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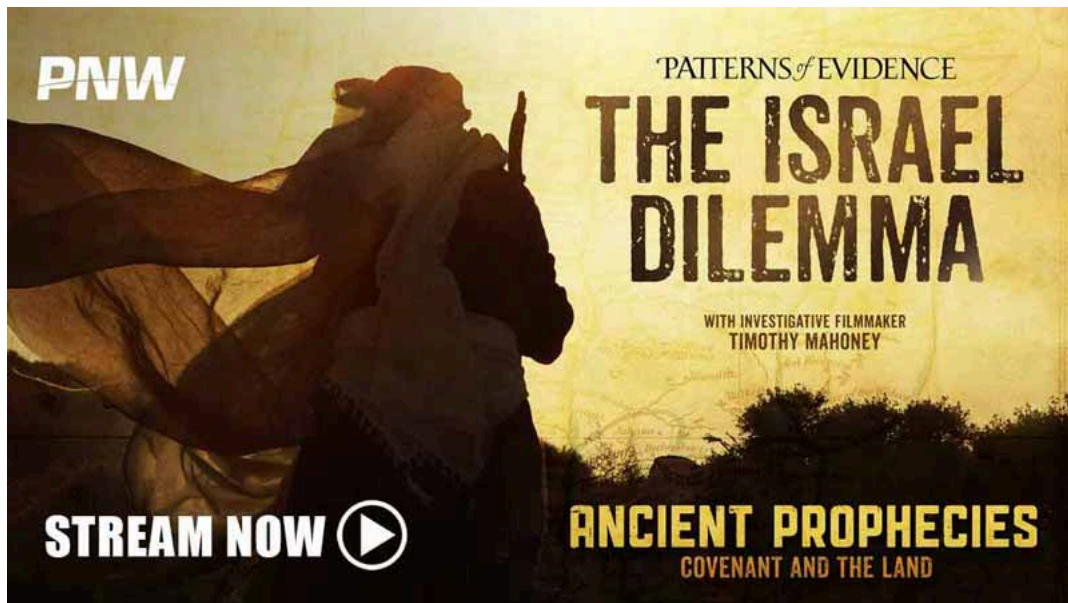
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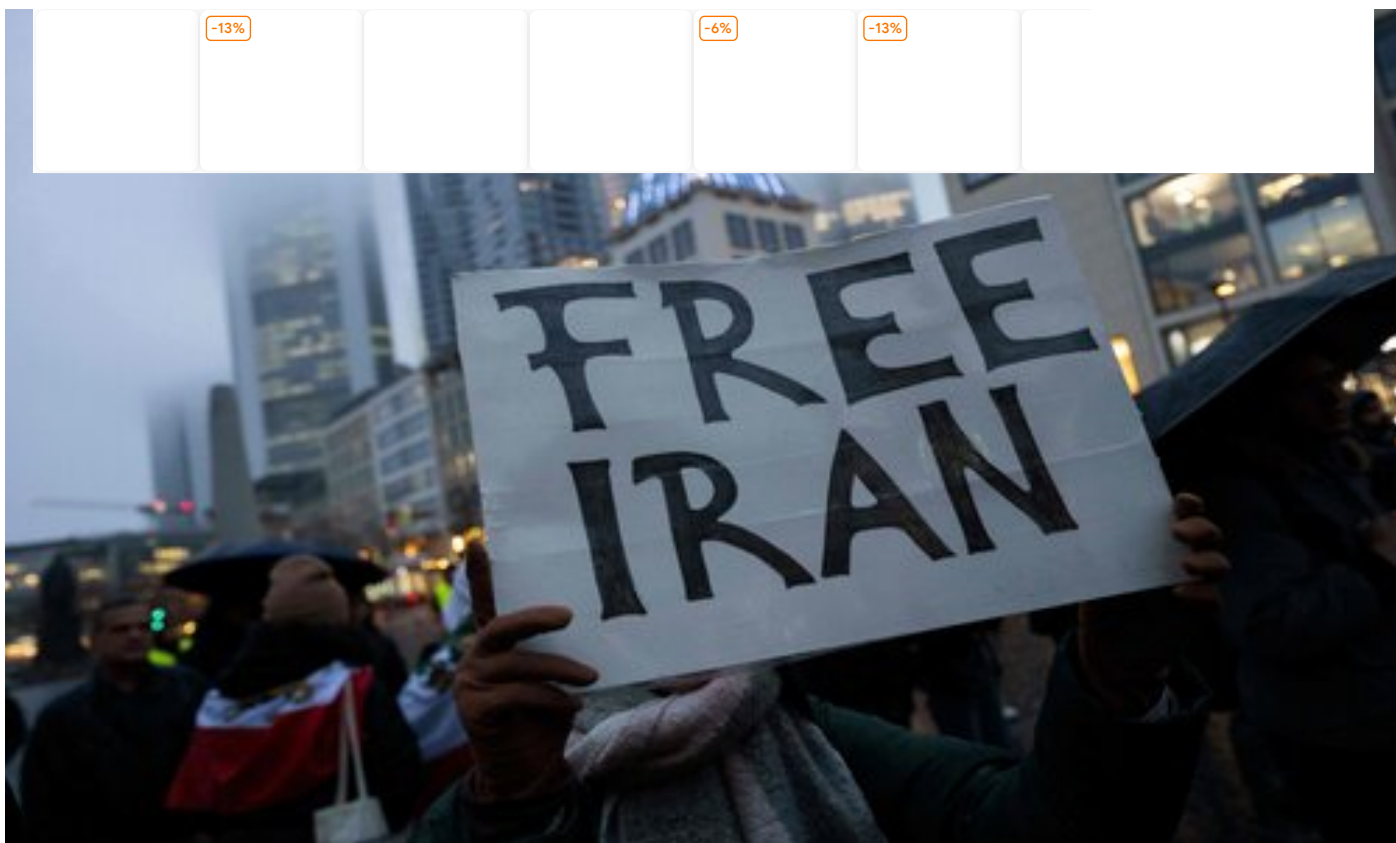


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ARTICLE

Why Do They March For Gaza, But Not Iran?





BY JONATHAN TOBIN/JNS.ORG JANUARY 15, 2026

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The silence from the chattering classes, Hollywood elites, and university students and faculty has been deafening. The same people who have been conducting mass demonstrations and virtue-signaling about their devotion to the cause of human rights and their abhorrence of civilian casualties when it came to the war in Gaza have been largely silent about what is happening in Iran.

That isn't because no one knows exactly what's going on.

Despite attempts by the Islamist regime to black out the internet and halt the flow of information about events inside the country, the scale of the conflict has grown so large that it has been impossible to cover up. Some 2,500 deaths have been confirmed by the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, though reports on mass killings of protesters by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps have raised the potential death toll to anywhere from 12,000 to 20,000.

While the liberal mainstream media was slow to pick up the story, it can no longer downplay it. While it has had to compete with its overwrought coverage of the controversy about the Trump administration's efforts to enforce immigration laws, the Iran protests have been the top story on The New York Times website for multiple days, and have also received extensive coverage in The Washington Post and on NPR. Even leftist human-rights groups like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have been posting about it.

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But the of thousands to protest the war in the Gaza Strip or to broadcast their identification with Palestinians has zero interest in the Iranian struggle for freedom or the many victims of the Islamist regime.

This apathy makes itself felt on a number of different levels.

No mass street protests, demonstrations or tent encampments can be found in U.S. cities or on college campuses dedicated to supporting Iranian protesters. The opinion columnists at major outlets who have been churning out articles falsely accusing Israel of "genocide" while parroting grossly inaccurate Palestinian casualty figures are mum about Iran. At the Golden Globes awards ceremony, actors and others in past years have shown off their support for the Palestinian war against Israel via lapel pins or biting words. At the event held this past weekend, the cause de jour was protests against the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE). Not a single person--either on stage or in the audience, as can be seen from the media coverage--was standing in solidarity with the people of Iran.

That's not surprising.

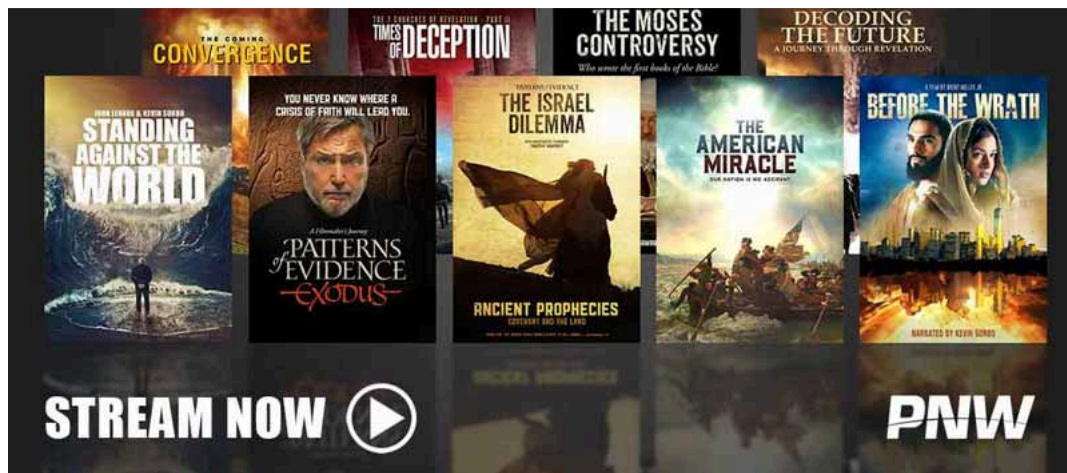
Concern about the way the Islamist theocracy oppresses the people of Iran has never been among its priorities. Or even a subject about which they were even minimally concerned.

The question is why--given everything heard from the crowd about how terrible it is for the innocent to be killed in conflict--they have nothing to say about Tehran? They're all very vocal about the backing of a "Free Palestine." Not so much about a free Iran.

It's true that not as much attention has been paid to the conflict in Iran as there has been for the two-year war in Gaza; however, a good number of Iranians have been fighting against the mullahs since the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

Another reason may be that the State of Israel is supported by the United States. It's true that even when Washington was most sympathetic to Iran, and seeking to appease its government during the Barack Obama administration, and to a lesser extent, when Joe Biden was president, America didn't formally support the government of Iran.

If anything, the fight for freedom there ought to be generating a lot more foreign support than the Palestinian cause. After all, the Palestinians have rejected compromise, peace and a two-state solution to end the Arab-Israeli conflict for nearly a century. And the recent war in Gaza wasn't an Israeli attempt to stifle democratic protests. It was a morally justified response to a cross-border invasion by Palestinian Arabs on Oct. 7, 2023, which resulted in an orgy of mass murder, rape, torture, kidnapping and wanton destruction.



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The main impetus for those rallies, however, wasn't focused on ending ties between Washington and Jerusalem, though most of the protesters were surely in favor of that idea. Nor was the motivation for the protests simply a matter of backing a ceasefire in the fighting that followed the Oct. 7 massacre in Jewish communities in southern Israel. The ceasefire reached last October didn't really dampen the ardor of the anti-Israel crowd. It was also not a matter of genuine sympathy for victims; if that were the case, they wouldn't have been indifferent to the plight of Israeli hostages and would still be out advocating for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip.

Rather, as the chants of the pro-Hamas mobs made clear, it was their support for the desire of the Palestinians to see Israel eradicated ("From the river to the sea") and for violence against Jews wherever they lived ("Globalize the intifada") that lured them to join the cause.

Despite their loud proclamations that the anti-Israel protests were rooted in concern about human rights--something that would surely cause them to speak out about Iran--that just doesn't pass muster. Nobody who actually cares about human rights can support a cause that aims at the slaughter of an entire people, no matter where they live.

Racist myths

The reason for this can partly be explained by simple ideology. The indoctrination of a generation in the toxic ideas of critical race theory, intersectionality and settler-colonialism has led many young people to believe that all conflicts are essentially about race.

As such, they have come to believe that the world is divided into two groups perpetually at war with each other: oppressed "people of color" and their "white" oppressors. In that essentially Marxist formulation, Jews are, despite their history of persecution and the persistence of antisemitism, too Western and too successful to merit sympathy, and so must be defined as "white" oppressors. That makes the Palestinians the oppressed racial minority. They believe this myth, even though Jews and Arabs are the same race, and the majority of Israelis are people of color since they trace their origins to the Middle East and North Africa.

The struggle of Iranians to end the rule of tyrannical Islamist theocrats and their terrorist henchmen is irrelevant to this framework because neither side can be identified as "white." That makes it irrelevant at best, and at worst, a distraction from more interesting battles like the one against Israeli Jews.

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That's as illogical as it is absurd since it leads people who would be hanged or thrown off rooftops in Gaza or Tehran to march with "Gays for Palestine" placards. Yet it does make sense to those who consider the West, the United States and Israel to be inherently evil, and their opponents, even when they are Islamist murderers, to be somehow sympathetic.

It's the same reason why far larger and bloodier conflicts, such as the decade-long Syrian civil war--when hundreds of thousands died, and millions were made homeless--never motivated anyone on the left to take to the streets demanding action to stop the fighting. The same was true for what is a real genocide going on in Sudan right now.

The left and right unite in their antisemitism

Still, there's more to it than just that stale and intellectually vapid ideological construct. The "horseshoe" effect, in which the far left and the far right unite in their antisemitism, is at play when it comes to Iran as much as it is about Gaza.

Anti-Israel extremists on both the left and right are speaking out against any help for the protest movement in Iran. The likes of journalists Max Blumenthal, Glenn Greenwald and Ali Abunimah say they oppose the protests because the demonstrators' foreign sympathizers just want a pro-Israel government in Tehran. That misses the point. Of course, many people in the West would prefer a government that wasn't the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism. But apologists ignore the fact that one of the reasons why Iranians want to overthrow their Islamist tyrants is because the regime has squandered its country's resources in its frenzy to build a nuclear bomb to obliterate the Jewish state. And that's despite the fact that Israel and Iran have no real reason to be in conflict other than because of the mullahs' antisemitic obsessions.

As seen in recent months, the obsessive hatred for Israel on the part of a certain segment of right-wing opinion also leads those who take this position to be supportive of anyone who claims to be an anti-Zionist, even if that leads them to back some of the most anti-American regimes and people in the world.

It's no accident that former Fox News host and current podcaster Tucker Carlson has been adamant about opposing American efforts to stop Iran from getting a nuclear weapon or efforts on the part of the Trump administration to support anti-regime protesters. The same is true of former Trump staffer turned extremist podcaster Steve Bannon and neo-Nazi "groyper" leader Nick Fuentes.

Though these people claim to be American patriots and believers in an "America First" or "America Only" foreign policy, they oppose efforts by the Trump administration to rein in and stop a regime that has killed Americans and views the United States as the "great Satan," regardless of its position on Israel.

The only thing that brings them into agreement with the left on Iran is the fact that the Tehran theocrats hate Israel.

There's no way to look at this issue that doesn't inevitably lead back to an age-old hatred.

As with other global struggles, antisemites on both ends of the political spectrum are never going to care about a conflict in which neither side is Jewish. As for Iran, its radical oppressors not only support efforts at Jewish genocide but spend enormous sums on terrorist groups and a nuclear program with which that evil objective could be accomplished--money its population never sees.

Under those circumstances, it is to be expected that the same crowd who write, rally and virtue-signal their anguish about Palestinians will be utterly indifferent to the plight of Iranian victims at the hands of Islamists. The explanation isn't merely ideology or hypocrisy. It can be summed up on one basis: Jew-hatred.

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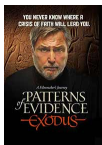
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