**Genocide in the Palestinian Territories**

In December 2024, the American Jewish Committee published an article asserting five reasons why Israel is not committing genocide against Palestinians. However, AJC, in its vigorous defense, omits critical facts that would contradict these assertions. It is important to look at all the facts and evidence to find the truth. AJC should consider the following:

Article II of the Genocide Convention and Article 6 of the Statute of the ICC define genocide as:

“any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

1. Killing members of the group;
2. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
3. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction, in whole or in part;
4. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
5. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”

A. Intent is the key factor in determining genocide, often reflected by statements made by government leaders. Of the 500 genocidal statements made by Israeli government officials, nine statements by government leaders stand out, and these statements are made on behalf of the state of Israel:

Gallant: “No food, no fuel, no water is going into Gaza. They are human animals, cockroaches.”

Herzog: “All Gazans are responsible for Hamas. Level the place!”

Netanyahu: “Remember Amalek”

Shaked: “Kill all the Palestinians.”

Atbaryan: “Erase all the Gazans off the face of the earth.”

Bennett: “They are Nazis, no water or electricity for them.”

Smoltrich: “starving two million Palestinian civilians in Gaza to death "might be justified and moral.”

Ben Gvir: “Send them all to Egypt,” and in a cabinet meeting, the army should “shoot [Palestinian women and children in Gaza](https://www.newarab.com/news/un-told-israeli-army-summary-killings-attack-baby). We cannot have women and children getting close to the border... anyone who gets near must get a bullet [in the head],”

Nissim Vaturi: “Erase the Gaza Strip from the face of the earth.”

AJC dismissed these and other statements by Israeli government leaders, stating that these leaders have been disciplined. Who has been disciplined and what was the punishment?

Statements alone do no establish intent. They must be acted upon, and these statements were acted upon. Consider Gallant’s statement above. Israel has controlled everything going into Gaza for many years. Prior to October 7th, 2023, some 500 trucks a day entered Gaza with food and other supplies. After October 7th and after Gallant’s statement, the number of trucks dropped to 27. When the number of trucks was later increased, many trucks were blocked from entering Gaza by Israeli citizens, who also would pull the drivers out of the trucks and beat them up. In March, Israel ceased almost all food and aid entering Gaza from the UN and other international humanitarian organizations at some 400 locations were mostly shut down.

As a result, babies and other vulnerable members of the population have died or are dying. What makes these acts particularly grievous, is that death by starvation is torture. How many people need to die before Israel is held accountable?

B. AJC’s main argument is that the killing of 60,000 Palestinians is defensible on the grounds of proportionality. Proportionality requires a balance be struck between a legitimate military necessity and the protection of civilians when assessing the legality of any attack. This means that civilian casualties must be proportionate to a legitimate, anticipated military objective.

The war in Gaza has resulted in mass destruction of hospitals, schools, farms, mosques, homes and the killing of journalists, medical personnel, in addition to thousands of women and children. Can this destruction all be put down to proportionality, especially when Israeli real estate developers are planning repopulation of Gaza with beach front property for Israelis?

C. Whether Israel took sufficient steps to protect civilians, whether Israeli warnings to Gazans were sufficient to protect them, and whether these 60,000 deaths were proportionate to a legitimate military objective, is debatable. But there are too many other deaths which cannot be defended on the grounds of proportionality. Consider the following:

1. AJC omitted to mention or address the 1000 or more Palestinian deaths in the West Bank, many of them women and children, murdered in their homes, harvesting their crops or simply in the way, mostly by Israeli soldiers who were supposed to be protecting them. If Israel’s war is against Hamas, then why is the Israeli military murdering so many Palestinians in the West Bank? They were never a part of this fight.

2. AJC failed to mention the babies and now many adults in northern Gaza and elsewhere who have died from starvation because Israel withheld food and other humanitarian aid. There is a clear link between Gallant’s statements and these deaths, the extent of which will not be known for some time, as Israel has suppressed information coming out of Gaza, and denies access to international journalists.

3. No mention is made of the dead teenagers who were brought into a hospital in Gaza with bullets in their head, presumably killed by Israeli snipers, as reported in the NYT recently by a doctor working in that hospital.

4. AJC claims that Hamas puts civilians in harm’s way. What about the civilians the Israeli military grabs off the street to use as human shields to clear the way in their reconnaissance activities?

5. Little is written about the Palestinians grabbed off the street in Gaza and thrown into detention. They are beaten, sexually abused, tortured, and in 50 instances, killed. Recently, a teenager in Israeli detention died of starvation.

6. Israel dismisses Palestinian deaths reported as untrustworthy. Recently it was disclosed that 15 medical workers were murdered by the Israeli military and buried, along with their Red Cross trucks. Israel denied responsibility, until a video published by the New York Times established the lie. Israel, when confronted with its lies, promises to investigate, but the results of such investigations never seem to make headlines. What else is Israel lying about?

7. In May 2025, Israel collaborated with the U.S. through its Gaza Humanitarian Foundation to distribute food at four locations. Since that time the IDF and some American soldiers have shot and killed over 1000 starving people lined up to obtain food.

8. In July 2025, some twenty dead Palestinian boys were brought to a hospital near Rafah, having died from poison gas aimed at them by Israeli soldiers.

Proportionality is irrelevant to these deaths. These deaths are genocidal.

D. While the AJC article is focused on genocide, there is no mention of other violations of human rights, specifically crimes against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing.

For decades Israel has been bulldozing Palestinian villages in the West Bank and building settlements in their place. They deny Palestinians building permits, demolish their homes, cut down their olive trees, burn their crops, and deny Palestinians access to water on their own land. Israel has never been held accountable. Recently the Israeli government indicated an intent to annex the West Bank, and Palestinians will not be permitted to vote or own land. How is this a liberal democracy?

What Hamas did on October 7th was reprehensible. Given how the Israelis have treated the Gazans for decades, it was certainly predictable. The Palestinians in the West Bank were not party to the attack on October 7th, yet the Israelis have used this opportunity to persecute them and drive even more of them from their land. Such acts constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. Why does Israel get a pass on this behavior?

E. AJC asserts that the attack by Hamas on October 7th was genocidal. Apparently, AJC does not know the difference between genocide and terror. There is broad agreement that the primary aim of genocide is to eradicate a particular group of people, backed by state actors. Terrorism, however, is the opposite. Carried out usually by non-state actors, its aim is selective murder, even mass murder as on 9/11, but not with the aim of eradicating a group as such, but of intimidating it. According to definitions used by both UN and USA bodies, the main purpose of terrorism is intimidation in order to influence the politics of a nation and/or state. The population is terrorized by selective acts of violence, in order to achieve a political or ideological goal. October 7th was a terrorist attack, but does not constitute genocide any more than Al Qaeda’s attack on the United States on September 11, 2001.

The Genocide convention does not require that state actors (governments) carry out genocidal intent. This is because state actors usually have the means to carry out destruction of a large number of people. Non-state actors, like Hamas, are simply terrorists pretending to be a state. Hamas is armed terrorist organization which has controlled the Gazan population for decades, replacing the Hamas leaders elected in 2005. Hamas may want Israelis to leave the region from the “River to the Sea,” but there is no evidence that they harbor a grudge against Jews in other parts of the world. How many Jews have been killed by Hamas in Europe or the Western Hemisphere?

AJC introduces the Holocaust as part of its defense. The Holocaust is irrelevant to the issue whether Israel is committing genocide in Gaza. Palestinians were never a party to the Holocaust. No one denies that Israel has the right to defend itself, but in this slaughter of civilians, Israel has surpassed any reasonable form of defense.

AJC claims South Africa’s charge of genocide brought in the International Court of Justice as baseless. Given AJC’s lack of expertise on the subject of genocide, and the fact that most human rights organizations around the world agree with the ICJ, the conclusion is irrefutable.

AJC should remember, those who deny it, are complicit.