



People mourn at the graveside of Eden Guez during her funeral in Ashkelon, Israel, Oct. 10, 2023. She was killed while attending a festival that was attacked by Hamas gunmen from Gaza. (OSV News/Reuters/Violeta Santos Moura)



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October 7, 2024

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One year ago today, Hamas terrorists perpetrated a pogrom against the Jews. It was a horrible day and the war against Hamas that it occasioned has been horrible too, as all wars are horrible.

How strange that here in the United States the protests have focused not on the fascist politics of Hamas; not on its criminal policy of placing terrorists within civilian infrastructures like schools and hospitals; not on Hamas' antedeluvian attitudes toward women and gays or its denial of the freedoms we all take for granted; and not on the need to return hostages to their families.

Here, in America, we have been telling ourselves, "Never Again!" for eight decades since the Shoah. We build thoughtful and educational Holocaust museums to warn future generations about both the unique role of antisemitism in Western history and the dreadful attempt at genocide by the Nazi regime in the 1930s and 1940s. None of that mattered. It is antisemitism that has been on the rise this past year.

No, the protests, from the very start, have been directed at Israel. Harvard's Undergraduate Palestinian Solidarity Committee [issued a statement](#), cosigned by 33 other student groups, that began: "We, the undersigned student organizations, hold the Israeli regime entirely responsible for all unfolding violence."

The lack of moral and intellectual seriousness was stunning. The [slowness of Harvard's leadership](#) to confront this nonsense was equally stunning.

Protests against Israel spread to other elite campuses and beyond. The Anti-Defamation League [reported](#) "2,087 anti-Israel incidents of assault, vandalism, harassment, protests/actions and divestment resolutions between June 1, 2023, and May 31, 2024, a staggering 477% increase in those categories compared to the same period in 2022-2023."



A person holds a sign during an anti-Israel demonstration, as part of a walkout by students of New York University in New York City Oct. 25, 2023. (OSV News/Reuters/Shannon Stapleton)

In a brilliant [essay at Liberties](#), Paul Berman examined the intellectual climate that made the campus protests possible, even likely: the reduction of the world into colonizer and colonized, oppressor and oppressed, "the West and the Rest." The essay is a tour de force and a balanced one.

Berman's extensive knowledge of the region and its history allows him to make the case that looking at the crucible of Israeli-Palestinian relations through the lens of settler colonialism yields distortions of fact, misunderstandings of what motivates the principal actors and, finally, morally obscene conclusions.

You do not need to understand all the complexities of the Middle East to know that deploying the word "genocide" to describe Israel's prosecution of its war against Hamas is not simply misguided. It requires an acceptance of the propaganda against Israel from those like Hamas and Hezbollah, who really do wish to commit genocide.

If they could.

It is the grimmest of ironies that Israel could, if it wanted, perpetrate a genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza. That it does not intend any such thing is obvious, as evidenced by the warnings it sends to civilians in advance of attacks and by the fact that civilian casualties have decreased drastically as the war progressed, [according to AP](#). That decrease was measured both as a percentage of those killed in the conflict *and* in raw numbers. It occurred as urban fighting intensified, which is when civilian casualties should have skyrocketed.

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Israel, of course, does not benefit from civilian deaths in Gaza. The dark irony is that Hamas, or at least its propaganda arm, actually does benefit from civilian deaths.

On the other hand, Hamas does not seek to hide its genocidal intent — its charter [makes that clear](#) — even while it lacks the means to perpetrate genocide against Israel. That could change if Iran, Hamas' patron, ever acquired a nuclear weapon.

When such obvious moral facts are ignored, can these anti-Israel protests be explained as anything but evidence of antisemitism? It is hard to see how.

The unique focus on Gaza instead of other tragedies also points to antisemitism as the culprit. The New York Times' Nicholas Kristoff traveled to Sudan this year to [report on the conflict there](#):

"There is so much rape," Suad Urqud, a woman crossing from the Darfur region of Sudan with her malnourished daughter, told me. She recounted how an Arab militia called the Rapid Support Forces had publicly raped four women and girls, ages 15 to 20, in her village, to terrorize the community and force Black African ethnic groups to flee.

Rape, dreadful though it is, is not the principal reason so many millions of Sudanese refugees have [fled their country](#). The Arab militias shoot men who try and work in the fields, and so there is mass starvation. That is the principal reason for the exodus.

Did I miss the campus protests about the situation in Sudan?

Sadly, the fact that Israel is a sister democracy, with a culture that is tolerant in ways our culture is tolerant, seems not to matter to large sectors of the American left anymore.

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History provides no comfort to the anti-Israel protesters. Is it plausible to think that the Allies could have stopped their assault on Nazi-controlled Europe at the Rhine? What were the Allies to do? What is Israel to do? Critics of Israel should be able to answer that question.

America's interests and its values demand that we continue to support our ally Israel.

Sadly, the fact that Israel is a sister democracy, with a culture that is tolerant in ways our culture is tolerant, seems not to matter to large sectors of the American left anymore. Antisemitism used to be associated with John Birchers and the Klan, not with elite colleges and universities and liberal, Democratic politics.

Antisemitism is Western culture's recessive, cancerous gene. We thought it was largely dead after the 20th century yielded its most obvious moral lessons. We were wrong. It turns out that antisemitism must be confronted in each and every generation and with something more than slogans about "Never Again!"

A future Holocaust is only a few nuclear bombs away. Criticize the Israeli government policies all day long, but never, ever ignore the moral authority of Jewish alarm.

You do not have to agree with the ways Israel defends itself to acknowledge the need for that defense. You do not have to apologize or make excuses for Islamist fascism. You do not have to equate legitimate military exercise with terrorism. Unless you are an antisemite. Then such things become easy. Then such things become dangerous.