this as the framework for the Gaza genocide, audiences are left sensing either that what is happening to Palestinians, however horrifying, may be deserved or that investing too much concern is a waste of energy and time. Another crisis will be along in a moment equally demanding of our attention.

And so it will. Because that is precisely the way the corporate media works. It offers a conveyor belt of bad news, one bewildering event after another – whether it be another disgraced celebrity, or murdered schoolgirl, or an outbreak of war.

The media's role – the reason states and corporations keep such a tight grip on it – is to stop us from gaining a wider picture of the world, one on which our hands look far more bloodied than the “terrorists” we sit in judgment on. One where a powerful western elite, its corporate empire headquartered in the US, runs the planet as nothing more than a wealth-extraction machine.

And so we, the publics of the West, shrug our shoulders once again: at “man's inhumanity to man”, at “the cycle of violence”, at “the barbarians at the gate”, at “the white man's burden”.

Nearly 15 months on, the Gaza genocide has become entirely normal, it has become just another minor, routine news item to be buried on the inside pages.

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