

Israel/Palestine/United States: Antisemitism Surges Around World as Israel, Hamas Clash

Thai News Service

October 16, 2023 Monday

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Body

As the conflict between Israel and Hamas rages for a fifth day, many Jews around the world face a familiar threat: a surge in antisemitism.

From New York to London, St. Louis to Sydney, Jewish communities are grappling with hate and bigotry that often flare up whenever the Middle East erupts.

"It's just a sad fact that whenever conflict arises between Israel and the Palestinians, Jews in all parts of the world will suffer some level of hate violence," said Heidi Beirich, co-founder of Global Project Against Hate and Extremism.

Israel plunged into a bloody nightmare Saturday when Hamas militants unleashed a surprise onslaught, killing at least 1,000 Israelis, wounding more than 2,000, and taking some 150 as hostages.

Brian Levin, a prominent extremism researcher and professor emeritus at California State University, San Bernardino, said the carnage amounted to "the worst single-day slaughter of Jews since the Holocaust."

U.S. President Joe Biden condemned the attack as "an act of sheer evil."

Israel's retaliatory airstrikes against targets in Gaza have been equally deadly, killing at least 1,100 Palestinians and leaving more than 5,000 others wounded, according to the Gaza Ministry of Health.

Threats surge

While Hamas' brutal assault has spurred sympathy for Israel, it also has sparked a surge of online threats against Jews, intimidation of Jewish institutions and brazen displays of antisemitic symbols.

Anti-Jewish threats on Telegram, a platform popular with Islamic State militants and white supremacists, surged by an alarming 488% in the first 18 hours of Saturday, according to the Anti-Defamation League, the oldest Jewish civil rights group in the United States.

Offline, there have been sporadic reports of antisemitic incidents. In Salt Lake City, Utah, a synagogue was forced to evacuate after receiving a bomb threat. Police are investigating threats against a number of synagogues in the state.

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In St. Louis, Missouri, a swastika was spray-painted on the side of a truck. Police said they were investigating it as an act of antisemitic vandalism.

And in London, a kosher restaurant was vandalized in the Golders Green section of the city. Mayor Sadiq Khan said, "There will be no tolerance for hate."

The first four days of the conflict saw a surge of over 300% in antisemitic incidents in the United Kingdom, according to Community Security Trust.

Pro-Palestinian protests around the world have sometimes taken on an anti-Jewish overtone, according to extremism experts.

In New York City, a protester attending a pro-Hamas rally on Sunday was seen brandishing a swastika, leading Mayor Eric Adams to condemn the protest.

In Sydney, unverified footage distributed by the Australian Jewish Association appeared to show a group of protesters outside the Sydney Opera House shouting, "Gas the Jews." Police are investigating the incident.

Pro-Hamas rallies in US

The American Jewish Committee said it has recorded about a dozen pro-Hamas protests in several U.S. cities, including New York, Washington, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Chicago.

Holly Huffnagle, U.S. director of antisemitism at the AJC, said the Jewish advocacy group backs Palestinian rights but warns that the protests extend from criticism of Israel to antisemitism and conspiracies about Jews.

"This is support for Hamas as a terrorist group," she said.

Addressing a group of American Jewish leaders Wednesday afternoon, President Biden acknowledged the war in Israel has led to a rise in hate and antisemitism.

Joined by the second gentleman Doug Emhoff, he said his administration was taking "meaningful actions ... to fight back against antisemitism and hate."

With Israel poised for a massive ground assault on Gaza and no end in sight, experts predict a surge of antisemitic incidents in the days ahead as the conflict intensifies.

"Considering that the current escalation will be longer and most intense, we should expect a more substantial increase in antisemitism in comparison to previous escalations in the conflict," said Arie Perliger, a professor at the School of Criminology and Justice Studies at the University of Massachusetts.

Anti-Jewish attacks at 'historic levels'

The recent surge in antisemitic attacks is not an isolated phenomenon but part of a long-standing pattern, Levin said.

In October 2000, violent protests in Israel triggered a 152% spike in antisemitic hate crimes in the United States, according to Levin's research.

In May 2021, clashes between Israel and Hamas led to a 187% increase in anti-Jewish hate crimes in New York City and a nearly four-fold increase in antisemitic hate in Los Angeles.

"We saw spikes in London, and indeed, nearly every major European country that reported antisemitic hate crimes for 2021 showed increases," Levin said.

The ADL reported earlier this year that incidents of assault, vandalism and harassment targeting Jews in the United States rose to new "historic levels" in 2022.

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Tom Copeland, director of research at the Centennial Institute at Colorado Christian University, said 2023 has been another record year for antisemitic activity.

"It's a long-term trend in the U.S. and in the U.K. as well," Copeland said in an interview. "So, it does seem that from this weekend, certainly on social media, especially on Telegram [and] to a certain extent on TikTok, all of the voices that are antisemitic are emerging once again."

But Jews are not the only targets of hate when violence flares up in the Middle East.

In 1985, Palestinian activist Alex Odeh was killed in California by a pipe bomb allegedly set off by extremist American Jews. The case remains unresolved.

In 1994, American Israeli extremist Baruch Goldstein killed 29 Muslim worshippers and wounded 125 others inside a mosque in Hebron in the West Bank.

The recent conflict has also spawned isolated acts of Islamophobia. On Tuesday, a sign at a Muslim religious academy in Boston was defaced with the word "Nazis, sparking calls for a hate crime investigation.

The Council on Islamic American Relations said on Wednesday it has received a flood of reports of Palestinian and Muslim students facing harassment for their advocacy on behalf of the Palestinian territories.

But Levin said anti-Muslim hate crimes sparked by violence in the Middle East have tended to be smaller in size compared to anti-Jewish violence.

"It's not as routine, and it's generally not as significant," he said.

Maha Elgenaidi, founder and executive director of California-based Islamic Networks Group, condemned the recent acts of antisemitism as "horrific."

"I just think it's fueling the anti-Semitism that has always existed in the United States and throughout Europe," Elgenaidi, an Egyptian American, said.

She said that while dialogue is the key to healing the rift between Jews and Muslims, the pain inflicted on both sides is too fresh to enable an interfaith conversation.

"A lot of people that I know have family in Gaza and that have been directly hurt and the same thing with Jewish friends that I've spoken with," she said. - VOA

Load-Date: October 13, 2023

Antisemitism Surges Around World as Israel, Hamas Clash

Voice of America News

October 11, 2023

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Length: 1041 words

Byline: Masood Farivar

Body

October 11, 2023 7:32 PM

washington -

As the conflict between Israel and Hamas rages for a fifth day, many Jews around the world face a familiar threat: a surge in antisemitism.

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Levin said promoting tolerance could reduce the level of hate. He pointed out that after former President George W. Bush urged Americans to show respect for Islam six days after the attacks of 9/11, "anti-Muslim hate crimes declined the next day. And they stayed lower into the following year."

"It is key that we continue interfaith dialogue," he said, "because in the end, especially here in the United States, this can be the place where seeds of peace can germinate, certainly not with respect to Hamas, but overall, between both people."

Load-Date: October 13, 2023

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President Dobkin responds to violence, unrest in DC calling it 'an attempt to subvert' democracy

The Forum: Westminster College

October 12, 2023 Thursday

University Wire

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Section: BEYOND-CAMPUS; Pg. 1

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Byline: Cami Mondeaux

Body

Westminster College President Beth Dobkin responded to the violent protest outside the U.S. Capitol while Congress prepared to certify the presidential election, calling it "an attempt to subvert democratic processes." (Photo courtesy Westminster College)

Westminster College President Beth Dobkin responded to the violent protest outside the U.S. Capitol Wednesday while Congress prepared to certify the presidential election, calling it "an attempt to subvert democratic processes."

After the chaos within the nation's capital subsided - which forced an emergency recess and a shelter-in-place for Congressmembers inside the building - D.C. police reported Wednesday night it had recovered five weapons and arrested 13 people. One woman was shot and killed.

"The actions were horrifying but not unanticipated," Dobkin said in a statement. "As a citizenry, some of us have been too willing to ignore patterns of words and deeds, to selectively consider facts and recall history, and to undermine the very institutions that have the potential to bring our country together."

Protests rejecting the results of the 2020 election were not unique to Washington. Several Trump supporters gathered at the Utah Capitol at the same time, chanting about election fraud and the coronavirus pandemic being a "hoax." Both claims are unsubstantiated and unsupported by evidence.

This speaker is calling the #COVID19 pandemic a hoax, and saying that the Democrats stole the election. He says they need to fight it. I shouldn't have to say this, but the pandemic is not a hoax and there is no evidence of widespread voter fraud. #utpol pic.twitter.com/q3LARuh3A3 - Sonja Hutson (@SonjaHutson) January 6, 2021

The protest in Salt Lake City resulted in counter-protests by members of the Black Lives Matter movement.

One photojournalist from the Salt Lake Tribune was pepper-sprayed by a protester who was reportedly upset he was documenting the event. Another protester was filmed telling journalists they should be "hung on the spot."

This guy's comments about journalists: pic.twitter.com/EQRVB4fGZS - Taylor Stevens (@tstevensmedia) January 6, 2021

President Dobkin responds to violence, unrest in DC calling it 'an attempt to subvert' democracy

In response, President Dobkin said it's crucial to "sustain democracy" - noting that Westminster is an institution that plays a crucial role in that process.

"Westminster plays an essential role in sustaining democracy by fostering ethical, informed, and engaged deliberation, care and compassion for others, and equitable opportunities for all," she said. "Learning means understanding the past so that we can create a better future. It includes taking accountability for our words and understanding the impact of actions not just on our own lives, but others as well."

REQUEST CORRECTION

Load-Date: October 16, 2023

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While the world is watching Gaza, violence fuels growing tensions in the occupied West Bank

While the world is watching Gaza, violence fuels growing tensions in the occupied West Bank

The Associated Press

October 14, 2023 Saturday 4:55 PM GMT

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Byline: JULIA FRANKEL and JOSEPH KRAUSS, Associated Press

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

JERUSALEM — While the world is focused on the war in Gaza, tensions have risen in the occupied West Bank, where 55 Palestinians were killed over the past week in clashes with Israeli troops, arrest raids and attacks by Jewish settlers. U.N. monitors said it was the deadliest week for Palestinians in the territory since at least 2005.

Since Hamas' deadly mass incursion into southern Israel, in which militants killed over 1,300 people and captured around 150, Israeli forces have held the West Bank under a tight grip, closing crossings into the territory and checkpoints between cities, measures they say are aimed at preventing attacks.

Friday was a particularly deadly day, with 16 Palestinians killed in different incidents in the West Bank.

The military says it has arrested 220 people in raids across the West Bank, including 130 Hamas operatives, since last weekend's attack. Hamas militants are present in the West Bank, but largely operate underground because of Israel's tight grip on the territory.

The renewed crackdown comes as Israel is concerned about the conflict escalating into a multi-front war, particularly the possibility of Lebanon's Hezbollah militia also joining the battle.

But Palestinians say the latest Israeli measures in the West Bank have only further blurred the line between security forces and radical, violent settlers. Israel's National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, a far-right settler with a long history of anti-Arab incitement, responded to the Hamas attack by distributing more weapons to the already well-armed settler population and tasking settlers with security.

In a statement earlier this week, he said his office is distributing 10,000 firearms, as well as combat gear, protective vests and helmets, to Israeli civilians — with a particular focus on residents of Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

"We will change the world so that the settlements will be protected," he said. "I have ordered the massive arming of the civilian standby units in order to protect the settlements and the cities."

On Friday, a video showed a settler with an assault rifle walking into the village of Al-Tuwani in the southern West Bank and shooting a Palestinian point blank.

While the world is watching Gaza, violence fuels growing tensions in the occupied West Bank

Two days earlier, settlers shot dead three Palestinians in the village of Qusra, near the northern West Bank city of Nablus. On Thursday, settlers attacked their funeral, killing another two men, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. Video footage showed the settlers swerving their cars into the funeral procession before stopping and opening fire.

On Thursday, settlers arrived at Wadi Seeq, a small Bedouin village home to around 200 people in the central West Bank, as Palestinians there packed up their belongings. They had already moved all of the women, children and livestock to a safer area in recent days because of rising threats, a resident of the village said. Witnesses said that the settlers opened fire, wounding three Palestinians and driving the rest out of the village.

Abdelrahman Kaabni, the head of the Wadi Seeq village council, said that soldiers and police had taken part in the attack, beating and arresting residents. As the villagers of Wadi Seeq fled settler violence, they left behind cisterns, livestock, solar panels and two vehicles. "The settlers took everything, and now they're squatting in our homes," Kaabni said.

Wadi Seeq is the sixth Bedouin village to have pulled up stakes in the last year in response to an uptick in settler attacks. Many more are in danger of being completely displaced, according to the West Bank Protection Consortium, a coalition of aid groups and donor countries, including the European Union, that support Palestinian communities.

Neither COGAT, the Israeli defense body responsible for civilian affairs, nor the Israeli military responded to requests for comment. In the past, authorities have said troops only open fire in response to threats or to disperse violent protests and that soldiers protect Palestinians from settler attacks.

The U.N. said last month that 1,100 Palestinians had been displaced by settler violence in the last year, an unprecedented figure. Over just the last few days, around 200 to 300 Palestinians have been displaced in Wadi Seeq and other areas, the consortium said — often by settlers who are armed.

"They're leaving now because they feel completely unprotected. They're so scared of those settlers who have come in and threatened them," said Allegra Pacheco, who heads the consortium.

Most of the attacks come from settler outposts established without government authorization but protected by the Israeli army. Over 500,000 Jewish settlers live in nearly 150 settlements across the West Bank, which is home to some 2.5 million Palestinians. The international community overwhelmingly views settlements as illegal and a major obstacle to peace. Israel captured the West Bank, along with Gaza and east Jerusalem, in the 1967 war. The Palestinians want the territories for their future state.

On Saturday, Israeli military spokesperson Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari appeared to be calling on settlers to stand down, saying: "The responsibility for security in the settlements and on the roads lies with the army alone."

But messages continued to circulate on WhatsApp groups that Jewish settlers have created since the start of the war to coordinate operations in the West Bank. A description of one chat group with over 800 participants told residents to prepare for "the possibility of mobilizing for a joint activity with the security forces for the immediate demolition of terrorist houses."

The message urged residents to "eliminate" any Palestinian approaching a settlement.

"From the stories flowing in from the Gaza Strip, it is clear that we cannot rely on the army alone to be able to protect us in a time of chaos," it read. "Are you ready for war?"

Load-Date: October 14, 2023

The Savagery of the War Against the Palestinian People

Sri Lanka Guardian

October 13, 2023 Friday

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Length: 1480 words

Body

Who knows how many Palestinian civilians will be killed by the time this report is published? Among the bodies that cannot be taken to a hospital or a morgue, because there will be no petrol or electricity, will be large numbers of children. They will have hidden in their homes, listening to the sound of the Israeli F-16 bombers coming closer and closer, the explosions advancing toward them like a swarm of red ants on the chase. They will have covered their ears with their hands, crouched with their parents in their darkened living rooms, waiting, waiting for the inevitable bomb to strike their home. By the time the rescue workers get to them under the mountains of rubble, their bodies would have become unrecognizable, their families weeping as familiar clothing or household goods are excavated. Such is the torment of the Palestinians who live in Gaza.

A friend of mine in Gaza who has a 17-year-old child told me on the first night of this recent spell of Israeli bombing that his child has lived through at least ten major Israeli assaults on the Palestinians in Gaza. As we spoke, we made a list of some of the wars we could remember (because these are Israel's wars, we are using the Israeli army names for their attacks on Gaza):

Operation Summer Rains (June 2006)

Operation Autumn Clouds (October-November 2006)

Operation Hot Winter (February-March 2008)

Operation Cast Lead (December 2008-January 2009)

Operation Running Echo (March 2012)

Operation Pillar of Cloud (November 2012)

Operation Protective Edge (July-August 2014)

Operation Black Belt (November 2019)

The Savagery of the War Against the Palestinian People

Operation Breaking Dawn (August 2022)

Operation Shield and Arrow (May 2023)

Each of these attacks pulverizes the minimal infrastructure that remains intact in Gaza and hits the Palestinian civilians very hard. Civilian deaths and casualties are recorded by the Health Ministry in Gaza but disregarded by the Israelis and their Western enablers. As the current bombing intensified, journalist Muhammad Smiry said, 'We might not survive this time.' Smiry's worry is not isolated. Each time Israel sends in its fighter jets and missiles, the death and destruction are of an unimaginable proportion. This time, with a full-scale invasion, the destruction will be at a scale not previously witnessed.

The Ruin of Gaza

Gaza is a ruin populated by nearly two million people. After Israel's horrific 2014 bombardment of Gaza, the United Nations reported that 'people are literally sleeping amongst the rubble; children have died of hypothermia.' A variation of this sentence has been written after each of these bombings and will be written when this one finally comes to an end.

In 2004, Israel's National Security Director Giora Eiland said that Gaza is a 'huge concentration camp.' This 'huge concentration camp' was erected in 1948 when the newly created Israeli state's ethnic cleansing policy removed Palestinians into refugee camps, including in Gaza. Two years later, Israeli intelligence reported that the refugees in Gaza had been 'condemned to utter extinction.' That judgment has not altered in the intervening 73 years. Despite the formal withdrawal of Israeli settlers and troops in 2005, Israel remains the occupying power over the region by sealing off the land and sea borders of the Gaza Strip. Israel decides what enters Gaza and uses that power to throttle the people periodically.

Politicide

When the Palestinians in Gaza tried to elect their own leadership in January 2006, Hamas-formed in the first Intifada (Uprising) of 1987 in Gaza-won the election. The victory of Hamas (the Islamic Resistance Movement) was condemned by the Israelis and the West, who decided to use armed force to overthrow the election results. Operation Summer Rains and Operation Autumn Clouds introduced the Palestinians to a new dynamic: punctual bombardment as collective punishment for electing Hamas in the legislative elections. Gaza was never allowed a political process, in fact, never allowed to shape any kind of political authority to speak for the people. Israel has tried with force to eradicate Gaza's political life and to force the people into a situation where the armed conflict becomes permanent. When the Palestinians conducted a non-violent Great March of Return in 2019, the Israeli army responded with brute force that killed two hundred people. When a non-violent protest is met with force, it becomes difficult to convince people to remain on that path and not take up arms.

As this conflict takes on the air of permanency, the frustration of Palestinian politics moves away from the impossibility of negotiations to the necessity of armed violence. No other avenue is left open. Palestine's political leadership has been either tethered by the European Union and the United States and so been removed from popular aspirations or-if it continues to mirror those aspirations-it has been sent to one of Israel's many, harsh prisons (four of 10 Palestinian men are in or have been in prison, while the leaders of most of the left parties spend long periods there under 'administrative detention' orders). Israeli sociologist Baruch Kimmerling has argued that the Israeli policy toward the Palestinians has resulted in 'politicide,' the deliberate destruction of Palestinian political processes. The only road left open is armed struggle.

Indeed, by international law, armed struggle against an occupying power is not illegal. There are many international conventions and United Nations resolutions that affirm the right of self-determination: these include, Additional Protocol 1 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, UN General Assembly Resolution 3314 (1974), and UN General Assembly Resolution 37/43 (1982). The 1982 resolution 'reaffirms the legitimacy of the struggle of peoples for independence, territorial integrity, national unity and liberation from colonial and foreign domination and foreign occupation by all available means, including armed struggle.' You could not have a stronger statement that provides legal sanction for armed struggle against an illegal occupation.

The Savagery of the War Against the Palestinian People

Why does Hamas attack Israel? Because a political grammar has been imposed on the relationship between the Palestinians and the Israelis by the nature of the Israeli occupation. Indeed, any time there is a modest development for talks-often brokered by Qatar-between Hamas and the Israeli government, those talks are silenced by the sound of Israeli fighter jets.

War Crimes

Each time these Israeli fighter jets hammer Gaza, leaders of Western countries line up metronomically to announce that they 'stand with Israel' and that 'Israel has a right to defend itself.' This last statement-about Israel having the right to defend itself-is legally erroneous. In 1967, Israeli forces crossed the 1948 Israeli 'green lines' and seized East Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank. United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 sought the 'withdrawal of [Israeli] armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict.' The use of the term 'occupied' is not innocent. Article 42 of the Hague Regulations (1907) states that a 'territory is considered occupied when it is actually placed under the authority of the hostile army.' The Fourth Geneva Convention obliges the occupying power to be responsible for the welfare of those who have been occupied, most of the obligations violated by the Israeli government.

In fact, as far as Gaza has been concerned since 2005, Israeli high officials have not used the language of self-defense. They have spoken in the language of collective punishment. In the lead-up to the ongoing bombing, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, 'We have decided to halt electricity, fuel, and goods transfer to Gaza.' His Defense Minister Yoav Gallant followed up, saying, 'I have ordered a complete siege on the Gaza Strip. There will be no electricity, no food, no fuel, everything is closed.' Then, Israel's Energy Minister Israel Katz said, 'I instructed that the water supply from Israel to Gaza be cut off immediately.' Having followed up on these threats, they have sealed Gaza-including by bombing the Rafah crossing to Egypt-and closed down the lives of two million people. In the language of the Geneva Conventions, this is 'collective punishment,' which constitutes a war crime. The International Criminal Court opened an investigation into Israeli war crimes in 2021 but was not able to move forward even to collect information.

The children huddle in their rooms waiting for the bombs sit in the dark because there is no electricity and wait-with parched throats and hungry bellies-for the end. After the 2014 Israeli bombardment, Umm Amjad Shalah spoke of her 10-year-old son Salman. The boy would not let his mother go, being in terror of the noise of the explosions and the death around him. 'Sometimes he screams so loudly,' she says. 'It almost sounds like he's laughing loudly.'

Load-Date: October 21, 2023