

# Pro-Israel Propaganda-Lies vs. Reality

By Ron Unz - October, 2023

Another week has now passed since the Middle East and the entire world were suddenly upended by the huge raid into Israel by the Hamas militants of Gaza. But the new developments over the last seven days have merely continued and confirmed the situation I'd already described last Monday.

According to all news sources, some 1,400 Israeli soldiers and civilians died in the attack, most of them within the first 24 hours, probably making it the deadliest day in Israel's entire history, amounting to more fatalities than the total for all of Israel's wars during nearly the last fifty years combined.

Back in 2011, the Israeli government had freed over 1,000 imprisoned Palestinians in exchange for a single captured soldier. So a key goal of this Hamas attack had been gaining the freedom of the many thousands of captive Palestinians by seizing some Israelis as bargaining chips, and the effort succeeded beyond all expectations, with more than 200 Israeli soldiers and civilians taken back to Gaza as prisoners.

Israel had invested hundreds of millions of dollars in advanced technology to guard its Gaza border, but Hamas disabled those systems using inexpensive small drones and highly innovative tactics, thereby inflicting a hugely humiliating defeat upon the Jewish State.

Mossad was widely regarded as one of the world's best intelligence services and the Israeli military had the same reputation for its prowess in combat. But despite a year of careful planning and preparation, Hamas seems to have achieved total tactical surprise while the local Israeli garrison bases were easily overrun, with none of their sentries on duty and alert. As a result, the IDF suffered up to 600 dead in a matter of hours at the hands of lightly-armed militants, probably the worst one-day combat losses in any of Israel's many wars. Hundreds of thousands of Israeli civilians have now been evacuated both from the area around Gaza and from the northern parts of the country threatened by Lebanon's Hezbollah, and given the scale of the recent disaster, it's unclear how soon most of them would be willing to return to their former homes.

For decades pro-Israel propaganda has been unsurpassed in its reach and effectiveness, and the astonishing mismatch between such boastful claims and the reality of Hamas' remarkable military success quickly prompted conspiratorial speculations all across the Internet. For months, Netanyahu's government had been facing enormous public protests that had bitterly divided Israeli society, so quite a number of prominent voices in both pro-Israel and anti-Israel camps suggested that Netanyahu had deliberately permitted the Hamas attack in hopes that such a "Pearl Harbor" or "9/11" would unify the country and salvage his shaky political position.

I had sharply challenged the logical plausibility of such “false flag” theories, but their adherents remained unconvinced, and many commenters ridiculed me for my naivety, arguing that the major Hamas victory had obviously been an “inside job” by the Israeli government. But I think that subsequent political developments have almost eliminated that possibility. A few days ago, the *New York Times* described the political situation in Israel:

***Mr. Netanyahu has appeared unusually isolated since the Hamas attack, amid cratering poll numbers and accusations that his chaotic leadership over the past year had set the stage for the catastrophic security failure on Oct 7.***

***Few members of his government have given him their unqualified backing since the day, with many simply saying that scrutiny of the government’s mistakes should wait until the war ends.***

***“I’m saying in the clearest way possible: It is clear to me that Netanyahu and the entire government of Israel and everyone on whose watch this happened bears responsibility for what happened,” one government minister from Mr. Netanyahu’s party, Miki Zohar, told a radio station on Thursday. “That is also clear to Netanyahu. That he also bears responsibility.”***

Given such public criticism of Netanyahu by his own cabinet minister, there would be a gigantic political incentive for any whistle-blower to come forward and reveal that the government had deliberately allowed the Hamas attack to proceed. In this atmosphere, it would be totally impossible to keep secret that sort of explosive revelation.

Meanwhile, if Netanyahu had the slightest reason to suspect that his many political enemies in the security services had deliberately facilitated the Hamas attack in order to embarrass him, he would be moving heaven and earth to uncover those facts and salvage his career.

Yet nothing like this has happened. Israel’s raucous parliament is notorious for its wild accusations and heated rhetoric, yet I haven’t heard a single member of the Knesset make any such incendiary claims.

A commenter on our website made a very similar point regarding reactions in the Arab world:

***There are currently 465 million Arabs on the planet, who speak the same language as Hamas, who have their own media, channels and journalists, some very deeply committed to Palestine, and some kowtowing to the Zionists. There is not a single Arab media, journalist, or even random citizen interviewed in the street expressing the lunatic opinion that the 7 October Al Quds Flood was a false flag.***

Arabs and Israelis obviously possess the best understanding of the local situation and they are often highly “conspiratorial” in their beliefs. So if virtually none of them anywhere suggest this possibility, it seems rather foolish for ignorant outsiders to do so.

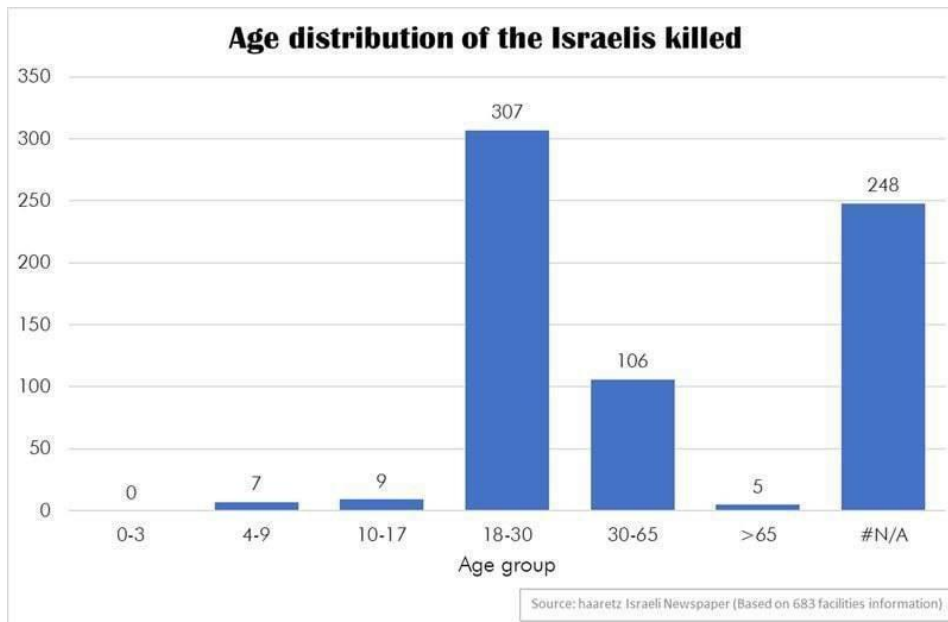
The last week has also brought greater clarity to other important issues. In the immediate aftermath of the Hamas attack, the Western media was awash with the most outrageous claims of horrific Hamas massacres, including the beheading of 40 Israeli babies, which dominated the British newspaper headlines and filled American electronic media, even reaching the lips of President Joe Biden:



However, those ridiculous stories, apparently originating with a particularly fanatic leader of Jewish settlers, have now completely disappeared from the pro-Israel media, thereby demonstrating their utter falsehood. But before vanishing, such dramatic claims probably embedded themselves in the memories of the low-information voters who constitute the bulk of the population, and therefore achieved their obvious propagandistic purpose by permanently tainting Hamas militants as monstrously brutal baby-killers.

Meanwhile, important contrary information has received much less attention. I'd previously mentioned the short interview of an Israeli woman with two young children who emphasized that the Hamas militants who occupied her home for a couple of hours had been quite respectful to her family. I had also reported the eyewitness testimony of a survivor from a Kibbutz near Gaza who explained that the civilians had been killed when the Israeli military attacked the Hamas fighters holding them.

Furthermore, the official list of dead Israelis indicates that nearly all of the victims were non-elderly adults, with a large fraction being soldiers or security personnel, hardly suggesting a policy of indiscriminate slaughter:



Important articles have now begun appearing, drawing together all this scattered information, and indeed suggesting that many or most of the Israeli civilian deaths may have occurred at the hands of their own confused and trigger-happy military forces:

- [A growing number of reports indicate Israeli forces responsible for Israeli civilian and military deaths following October 7 attack](#)  
Anonymous Contributor • **MondoWeiss** • October 22, 2023 • 1,300 Words
- [What Really Happened on 7th October?](#)  
Robert Inlakesh • **The Cradle** • October 24, 2023 • 2,500 Words
- [October 7 testimonies reveal Israel's military 'shelling' Israeli citizens with tanks, missiles](#)  
Max Blumenthal • **The Grayzone** • October 27, 2023 • 3,500 Words

Blumenthal's account constitutes an especially devastating refutation of the widespread media narrative and is worth quoting at considerable length:

***Ultimately, the Israeli helicopter pilots blamed clever Hamas tactics for their inability to distinguish between the armed militants and Israeli non-combatants. "The Hamas army, it turns out, deliberately made it difficult for the helicopter pilots and the operators of the UAVs," Yedioth Aharanoth claimed...***

***And so, without any intelligence or ability to distinguish between Palestinian and Israeli, the pilots let loose a fury of cannon and missile fire onto Israeli areas below.***

***Photos of the aftermath of the fighting inside kibbutzes like Be'eri – and of the Israeli bombardment of these communities – show rubble and charred homes that resemble the aftermath of Israeli tank and artillery attacks inside Gaza. As Tuval Escapa, the security coordinator at Kibbutz Be'eri,***

**told Haaretz, Israeli army commanders had ordered the “shelling [of] houses on their occupants in order to eliminate the terrorists along with the hostages.”**

**Yasmin Porat, an attendee of the Nova music festival who fled into Kibbutz Be’eri, told Israeli Radio that when Israeli special forces arrived during a hostage standoff, “They eliminated everyone, including the hostages because there was very, very heavy crossfire.”**

**“After insane crossfire,” Porat continued, “two tank shells were shot into the house. It’s a small kibbutz house, nothing big.”**

**A video posted by the Telegram account of Israel’s South Responders shows the bodies of Israelis discovered below the rubble of a home destroyed by a powerful explosive blast – likely a tank shell. The right-wing New York Post ran a report on a similar incident about a boy’s body found scorched beneath the ruins of his home in Be’eri.**

**The phenomenon of charred corpses whose hands and ankles had been tied, and who were found in groups beneath the rubble of destroyed homes, also raises questions about “friendly” tank fire.**

**Yasmin Porat, the hostage who survived a standoff at Be’eri, described how Hamas militants tied her partner’s hands behind his back. After one militant commander surrendered, using her as a human shield to ensure his safety, she saw her partner lying on the ground, still alive. She stated that Israeli security forces “undoubtedly” killed him and the other hostages as they opened fire on the remaining militants inside, including with tank shells.**

**Israeli security forces also opened fire on fleeing Israelis whom they mistook for Hamas gunmen. A resident of Ashkelon named Danielle Rachiel described nearly being killed after escaping from the Nova music festival when it was attacked by militants from Gaza. “As we reached the roundabout [at a kibbutz], we saw Israeli security forces!” Rachiel recalled. “We held our heads down [because] we automatically knew they’d be suspicious of us, in a small beat-up car... from the same direction the terrorists were coming from. Our forces began shooting at us!”**

**“When our forces fired at us, our windows shattered,” she continued. It was only when they shouted in Hebrew, “We’re Israelis!” that the shooting stopped, and they were taken to safety.**

**Among the most gruesome videos of the aftermath of October 7, also published on the Telegram account of South Responders, shows a car full of charred corpses (below) at the entrance of Kibbutz Be’eri. The Israeli government has portrayed these casualties as Israeli victims of sadistic Hamas violence. However, the melted steel body and collapsed roof of the**

***car, and the comprehensively scorched corpses inside, evidence a direct hit from a Hellfire missile.***

Most of the Hamas militants only carried rifles and other small arms, so Blumenthal convincingly argues that the lurid photos of charred corpses and destroyed houses distributed by the Israeli government were almost certainly the result of “friendly fire” from Israeli tanks and Apache attack-helicopters. And ironically enough, the atrocity photos of alleged Hamas victims provided by Israel’s UN Ambassador Gilad Erdan were apparently those of Hamas fighters killed by the Israeli military.

Thus, the total incompetence displayed by the Israeli government in originally defending its country against the Hamas attack seems matched by a similar incompetence in its subsequent counter-attack. But the extreme media stranglehold enjoyed by pro-Israel advocates reduces the likelihood that these important facts will become widely known.

Blumenthal also emphasized the role of Israel’s notorious “Hannibal Directive,” requiring that Israeli captives must either be killed or rescued to avoid allowing them to be used as bargaining chips:

***The last confirmed application of the Hannibal Directive took place on August 1, 2014 in Rafah, Gaza, when Hamas fighters captured an Israeli officer, Col. Hadar Goldin, prompting the military to unleash more than 2000 bombs, missiles and shells on the area, killing the soldier along with over 100 Palestinian civilians.***

Given this official policy, it’s quite possible that at least some of the Israeli civilians who died were actually the intended victims of the many missiles and shells fired into the homes where they were being held by Hamas militants.

Several mostly elderly Israeli captives have now been released from Gaza as a goodwill gesture, and their accounts provide an interesting contrast to the pro-Israel media narrative portraying the Hamas fighters as vicious, bloodthirsty terrorists. Instead, as 85-year-old Yocheved Lifshitz explained in an extended interview shown on Amy Goodman’s *Democracy Now!*, the militants had treated their prisoners quite well.

Obviously, the facts of the situation are somewhat mixed on both sides. But based upon the evidence, I think the reality accords less with the narrative uniformly broadcast across all of the West’s mainstream media outlets than with its polar opposite.

Over the last week some additional information has also come out regarding the huge October 17th explosion that rocked the grounds of Gaza’s largest Christian hospital, killing enormous numbers of the innocent civilians sheltering there and thereby igniting massive outrage across most of the world, especially among the nearly two billion Muslims.

As I had previously emphasized, an official Israeli spokesman had quickly taken credit for the hospital attack, which he boasted had killed several Hamas militants, but after reports of the enormous civilian death-toll began circulating, he quickly deleted his Tweet. The Israelis and their American patrons eventually declared that an errant Palestinian rocket had been responsible for the devastation, and this claim was credulously accepted across nearly all of the American mainstream media, including the *New York Times*, then repeated by our befuddled President Joseph Biden in his Oval Office address.

However, the evidence of Israeli culpability seemed overwhelming, as was admitted by a local BBC journalist covering the story. The massive scale of the explosion was entirely unlike anything produced by the small home-made rockets found in Palestinian arsenals, and the sound of the descending missile seemed identical to that of advanced Israeli munitions. The Israelis had admitted two previous bombing attacks against the same Christian hospital and just a couple of days later, an Israeli airstrike hit Gaza's oldest Christian church, killing many civilians, including several relatives of former U.S. Congressman Justin Amash. Former CIA Analyst Larry Johnson has considerable military experience and all of these facts led him to firmly conclude that Israel had been responsible for the devastating loss of life.

Finally, a few days ago, a team of seven *New York Times* reporters and video analysts concluded that the contrary video evidence widely cited by Israeli and American officials to exculpate Israel was essentially fraudulent:

***The video shows a projectile streaking through the darkened skies over Gaza and exploding in the air. Seconds later, another explosion is seen on the ground.***

***The footage has become a widely cited piece of evidence as Israeli and American officials have made the case that an errant Palestinian rocket malfunctioned in the sky, fell to the ground and caused a deadly explosion at Al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City.***

***But a detailed visual analysis by The New York Times concludes that the video clip — taken from an Al Jazeera television camera livestreaming on the night of Oct. 17 — shows something else. The missile seen in the video is most likely not what caused the explosion at the hospital. It actually detonated in the sky roughly two miles away, The Times found, and is an unrelated aspect of the fighting that unfolded over the Israeli-Gaza border that night.***

This conclusion merely confirmed the suspicions earlier voiced by NYT Columnist Michelle Goldberg, who noted that Israel had notoriously lied about numerous far smaller atrocities over the years. Pulitzer Prize-winner Chris Hedges, who had spent fifteen years at the *Times*, including serving as its Middle East Bureau Chief, had condemned "Israel's culture of deceit" in an article of that title, and this new information completely validated his harsh verdict.

The fog of war naturally produces a great deal of confusion on all sides, and the initial report of 500 Palestinian deaths in the Christian hospital bombing may have been considerably exaggerated, with American intelligence now arguing that the true figure was probably between 100 and 300.

But regardless, the casualties from that one incident are merely a sliver of the enormous number of civilians killed by the many thousands of Israeli bombs and missiles that have recently rained down upon the two million defenseless residents of that densely-populated urban area, a situation only worsened by Israel's blockade of food, water, and fuel and its destruction of power and Internet services.

Although Israel has mobilized hundreds of thousands of reservists, the government has been very reluctant to risk heavy casualties by sending them into dangerous ground combat against the well-entrenched Hamas fighters. So instead, it has chosen to punish Gaza's general population in brutal aerial attacks, by some estimates having already destroyed nearly half of all homes. As of several days ago, Gaza's health ministry had reported that over 7,000 civilians had already been killed, including over 2,600 children, with many more bodies still buried under the rubble of their destroyed buildings. The Israeli bombardment has greatly intensified since then, so the current toll must surely be far higher.

These are large numbers, probably greater than the total number of Ukrainian civilians killed in twenty months of heavy fighting in that other war, while many, many times more children have died in just three weeks of attacks on Gaza. Although American electronic media has generally avoided broadcasting the widespread images of dead Palestinian children being pulled from the rubble of their collapsed homes, the rest of the world is watching with growing anger and perhaps fateful political consequences. Despite propagandist Western claims to the contrary, there has been no indiscriminate Russian bombing or missile attacks against major civilian population centers in Ukraine, while that has been the mainstay of the Israeli military campaign, and the grotesque Western hypocrisy regarding those two different conflicts has hardly escaped international attention.

Many sharp critics of Israel have bandied about accusations of "genocide" and I've always been extremely leery of the increasingly inflated use of that momentous term. But under its strictly technical definition, originally concocted by Jewish propagandists to vilify Nazi Germany, the indiscriminate slaughter of such large numbers of Palestinian civilians while forcing a million of them away from their homes might indeed qualify, certainly far more so than the alleged "genocide" being committed against Chinese Uighurs. On that last point, I saw a very telling Tweet displaying side-by-side images of the unblemished towers and modern buildings of the Uighur cities next to the bombed out rubble of Gaza, asking the question: "Which is the real genocide?"



Probably no more than a couple of dozen Israeli children had died in the Hamas assault and since then, Israeli bombs have killed a hundred times as many Gazan children, but the bombardment has only intensified. According to traditional Judaism, Jewish lives have infinite value but Gentile ones none at all, perhaps helping to explain the sense of total outrage from Israeli leaders as well as the utterly disproportionate nature of their country's retaliation. As I have emphasized in my past articles, although most present-day Jews—and most Israelis—are secular, we must remember that religious tenets of a thousand or two thousand years duration can deeply permeate cultural traditions even if most present-day individuals are not directly aware of them.

However, whether or not the term “genocide” is appropriate, the notion of “war-crimes” seem much more solidly based upon international law, and although I'm hardly an expert in such jurisprudence, it seems to me that if those principles were applied in fair and even-handed fashion, most of Israel's political and military leadership would surely be facing the gallows.

For all of these reasons, the geopolitical impact of the last three weeks has been enormous.

Prior to the Hamas attack, the plight of the Palestinians had been increasingly ignored by the world, including nearly all Arab countries. But now a group of 22 Arab countries sponsored a UN resolution calling for an immediate truce in the fighting between Israel and Hamas, and despite strong opposition from the U.S. and Israel, it won in the General Assembly by an overwhelming 120-14 margin, with nearly all our major allies in Europe and elsewhere abstaining and about half the No votes coming from tiny statelets such as Fiji, Tonga, and Papua New Guinea.

Although UN General Secretary Antonio Guterres publicly condemned the Hamas attacks on Israel, he noted that they “did not happen in a vacuum,” and merely that slight suggestion of even-handedness led Israel's UN Ambassador to loudly accuse him of “justifying terrorism” and demand his immediate resignation.

China is Israel's largest trading partner, but it also came under severe attack for being insufficiently supportive of Israel, prompting a sharp response from the former Editor-in-Chief of *Global Times*, who condemned the Jewish State for its “arrogant attitude.” According to the *New York Times*, there has been a surge of “anti-Semitism” in Chinese social and state media, with some prominent influencers describing Israel's behavior as that of a terrorist-state no different than that of the endlessly vilified Nazis.

Until recently, Russia had enjoyed good relations with Israel and it has attempted to remain relatively neutral in the current conflict while supporting a cease-fire and opposing Israel's starvation and slaughter of Palestinian civilians. But this approach provoked gigantic outrage in a leading figure of Israel's ruling Likud party, who angrily declared on *KremlinTV* that after Hamas had been destroyed, retaliation against nuclear-armed Russia would be next on the list.

The Turks constitute the largest NATO contingent, and several days ago President Recep Erdogan declared to the cheers of his parliament that Hamas was not a terrorist organization but instead the national liberation movement of the Palestinian people and denounced the Israeli attacks against Gazan civilians; he later condemned Israel as a “war criminal” at a massive pro-Palestinian public rally. Col. Douglas Macgregor and others believes that Erdogan is laying the basis for possible military intervention against Israel, which might bring it into direct conflict with America and would obviously mean the end of NATO.

According to the *New York Times*, the enormous number of civilian deaths reported in Gaza produced a certain amount of denial and disbelief on the part of President Biden and his advisors, leading to an immediate response by Gazan officials:

The Hamas-run Health Ministry in Gaza has released a list of 6,747 people it said had been killed in Israel’s relentless bombardment of the Palestinian territory in retaliation for the Hamas-led raid on Oct.7 that killed more than 1,400 people in Israel.

***The release of the document on Thursday evening served as a sharp retort to President Biden’s comments to reporters at the White House a day earlier, when he said that he had “no confidence in the number that the Palestinians are using.”***

***The list includes the name, age, gender and ID number of each person killed, including those of 2,665 children. The ministry said it did not name an additional 281 people who had been killed because their bodies could not be identified, bringing the total to 7,028.***

But reading this story in Thursday’s newspaper raised some interesting questions in my own mind. Impoverished Gaza is under severe bombardment, with most of its government offices destroyed and many of its health care workers killed. Yet it seems to be maintaining a very detailed and timely record of the many thousands of deaths that have occurred, doing so amid the ruins and the rubble.

Meanwhile, every media outlet in the world has been uniformly reporting that around 1,400 Israelis died in the Hamas attack, yet more than **three weeks** later, the Israeli government has still not provided any comprehensive list of the victims. As far as I can tell, *Haaretz* published the most complete listing on October 19th, but it only included about 900 names. It’s quite easy to understand why it might take a few days for bodies to be identified, the information collected, and the relatives notified. But **three weeks?!** How difficult can it be to merely release a list of names?

Therefore, I increasingly suspect that the other Israeli victims don’t actually exist.

The Israeli government may be riding a tiger. Being both incompetent and dishonest, perhaps they were initially confused or exaggerated the numbers, then felt too embarrassed to admit that fact. But every day that goes by, their predicament grows worse. They already severely damaged their credibility with that “40 beheaded babies” hoax and all that fake evidence suggesting that the Palestinians had destroyed their own Christian hospital. If it finally came out that more than one-third of the Israeli victims were actually fictional, even the totally corrupt Western mainstream media might finally call them to account.