

## Extermination Works. At First. “If Israel is Not Stopped” .... Chris Hedges

Israel will continue its mass killing to achieve its immediate goals, but in the long run the blowback from its genocide will doom the Zionist state.

By [Chris Hedges](#)

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*Extermination works. At first. This is the terrible lesson of history. **If Israel is not stopped** — and no outside power appears willing to halt the genocide in Gaza or the destruction of Lebanon — it will achieve its goals of depopulating and annexing northern Gaza and turning southern Gaza into a charnel house where Palestinians are [burned alive](#), decimated by bombs and die from [starvation](#) and infectious diseases, until they are driven out. It will achieve its goal of destroying Lebanon — 2,255 people have been [killed](#) and over one million Lebanese have been displaced — in an attempt to turn it into a failed state. And, it may soon realize its long cherished dream of forcing the United States into war with Iran. Israeli leaders are publicly salivating over proposals to assassinate Iranian leader **Ayatollah Ali Hosseini Khamenei** and carry out airstrikes on Iran’s nuclear installations and oil facilities.*

Israeli **Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** and his cabinet, like those driving Middle East policy in the White House — [Antony Blinken](#), raised in a staunch Zionist family, [Brett McGurk](#), [Amos Hochstein](#), who was born in Israel and served in the Israeli military, and [Jake Sullivan](#) — are [true believers](#) in the doctrine that violence can mold the world to fit their demented vision. That this doctrine has been a spectacular failure in Israel’s occupied territories, and did not work in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Libya, and a generation earlier in Vietnam, does not deter them. This time, they assure us, it will succeed.

In the short term they are right. This is not good news for Palestinians or the Lebanese. The U.S. and Israel will continue to use their arsenal of industrial weapons to kill huge numbers of people and turn cities into rubble. But in the long term, this indiscriminate violence sows dragon’s teeth. It creates adversaries that, sometimes a generation later, outdo in savagery — we call it terrorism — what was done to those slain in the previous generation.

Hate and a lust of vengeance, as I learned covering the war in the former Yugoslavia, are passed down like a poisonous elixir from one generation to the next. Our disastrous interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen, along with Israel’s invasion of Lebanon in 1982, which [created](#) Hezbollah, should have taught us this.

Those of us who covered the Middle East were stunned that the Bush administration imagined it would be greeted as liberators in Iraq when the U.S. had spent over a decade imposing sanctions that resulted in severe shortages of food and medicine, [causing](#) the deaths of at least one million Iraqis, including 500,000 children. **Denis Halliday**, the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq, [resigned](#) in 1998 over U.S.-imposed sanctions,

[calling](#) them “genocidal” because they represented “a deliberate policy to destroy the people of Iraq.”

Israel’s occupation of Palestine and its saturation bombing of Lebanon in 1982, were the [catalyst](#) for Osama bin Laden’s attack on the Twin Towers in New York City in 2001, along with U.S. support for attacks on Muslims in Somalia, Chechnya, Kashmir and the South of the Philippines, U.S. military assistance to Israel and the sanctions on Iraq.

Will the international community continue to stand by [passively](#) and allow Israel to carry out a mass extermination campaign? Will there ever be limits? Or will war with Lebanon and Iran provide a smokescreen — Israel’s worst campaigns of ethnic cleansing and mass murder have always been done under the cover of war — to turn what is happening in Palestine into an updated version of the Armenian genocide?

I fear, given that the Israel lobby has bought and paid for Congress and the two ruling parties, as well as cowed the media and universities, the rivers of blood will continue to swell. There is money to be made in war. A *lot* of it. And the influence of the war industry, buttressed by hundreds of millions of dollars spent on political campaigns by the [Zionists](#), will be a formidable barrier to peace, not to mention sanity.

Unless, as Chalmers Johnson writes in “[Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic](#),” “we abolish the CIA, restore intelligence gathering to the State Department, and remove all but purely military functions from the Pentagon” we will “never again know peace, nor in all probability survive very long as a nation.”

Genocide is done by attrition. Once a targeted group is stripped of its rights the next steps are the displacement of the population, destruction of the infrastructure and the wholesale killing of civilians. Israel is also attacking and killing [international monitors](#), [human rights organizations](#), [aid workers](#) and [United Nations staff](#), a feature of most genocides. Foreign journalists are being [arrested](#) and [accused](#) of “aiding the enemy,” while Palestinian [journalists](#) are being [assassinated](#) and their [families](#) wiped out. Israel carries out [continuous](#) assaults in Gaza on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), where two-thirds of its facilities have been damaged or destroyed, and 223 of its staff have been killed. It has [attacked](#) the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), where peacekeepers have been [fired upon](#), [tear gassed](#) and [wounded](#). This tactic replicates the Bosnian Serb attacks in July 1995, which I covered, on the U.N. Protection Force outposts in [Srebrenica](#). The Serbs, who had cut off food deliveries to the Bosnian enclave, resulting in severe malnutrition and starvation, [overran](#) the U.N. outposts and took 30 U.N. troops hostage before massacring more than 8,000 Bosniak Muslim men and boys.

These initial phases are complete in Gaza. The final stage is mass death, not only from bullets and bombs, but famine and disease. No food has entered northern Gaza [since](#) the beginning of this month.

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Water shortage in Gaza ([Source](#))

Israel has been dropping leaflets demanding everyone in the north evacuate. 400,000 Palestinians in northern Gaza must leave or die. It has ordered the [evacuation](#) of hospitals — Israel is also [targeting](#) hospitals in Lebanon — deployed drones to fire indiscriminately on civilians, including those attempting to take the wounded for treatment, [bombed](#) schools that serve as shelters and turned the [Jabaliya refugee camp](#) into a free fire zone. As usual, Israel continues to target [journalists](#), including Al Jazeera's [Fadi Al-Wahidi](#), who was shot in the neck and remains in [critical condition](#). At least 175 journalists and media workers are estimated to have been [killed](#) by Israeli troops in Gaza since Oct. 7, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [warns](#) that [aid shipments](#) to all of Gaza are at their lowest level in months. “People have run out of ways to cope, food systems have collapsed, and the risk of famine persists,” it notes.

The total siege imposed on northern Gaza will, in the next stage, be imposed on southern Gaza. Incremental death. And the primary weapon, as in the north, will be famine.

Egypt and the other Arab states have refused to consider accepting Palestinian refugees. But Israel is banking on creating a humanitarian disaster of such catastrophic proportions that these countries, or other countries, will relent so they can depopulate Gaza and turn their attention to ethnically cleansing the West Bank. That is the plan, although no one, including Israel, knows if it will work.

Israeli Minister of Finance **Bezalel Smotrich**, in August [complained](#) openly that international pressure is preventing Israel from starving the Palestinians, “even though it

might be justified and moral, until our hostages are returned.”

What is happening in Gaza is not unprecedented. Indonesia’s military, backed by the U.S., carried out a [year-long campaign](#) in 1965 to exterminate those accused of being communist leaders, functionaries, party members and sympathizers. The bloodbath — much of it carried out by rogue death squads and paramilitary gangs — decimated the labor union movement along with the intellectual and artistic class, opposition parties, university student leaders, journalists and ethnic Chinese. A million people were slaughtered. Many of the bodies were dumped into rivers, hastily buried or left to rot on roadsides.

This campaign of mass murder is today mythologized in Indonesia, as it will be in Israel. It is portrayed as an epic battle against the forces of evil, just as Israel equates the Palestinians with Nazis.

The killers in the Indonesian war against “communism” are cheered at political rallies. They are lionized for saving the country. They are interviewed on television about their “heroic” battles. The three-million-strong Pancasila Youth — Indonesia’s equivalent of the “Brownshirts” or the Hitler Youth — in 1965, joined in the genocidal mayhem and are held up as the pillars of the nation.

Image [source](#)



Joshua Oppenheimer’s documentary [“The Act of Killing,”](#) which took eight years to make, exposes the dark psychology of a society that engages in genocide and venerates mass murderers.

We are as depraved as the killers in Indonesia and Israel. We mythologize our genocide of Native Americans, romanticizing our killers, gunmen, outlaws, militias and cavalry units. We, like Israel, fetishize the military.

Our mass killing in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq - what the sociologist James William

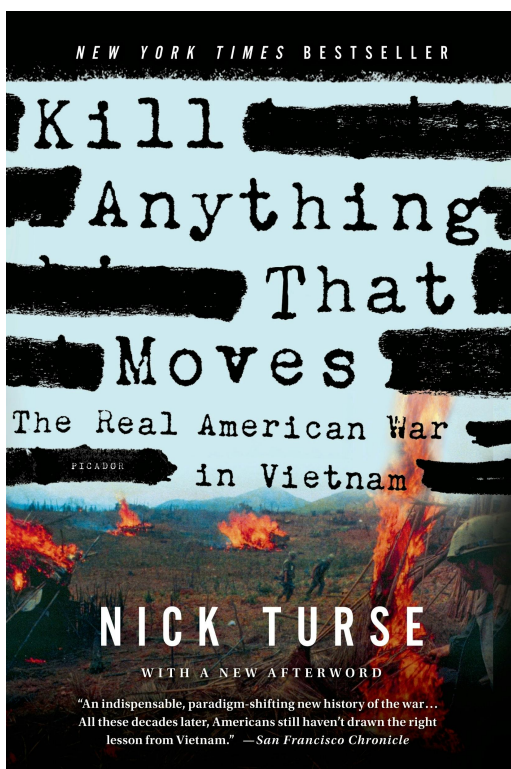
Gibson calls “technowar”— defines Israel’s assault on Gaza and Lebanon. Technowar is centered on the concept of “overkill.” Overkill, with its intentionally large numbers of civilian casualties, is justified as an effective form of [deterrence](#).

We, like Israel, as [Nick Turse points out](#) in “[Kill Anything That Moves: The Real American War in Vietnam](#)” deliberately maimed, abused, beat, tortured, raped, wounded and killed hundreds of thousands of unarmed civilians, including children.

The slaughters, Turse writes, “were the inevitable outcome of deliberate policies, dictated at the highest levels of the military.”

Many of the Vietnamese — like Palestinians — who were murdered, Turse relates, were first subjected to degrading forms of public abuse. They were, Turse writes, when first detained “confined to tiny barbed wire ‘cow cages’ and sometimes jabbed with sharpened bamboo sticks while inside them.” Other detainees “were placed in large drums filled with water; the containers were then struck with great force, which caused internal injuries but left no scars.” Some were “suspended by ropes for hours on end or hung upside down and beaten, a practice called ‘the plane ride.’” They were subjected to electric shocks from crank-operated field telephones, battery-powered devices, or even cattle prods.” Soles of feet were beaten. Fingers were dismembered. Detainees were slashed with knives, “suffocated, burned by cigarettes, or beaten with truncheons, clubs, sticks, bamboo flails, baseball bats, and other objects. Many were threatened with death or even subjected to mock executions.” Turse found — again like Israel — that “detained civilians and captured guerrillas were often used as human mine detectors and regularly died in the process.” And while soldiers and Marines were engaged in daily acts of brutality and murder, the CIA “organized, coordinated, and paid for” a clandestine program of targeted assassinations “of specific individuals without any attempt to capture them alive or any thought of a legal trial.”

Image [source](#)



“After the war,” Turse concludes, “most scholars wrote off the accounts of widespread

war crimes that recur throughout Vietnamese revolutionary publications and American antiwar literature as merely so much propaganda. Few academic historians even thought to cite such sources, and almost none did so extensively. Meanwhile, [My Lai](#) came to stand for — and thus blot out — all other American atrocities. Vietnam War bookshelves are now filled with big-picture histories, sober studies of diplomacy and military tactics, and combat memoirs told from the soldiers' perspective. Buried in forgotten U.S. government archives, locked away in the memories of atrocity survivors, the real American war in Vietnam has all but vanished from public consciousness.”

There is [no difference](#) between us and Israel. This is why we do not halt the genocide. Israel is doing exactly what we would do in its place. Israel's bloodlust is our [own](#). As ProPublica [reported](#), “Israel Deliberately Blocked Humanitarian Aid to Gaza, Two Government Bodies Concluded. Antony Blinken Rejected Them.”

U.S. law requires the government to suspend weapons shipments to countries that prevent the delivery of U.S.-backed humanitarian aid.

Historical amnesia is a vital part of extermination campaigns once they end, at least for the victors. But for the victims, the memory of genocide, along with a yearning for retribution, is a sacred calling. The vanquished reappear in ways the genocidal killers cannot predict, fueling new conflicts and new animosities. The physical eradication of all Palestinians, the only way genocide works, is an impossibility given that six million Palestinians alone live in the diaspora. Over five million live in Gaza and the West Bank.

Israel's genocide has enraged the 1.9 billion Muslims worldwide, as well as most of the Global South. It has discredited and weakened the corrupt and fragile regimes of the dictatorships and monarchies in the Arab world, home to 456 million Muslims, who collaborate with the U.S. and Israel. It has fueled the ranks of the Palestinian resistance. And it has turned Israel and the U.S. into despised pariahs.

Israel and the U.S. will probably win this round. But ultimately, they have signed their own death warrants.

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Featured image: *Extermination Nation* – by Mr. Fish

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