

Scorched Earth Campaign: Ethnic Cleansing in Gaza, The Cruellest Weapon of War — Starvation. “Let Them Eat Cement”. Chris Hedges

Israel is not only decimating Gaza with airstrikes but employing the oldest and cruelest weapon of war — starvation. Israel’s message, on the eve of a ground invasion, is clear. Leave Gaza or Die.

By [Chris Hedges](#)

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Israel, with the backing of its U.S. and European allies, is preparing to launch not only a scorched earth campaign in Gaza but the worst ethnic cleansing since the wars in the former Yugoslavia.

The goal is to drive tens, most probably hundreds of thousands of Palestinians over the southern border at Rafah into refugee camps in Egypt.

The reverberations will be catastrophic, not only for the Palestinians, but throughout the region, almost certainly triggering armed clashes to the north of Israel with Hezbollah in Lebanon and perhaps with Syria and Iran.

The Biden administration, slavishly doing Israel’s bidding, is fueling the madness. The U.S. was the only country to [veto](#) the U.N. Security Council resolution calling for humanitarian pauses to deliver food, medicine, water and fuel to Gaza. It has blocked proposals for a ceasefire. It has proposed a draft U.N. Security Council [resolution](#) that says Israel has a right to defend itself. The resolution also demands Iran stop exporting arms to “militias and terrorist groups threatening peace and security across the region.”

The U.S. and its Western allies are as morally bankrupt and as complicit in genocide as those who witnessed the Nazi Holocaust of the Jews and did nothing.

The conflict, which has taken the lives of 1,400 Israelis and at least 4,600 Palestinians in Gaza, is widening. Israel carried out a [airstrike](#) on two airports in Syria. It daily trades

rocket barrages with Hezbollah militias. U.S. military bases in Iraq and Syria have been attacked by Shia militias. The USS Carney, a guided missile destroyer, shot down three cruise missiles on Thursday, apparently launched by the Houthis in Yemen and heading towards Israel.

Israel is also struggling to quell daily violent clashes in the occupied West Bank. It carried out an airstrike on Sunday on a [mosque](#) in the Jenin refugee camp – the first air strike in the West Bank for two decades – that killed at least 2 people. Armed Jewish settlers have been rampaging through Palestinian towns in the West Bank. At least 90 Palestinians in the West Bank have been [killed](#) by armed settlers or the Israeli military since the Oct. 7 incursion into Israel by Hamas and other resistance fighters, according to the U.N.'s humanitarian office. Some 4,000 workers from Gaza and 1,000 Palestinians in the West Bank have been arrested in the past two weeks, doubling the number of Palestinian [prisoners](#) to 10,000 held by Israel, over half of whom are political prisoners.

“Many of the prisoners have had their limbs, hands and legs broken ... degrading and insulting expressions, insults, cursing, tying them with handcuffs to the back and tightening them at the end to the point of causing severe pain ... naked, humiliating and group search of the prisoners,” the Palestinian Authority’s Commission for Detainees’ Affairs, **Qadura Fares**, said at a press conference.

B’Tselem, the Israeli human rights organization, told the BBC that since the Oct. 7 attack, it had documented “a concerted and organized effort by settlers to use the fact that the entire international and local attention is focused on Gaza and the north of Israel to try to seize land in the West Bank.”

Inside Israel, Palestinians with Israeli citizenship and Jerusalem IDs are being harassed, detained, arrested and expelled from jobs and universities in what is described as a “[witch hunt](#).” More than 152,000 Israelis have been evacuated from towns and villages near the borders of Gaza and Lebanon.

The U.S., in an effort to thwart a military response by Iran that could trigger a regional war, is deploying an additional 2,000 troops to the Middle East. It will redeploy one of its strike groups to the Persian Gulf and send additional air defense systems to the region. The USS Dwight D. Eisenhower and its strike group — which last weekend was being deployed to the eastern Mediterranean Sea to join the USS Gerald R. Ford — has been redirected to the Persian Gulf. A Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-missile battery, and Patriot missile defense system battalions, have also been sent to the Persian Gulf.

Israel has unleashed its Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse – Death, Famine, War and Conquest.

It has given Gazans two choices. Leave Gaza or die.

Palestinians will be killed not only from the bombs and shells, and eventually, with the ground invasion, bullets and tank shells, but from hunger and epidemics such as cholera. Without water, fuel and medicine and with the breakdown of sanitation, diseases will spread swiftly. The U.N. [states](#) that hospitals in Gaza “are on the brink of collapse.” Thousands of patients will die once fuel runs out for hospital generators.

A doctor from al-Shifa hospital in Gaza [reported](#) in an interview Saturday, “We are

collapsing.” He spoke of a lack of oxygen, light and medical supplies, no water in some departments, concerns about cholera and the loss of doctors killed by Israeli airstrikes, including a dentist killed in Israel’s [bombing](#) of an Orthodox church that left at least 18 dead, including several children.

GAZA SURGEON: DAILY MASSACRES "ABOVE IMAGINATION"

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Hospitals cope as medical staff killed by Israeli bombing
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— Uncaptured News (@UncapturedNews) [October 22, 2023](#)

The handful of trucks, 37 so far, of [aid](#) into Gaza is a cynical public relations gimmick demanded by the Biden administration. It will do little to alleviate the Israeli-engineered humanitarian crisis. The U.N. [says](#) it needs at least 100 aid trucks a day. Gaza’s last functioning seawater desalination plant shut down on Sunday because of a lack of fuel.

Israel has no intention of lifting the total siege on Gaza. It announced it will [increase](#) its airstrikes. It will continue, as it has for the past two weeks, to extinguish the lives of Palestinians and terrorize and starve them into leaving Gaza.

The ground assault on Gaza will not be quick. It will involve weeks, perhaps months, of street fighting. **Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin** compared the looming battle in Gaza to the U.S. assault on the Iraqi city of Mosul, held by ISIS, in 2014. It took the U.S. nine months to recapture Mosul.

When Israel [says](#) this will be a “long war” they are, for once, telling the truth.

Israel has [requested](#) more military aid from Washington, \$14.3 billion including \$10.6 billion for air and missile defense. It will [get it](#). Israel is rapidly depleting its stocks as it pounds Gaza, including in the south of Gaza where hundreds of thousands of displaced families from the north have fled.

Israel will not permit the distribution of the \$100 million in U.S. aid [pledged](#) for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, at least not until their scorched earth campaign is finished. But by then, Gaza will be unrecognizable. Israel will have annexed part or all of it. Maybe the money can go to building more illegal Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank. And pledging aid is not the same as appropriating it. So perhaps that, too, is part of the illusion.

Egyptian officials are acutely aware of what comes next. Up to half, maybe more, of the 2.3 million Palestinians will be pushed by Israel into Egypt on Gaza’s southern border and never be allowed to return.

“What is happening now in Gaza is an attempt to force civilian residents to take refuge and migrate to Egypt, which should not be accepted,” Egyptian president **Abdulfattah al-Sisi** [warned](#).

[Reports](#) out of Egypt contend that Washington has promised to forgive much of

Egypt's massive \$162.9 billion [debt](#), as well as offer other economic incentives in exchange for Egypt's acquiescence to the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. The refugees, once they cross the border into Egypt, will be left to rot in the Sinai.

"There is a grave danger that what we are witnessing may be a repeat of the 1948 Nakba, and the 1967 [Naksa](#), yet on a larger scale. The international community must do everything to stop this from happening again," [said Francesca Albanese](#), U.N. Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967.

Israel has long used war to justify the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. Government officials have openly called for another [Nakba](#), or "catastrophe," the term for the events of 1947-1949 when over 750,000 Palestinians were ethnically cleansed from historic Palestine and driven into refugee camps to create the state of Israel. During the 1967 war, which led to Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Israel ethnically cleansed [another](#) 300,000 Palestinians during the Naksa, or "day of the setback," which is commemorated every year by Palestinians.

Israel's [ethnic cleansing](#) of Palestinians, however, is not limited to wars. There has been an [ongoing](#) slow motion ethnic cleansing as Israel has [steadily built](#) more [Jewish-only colonies](#) and incrementally seized Palestinian land. Palestinians, [denied](#) basic civil liberties in Israel's [apartheid state](#), have been robbed of assets, including, often, their homes. They have faced mounting restrictions on their physical movements. They have been blocked from trading and business, especially the selling of produce. They have found themselves increasingly impoverished and trapped behind walls and security fences [erected](#) around Gaza and the West Bank. At the same time, they have endured periodic Israeli airstrikes, targeted assassinations and near daily attacks by armed Jewish settlers and the Israeli army.

Israel prevented Palestinians who left the West Bank and Gaza Strip from returning at the rate of about 9,000 Palestinians per year following the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, until the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1994, according to the Israel human rights group [HaMoked](#). Israel has also revoked the residency permits for some 14,000 Palestinians who lived in East Jerusalem since 1967 according to [B'Tselem](#).

Israel demolished 9,880 structures, including over 2,600 inhabited residential buildings, displacing over 14,000 people and affecting 233,681 in the West Bank alone between Jan. 1, 2009 and 7 Oct. 7, 2023, [according](#) to data from the U.N Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Since the Oct. 7 attack, a further 38 homes and other structures were demolished in the West Bank affecting an additional 13,613 people and displacing at least 73.

Less than 2.2 percent of Palestinian requests for construction permits made between 2009 and 2020 were approved, [according](#) to data from Peace Now and the Israeli newspaper Haaretz.

The number of Israeli colonists in the occupied territories, however, has gone from zero before the June 1967 war, to between 600,000 to 750,000 [spread out](#) across at least 250 settlements and outposts throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, all of them in violation of international law.

Israel makes no secret about its intentions.

Israel's defense minister, [Yoav Gallant](#), told troops preparing to enter Gaza, "I have released all the restraints."

Knesset member **Ariel Kallner**, part of Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party, [called](#) on X, formerly known as Twitter, for "a Nakba that will overshadow the Nakba of 48."

The Israeli army mobilized Ezra Yachin, a 95-year-old army veteran, to "motivate" the troops. Yachin was a member of the Lehi Zionist militia that carried out numerous massacres of Palestinian civilians, including the [Deir Yassin massacre](#) on April 9, 1948, where over 100 Palestinian civilians, many women and children, were slaughtered.

"Be triumphant and finish them off and don't leave anyone behind. Erase the memory of them," Yachin [said](#) addressing Israeli troops.

"Erase them, their families, mothers and children," he went on. "These animals can no longer live."

"Every Jew with a weapon should go out and kill them," he said. "If you have an Arab neighbor, don't wait, go to his home and shoot him."

Where are our humanitarian interventionists?

The ones who wept crocodile tears about the human rights of Ukrainians, Iraqis, Syrians, Libyans and Afghans, to justify massive arms shipments and war?

Where is the old anti-war wing of the Democratic Party and the liberal class?

What has happened to the public intellectuals who used to decry the slaughter of innocents and the U.S. war machine? Where are the jurists who uphold the rule of international law? Why are the few lonely voices speaking out about Israel's genocide of the Palestinians [attacked](#), [censored](#) and [doxxed](#)?

"The previous president wanted to ban us and probably put us in concentration camps," said Michigan **Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib**, who is of Palestinian descent, at a [rally](#) in support of a ceasefire on Oct. 20 in Washington in front of the U.S. Capitol. "This one wants us just to die. That's how it feels. Shame on them."

Israel will not halt its genocidal campaign in Gaza against the Palestinians until there is a U.S. arms embargo on Israel. Our weapons systems, munitions and attack aircraft sustain the slaughter. We must terminate the \$3.8 billion in [military aid](#) that the U.S. gives to Israel each year. We must support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement and demand suspension of all free trade and other agreements between the U.S. and Israel. Only when these props are knocked out from under Israel will the Israeli leadership be forced, as was the apartheid regime in South Africa, to integrate Palestinians into one state with equal rights. As long as these props remain, the Palestinians are doomed.

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