**The Strategic Objectives of Hamas**

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The October 7, 2023, Hamas strike is explained by certain global events preceding it. Arab states were warming up to Israel. Bahrain and the UAE normalized relations with Israel in 2020. Saudi Arabia was all set to follow suit. On September 22, 2023, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held up a map at the United Nations General Assembly, that placed the West Bank and Gaza within the boundaries of sovereign Israel.

At home, Netanyahu became unpopular over his subversion of the judiciary. Netanyahu concentrated the Israeli military towards the illegal West Bank settlements in early October. The resulting sparse IDF presence at Gaza, allowed the Hamas strike to succeed.

Israel is using Israeli deaths to morally justify genocide against the 2.5 million Gaza residents.

Yoav Gallant, the Israeli Defense Minister stated, “I have ordered a complete siege on the Gaza Strip. There will be no electricity, no food, and no fuel, everything is closed. We are fighting human animals and we will act accordingly.” However, after tremendous international pressure, the latest news is that the water supply has been partially resumed in South Gaza.

Yoav Gallant has borrowed the term, “Human animals” from the Nazis, who frequently used it for the Jews, and also for the Slavs, gypsies, and blacks. Israel is following in their footsteps, holding the same beliefs of being morally and racially superior.

There are three main reasons why Israel’s war crimes go unchecked: the dehumanization of the Palestinians by Israel; the Christian West’s guilt over the centuries-long Jewish persecution culminating in the holocaust; and the US’ geo-economic interest in the region. When the Western-dominated UN condemns Israel, their state officials have repeatedly stated that the Christian West lacks moral authority, therefore Israel rejects any moral preaching by them.

Sympathy for Israelis and apathy for subhuman Palestinians is best generated through the optics of international news. Dead Israeli youth have been given coverage, which tugs at the heartstrings of the viewer. Such coverage demonizes their attackers and garners support for the Israeli overreaction. Media coverage of Palestinian losses lacks human stories. Wailing older women in black burqas and rubble makes for bad optics, which generates no sympathy for Palestinian victims. No channel has shown Palestinian children killed or injured by Israeli air strikes.

Israeli propaganda is truly sinister. Israel’s i24 News aired the news that Hamas had beheaded 40 babies in the village of Kfar Aza. This story was repeated by POTUS Biden, inflaming Western sentiments against the Palestinians – even though it was fake news traced to a militant Israeli settler leader named David Ben Zion. It is a story still being told by Israelis being interviewed on Western TV channels, to demonize Hamas and justify the genocide of Palestinians.

In the Western world, anti-Israel voices were understandably few and far between. However, a dramatic shift has now taken place. Jews called for a ceasefire, gathering at Capitol Hill, Washington DC. Large crowds marched in protest in London, Manchester and Ireland against Israel. In the most recent protests in London, prominent British and Irish left-wing political activists such as Lindsay German, Kate Hudson, Declan Kearney, Eddie Dempsey and James Corbyn took to the stage and spoke against Israel.

It was not just the Muslim diaspora marching to condemn Israel, this time the whites marched with them. Western celebrities and social media influencers are also openly speaking against Israel.

This is a paradigm shift, as it showcases the defeat of the Israeli narrative. Israel’s Western support rests on the narrative that it is the only civilized democracy in the Middle East. However, as the Palestinian genocide dominates airtime on Western TV channels, Israel’s narrative is being defeated. Israel is now being viewed as an apartheid, genocidal state. Moral Western citizens are now speaking against Israel in support of Palestine, and their numbers will swell.

Protests in the US and UK will not do much to stop the Israeli invasion. However, negative Western perceptions about Israel will certainly hurt its commercial, diplomatic and social interests. Past commercial and academic boycotts subverted by Israel, will resume and gain widespread support. Becoming a pariah nation will pose a grave danger for Israel.

Israel has the full support of the US. POTUS Biden has sent its most advanced aircraft carrier fleet, warning neighbouring countries not to think of attacking Israel. The US has also dispatched more of its most sophisticated fighter jets, the F-35s, F-15s and F-16s to Israel. It has replenished the depleted arsenal of Israel’s iron dome and more importantly, the US has now also sent troops to Israel.

Such American support is oxygen for Israel. Since 1946, Israel has pocketed $124.3 billion in military aid from the United States, including $12.4 billion since 2020.

Noam Chomsky the Jewish public intellectual once said, “Israel uses sophisticated attack jets and naval vessels to bomb densely-crowded refugee camps, schools, apartment blocks, mosques, and slums to attack a population that has no air force, no air defence, no navy, no heavy weapons, no artillery units, no mechanized armour, no command in control, no army… and calls it a war. It is not a war, it is murder.”

Gaza is Egyptian territory seized by Israel in the 1967 war. Palestinian refugees are crammed in this small strip of land, financially sustained by Qatar. Israel has attacked Gaza in 2008, 2009, 2014 and 2021. It used white phosphorus bombs on the residents.

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The other half of Palestine is the West Bank, which is geographically removed from Gaza. Israeli settlers are increasingly illegally occupying Palestinian homes.

In December 2022, Netanyahu’s right wing government accelerated the takeover of Palestinian territory by illegal settlers with the support of the Israeli military. After October 7, 2023, Israel’s National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir handed out 10,000 assault rifles to the invading settlers. The now-armed settlers are assaulting and shooting Palestinians in the West Bank. The people in the West have never felt more insecure, as the Israeli military either accompanies settlers or the settlers themselves appear in the IDF uniform.

As the Israeli genocide continues, stock prices of weapons manufacturers such as Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman etc are rising. War profiteering is another reason why US foreign policy is pro-Israel.

POTUS Biden’s National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and others have asserted that Iran was complicit in the Hamas attack

In 2001, the US administration made plans to attack Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Iran in the war on terror. It seems like it is finally Iran’s turn. However secret communication from Israeli officials is advising against it, as it would automatically draw Hezbollah into the conflict. Israel fears Hezbollah since the latter’s capability far exceeds Hamas. Engaging Iran will also draw its regional proxies into a war.

Hamas struck a big blow to the supposedly invincible IDF and Mossad. In retaliation, Israel is engineering Nakba or forced removal of the trapped Palestinian population in Gaza and the West Bank. Carpet bombing is continuing in North Gaza and 1.1 million people have been driven to South Gaza. Bombing is continuing there too, including at hospitals and churches.

Military analysts have opined the IDF is no match for Hamas’ guerilla warfare capability, in urban warfare. This is why Israel is carpet bombing Gaza, to win against Hamas. Israel is delaying an all-out ground offensive – on the advice of the US – for intelligence gathering.

Israeli soldiers raided the Aqsa mosque in Ramadan and attacked worshippers. Attacking the sacred is crossing the red line. Hamas hence named its strike after the Aqsa mosque. Palestine is the holy land and so the Palestinian cause is close to the hearts of global Muslims.

An all-out invasion of helpless Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank would ultimately mobilize Hezbollah and factions from the various disparate global Jihadi groups. They could potentially arrive for Jihad, reminiscent of the Yugoslavian conflict in the 1990s, which changed the outcome of the war in Bosnia. Nusor, Al-Qaeda, IMU, Boko Haram the Taliban etc. are disparate groups, each fighting Western imperialism in their respective homeland. It is not far-fetched to say that atleast some fighters will head to the holy land. As more groups join the foray, Arab and Muslim public opinion would pressurize Arab/Muslim rulers for state action – the least of it being cutting diplomatic relations.

Hamas’ October 7 strike aimed to achieve five strategic goals: to reverse the diplomatic momentum toward “normalization” in the Middle East; and to elicit an overreaction from Israel. This was aimed to shift global public opinion against Israel; to garner support from the global Muslims; to elicit support from Jihadi groups and Muslim states; and finally to curtail the US’ all-out support of Israel. The first three objectives have already been met. The fourth will determine the fate of Palestine.

Pakistan stands in solidarity with the Palestinians. May Allah aid them, and ease their suffering.

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