

The Death of Israel: Chris Hedges

Settler colonial states have a terminal shelf life. Israel is no exception.

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Israel will appear triumphant after it finishes its genocidal campaign [in Gaza](#) and the [West Bank](#). Backed by the United States, it will achieve its demented goal. Its murderous rampages and genocidal violence will exterminate or ethnically cleanse Palestinians. Its dream of a state exclusively for Jews, with any Palestinians who remain stripped of basic rights, will be realized.

It will revel in its blood-soaked victory. It will celebrate its war criminals. Its genocide will be erased from public consciousness and tossed into Israel's huge black hole of historical amnesia. Those with a conscience in Israel will be silenced and [persecuted](#).

But by the time Israel achieves its decimation of Gaza — Israel is [talking about](#) months of warfare — it will have signed its own death sentence. Its facade of civility, its supposed vaunted respect for the rule of law and democracy, its mythical story of the courageous Israeli military and miraculous birth of the Jewish nation, will lie in ash heaps.

Israel's social capital will be spent. It will be revealed as an ugly, repressive, hate-filled [apartheid](#) regime, alienating [younger](#) generations of American Jews. Its patron, the United States, as new generations come into power, will distance itself from Israel the way it is distancing itself from Ukraine. Its popular support, already eroded in the U.S., will come from America's Christianized [fascists](#) who see Israel's domination of ancient Biblical land as a harbinger of the Second Coming and in its subjugation of Arabs a kindred racism and white supremacy.

Palestinian blood and suffering — 10 times the number of children have been [killed](#) in Gaza as in two years of war in Ukraine — will pave the road to Israel's oblivion. The tens, perhaps hundreds, of thousands of ghosts will have their revenge. Israel will become synonymous

with its victims the way Turks are synonymous with the Armenians, Germans are with the Namibians and later the Jews, and Serbs are with the Bosniaks. Israel's cultural, artistic, journalistic and intellectual life will be exterminated. Israel will be a stagnant nation where the religious fanatics, bigots and Jewish extremists who have seized power will dominate public discourse. It will find its allies among other despotic regimes. Israel's repugnant racial and religious supremacy will be its defining attribute, which is why the most retrograde white supremacists in the U.S. and Europe, including philo-semites such as [John Hagee](#), [Paul Gosar](#) and [Marjorie Taylor Greene](#), fervently back Israel. The vaunted fight against anti-Semitism is a thinly disguised celebration of White Power.

Despotisms can exist long after their past due date. But they are terminal. You don't have to be a Biblical scholar to see that Israel's [lust](#) for rivers of blood is antithetical to the core values of Judaism. The cynical weaponization of the Holocaust, including branding Palestinians as Nazis, has little efficacy when you carry out a live streamed genocide against 2.3 million people trapped in a concentration camp.

Nations need more than force to survive. They need a mystique. This mystique provides purpose, civility and even nobility to inspire citizens to sacrifice for the nation. The mystique offers hope for the future. It provides meaning. It provides national identity.

When mystiques implode, when they are exposed as lies, a central foundation of state power collapses. I reported on the death of the communist mystiques in 1989 during the revolutions in East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Romania. The police and the military decided there was nothing left to defend. Israel's decay will engender the same lassitude and apathy. It will not be able to recruit indigenous collaborators, such as Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian Authority — reviled by [most](#) Palestinians — to do the bidding of the colonizers. The historian Ronald Robinson cites the inability to recruit indigenous allies by the British Empire as the point at which collaboration inverted into noncooperation, a defining moment for the start of decolonization. Once noncooperation by native elites morphs into active opposition, Robinson explains, the Empire's "rapid retreat" is assured.

All Israel has left is escalating violence, [including torture](#), which accelerates the decline. This wholesale violence works in the short term, as it did in the war waged by the French in [Algeria](#), the Dirty War waged by Argentina's military dictatorship and during Britain's conflict in Northern Ireland. But in the long term it is suicidal.

"You might say that the battle of Algiers was won through the use of torture," the British historian [Alistair Horne](#) observed, "but that the war, the Algerian war, was lost."

The genocide in Gaza has turned Hamas fighters into heroes in the Muslim world and the Global South. Israel may wipe out the Hamas leadership. But the past — and current — assassinations of scores of Palestinian leaders has done little to blunt resistance. The siege and genocide in Gaza has produced a new generation of deeply traumatized and enraged young men and women whose families have been killed and whose communities have been obliterated. They are prepared to take the place of martyred leaders. Israel has sent the stock of its adversary into the stratosphere.

Israel was at war with itself before Oct. 7. Israelis were [protesting](#) to prevent Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's abolition of judicial independence. Its religious [bigots and fanatics](#), currently in power, had mounted a determined attack on Israeli secularism. Israel's unity since the attacks is precarious. It is a negative unity. It is held together by hatred. And even

this hatred is not enough to keep [protestors](#) from decrying the government's abandonment of Israeli hostages in Gaza.

Hatred is a dangerous political commodity. Once finished with one enemy, those who stoke hatred go in search of another. The Palestinian "human animals," when eradicated or subdued, will be replaced by Jewish apostates and traitors. The demonized group can never be redeemed or cured. A politics of hatred creates a permanent instability that is exploited by those seeking the destruction of civil society.

Israel was far down this road on Oct. 7 when it promulgated a series of [discriminatory laws](#) against non-Jews that resemble the racist [Nuremberg Laws](#) that disenfranchised Jews in Nazi Germany. The Communities Acceptance Law [permits](#) exclusively Jewish settlements to bar applicants for residency on the basis of "suitability to the community's fundamental outlook."

Many of Israel's best educated and young have left the country to places like Canada, Australia and the U.K., with as many as [one million](#) moving to the United States. Even Germany has seen an influx of [around](#) 20,000 Israelis in the first two decades of this century. Around 470,000 Israelis have left the country [since](#) Oct. 7. Within Israel, human rights campaigners, intellectuals and journalists — Israeli and Palestinian — are attacked as traitors in government-sponsored smear campaigns, placed under state surveillance and subjected to arbitrary arrests. The Israeli educational system is an [indoctrination machine](#) for the military.

The Israeli scholar [Yeshayahu Leibowitz](#) warned that if Israel did not separate church and state and end its occupation of the Palestinians, it would give rise to a corrupt Rabbinate that would warp Judaism into a fascistic cult. "Israel," he said, "would not deserve to exist, and it will not be worthwhile to preserve it."

The global mystique of the U.S., after two decades of disastrous wars in the Middle East and the assault on the Capitol on Jan. 6, is as contaminated as its Israeli ally. The Biden administration, in its fervor to unconditionally support Israel and appease the powerful Israel lobby, has [bypassed](#) the congressional review process with the Department of State to approve the transfer of 14,000 rounds of tank ammunition to Israel. Secretary of State Antony Blinken argued that "an emergency exists that requires the immediate sale." At the same time he has cynically called on Israel to minimize civilian casualties.

Israel has no intention of minimizing civilian casualties. It has already [killed](#) 18,800 Palestinians, 0.82 percent of the Gazan population — the equivalent of around 2.7 million Americans. Another 51,000 have been wounded. Half of Gaza's population is [starving](#), according to the U.N. All Palestinian institutions and services that sustain life — hospitals (only 11 out of 36 hospitals in Gaza are still "[partially functioning](#)"), [water treatment plants](#), [power grids](#), [sewer systems](#), [housing](#), [schools](#), [government](#) buildings, [cultural centers](#), [telecommunications systems](#), [mosques](#), [churches](#), U.N. [food distribution points](#) — have been destroyed. Israel has assassinated [at least](#) 80 Palestinian journalists alongside dozens of their family members and over [130](#) U.N. aid workers along with members of their families. Civilian casualties are the point. This is not a war against Hamas. It is a war against the Palestinians. The objective is to kill or [remove](#) 2.3 million Palestinians from Gaza.

The [shooting dead](#) of three Israeli hostages who apparently escaped their captors and approached Israeli forces with their shirts off, waving a white flag and calling out for help in

Hebrew is not only tragic, but a glimpse of Israel's rules of engagement in Gaza. These rules are — kill anything that moves.

As the retired Israeli Major General Giora Eiland, who formerly headed the Israeli National Security Council, [wrote](#) in Yedioth Ahronoth, “[T]he State of Israel has no choice but to turn Gaza into a place that is temporarily or permanently impossible to live in...Creating a severe humanitarian crisis in Gaza is a necessary means to achieve the goal.” “Gaza will become a place where no human being can exist,” he [wrote](#). Major General Ghassan Alian [declared](#) that in Gaza, “there will be no electricity and no water, there will only be destruction. You wanted hell; you will get hell.”

Settler colonial states that endure, including the United States, exterminate through diseases and violence nearly the entirety of their indigenous populations. Infectious diseases brought by the colonizers to the Americas, such as smallpox, killed an estimated [56 million](#) indigenous people over about 100 years in South, Central and North America. By 1600 less than a tenth of the original population remained. Israel cannot kill on this scale, with nearly 5.5 million Palestinians living under occupation and another 9 million in the diaspora.

The Biden presidency, which ironically may have signed its own political death certificate, is tethered to Israel's genocide. It will try to distance itself rhetorically, but at the same time it will funnel the billions of dollars of weapons demanded by Israel — [including](#) \$14.3 billion in supplemental military aid to augment the \$3.8 billion in [annual aid](#) — to “finish the job.” It is a [full partner](#) in Israel's genocide project.

Israel is a pariah state. This was publically on display on Dec. 12 when 153 member states at the U.N. General Assembly [voted](#) for a ceasefire, with only 10 — including the U.S. and Israel — opposed and 23 abstaining. Israel's scorched earth campaign in Gaza means there will be no peace. There will be no two state solution. Apartheid and genocide will define Israel. This presages a long, long conflict, one the Jewish State cannot ultimately win.

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