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## ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel  
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Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

tunnels, missiles and incursions. The opposing faction portrayed post-Gush Katif scenarios emphasizing serenity, development and unrestricted international intervention in Gaza when convenient. The former proved absolutely

## Commentary...

### It's That Simple: Gaza Disengagement Opponents Were Right

By Amit Segal

During my final exit from the Israeli moshav Ganei Tal, where I served as a correspondent for the Galei Tzahal radio station, after every tear had been wept, every Psalm recited in the synagogue, every evacuee had spoken all their words to the soldiers, a Gush Katif resident took his stand. He raised a modest sign, A4-sized, bearing the inscription "Terror won." That sign occupied my thoughts until reaching the Re'im base in southern Israel, where the evacuation forces and numerous journalists with sparkling eyes had positioned themselves.

This protester, undoubtedly expelled from his home the following day, identified the most elemental issue in the uprooting of Gush Katif. Before this evolved into legal violence ("preparing for dictatorship," Uri Orbach termed it then). Before becoming the narrative of sectarian and religious division. Before the unprecedented political promise-breaking story in Israeli history, before everything else — this remained a straightforward question of whether disengagement would enhance Israel's position against terrorism, or deteriorate it. Gaza's battle was waged on security grounds, not religious or moral ones, and there the verdict was rendered.

One protester along the Ganei Tal-Katif route declared conditions would worsen, yet he stood essentially isolated. Complete security and political leadership rallied to proclaim improvement was coming. Before the Likud functionaries' referendum, Israel's Channel 2 hosted a compelling debate between opposing Benny Begin and supporting former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. "Fighting in Gaza requires no dozens of communities lacking any chance or future for survival. This applies equally to Nablus and everywhere," Olmert declared. Begin countered, "Gush Katif's synagogue could transform into a mosque, continuing incitement and terror operation planning against Israel." Olmert responded, "You guarantee functionaries eternal terror, we guarantee opportunities for change."

Then-Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz pronounced on referendum day, "I forecast terror levels will decline." Regarding the Qassams, then possessing merely five-kilometer range, Mofaz explained, "Through IDF preparations before, during and following disengagement, IDF flexibility against Gaza Strip threats will expand, including enhanced missile response capabilities should they emerge. Our plan targets Gaza's terror infrastructure, emphasizing leaders, operatives and Hamas capabilities."

Consider 'Mr. Security' himself, then-Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. Before disengagement implementation, the Saturday night following Tisha B'Av, Sharon declared, "This plan serves Israel under any future circumstances. We minimize daily confrontations and casualties for both sides. The IDF will restructure along defensive boundaries, beyond the security barrier. Those persisting in fighting us will encounter the IDF and security apparatus at maximum capacity."

Weeks before the Simchat Torah massacre, the IDF's Southern Command commander during the disengagement, Dan Harel, clarified in an interview, "We knew Gaza would become Hamastan, but that's better... The border is clear, we built it very well... very stable, no infiltrations." Supporting his position, he characterized this as "a security initiative proven by time." His interviewer provided numerical justification regarding "In two years in Southern Command, 54 soldiers were killed, so the 18 years that have passed since would have cost 500 soldiers." Nearly 900 soldiers have perished since in Gaza conquest operations, yet he remains silent on apologies.

One faction envisioned post-Gush Katif futures featuring rockets,

accurate, the latter absolutely mistaken. The situation remains that elementary.

Contemporary magnificent gaslighting, featuring patronizing eye-rolling whenever "disengagement" surfaces as though representing ancient history, intends obscuring the fundamental reality that disengagement opponents correctly anticipated every consequence they warned against, while supporters erred in every encouragement they offered. Without the disengagement, Hamas would never have had two commando divisions to storm our border. Without the Oslo Accords, retrospectively speaking, Hamas lacked Gaza as a capital for manufacturing Qassams and raid teams that murdered Gush Katif inhabitants.

The deception centers on the "disengagement plan" terminology. The plain truth is Gaza never had anywhere to go. Before President Donald Trump's initiative, no genuine disengagement possibility existed from the terror sanctuary and demographic explosive. Sharon, strategically astute regarding settlers yet timid concerning Gazans, avoided launching Defensive Shield in Gaza fearing dozens of military casualties. Influenced by corrupt offspring and compromised media, he chose Rafiah Yam engagement over Rafah, producing known consequences.

It's trendy these days to pin messianic thinking on the right. Fair enough. But the truth is that two messianic movements crashed head-on in Gaza: the religious-nationalist right that wanted to annex the Gaza Strip and pretended two million Palestinians didn't exist because "it's our land," and the less talked-about secular-liberal left that believed pulling out would create a Gaza Riviera with high-tech and Singapore-style beach clubs.

The shrinking camp of disengagement supporters now makes two arguments. First, it could have worked differently. If we had just contained Hamas, fed them, and kept the Palestinian Authority out, there wouldn't have been terror. But remember — Hamas took over first through elections in 2006, then through an armed coup in 2007, both direct results of the disengagement. All these people now criticizing the Qatari money transfers? They were the same ones preaching "containment" and "accommodation" for years. If they really wanted to destroy Hamas, they had plenty of microphones to scream about Qatari cash. A fraction of the energy they put into fighting judicial reform would have stopped that disaster.

Second, they claim the Oct. 7 massacre would have happened anyway. That's incredibly brazen. It's like a guy who sells you "diet chocolate," forces you to eat it, then when you gain ten pounds says "Hey, you would have gotten fat on regular chocolate too." The whole point was to pay a steep price at home to get better security, not end up with the same nightmare. Unless better security was never really the goal, because no sane group with hundreds of years of military experience would think running away from terrorists would make them put down their guns. Maybe the real goal was always to crush internal opposition in Israeli society. You know: the operation failed, but at least the patient died. (Israel Hayom Aug 1)

### The Strategic and Moral Failure of the 'Bring Them Home' Campaign

By Avi Abelow

As reports grow more harrowing—of Israeli hostages starved, emaciated and forced to dig their own graves, the painful truth must be confronted: The "Bring Them Home Now" campaign has not only failed to free our people; it has served to entrench their suffering.

What began as a unifying cry of anguish transformed into a moral and strategic disaster. The campaign's well-intentioned, emotionally driven message quickly lost sight of the enemy—Hamas—and turned

its fury inward, at the Israeli government. By doing so, it handed Hamas exactly what it wanted: leverage. Worse, it fractured our society and muddled our national resolve.

It is profoundly immoral to prioritize emotional pressure over military victory. Jewish law and common sense agree: the lives of over 10 million Israelis must take precedence, despite the silence of so many rabbis.

The clarity of past generations has been replaced with emotional blackmail. That is not strength; it is surrender. Contrast today's chaos with the resolute moral clarity of Entebbe and Sabena. Israel's moral code was simple and firm back then: You don't negotiate with terrorists. You eliminate them. You rescue hostages when you can. But you do not surrender your national security or moral compass.

Yoni Netanyahu gave his life for that clarity. His brother, our current Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, once embodied it. Today, that clarity has been compromised by campaigns that misplace blame and reward terrorists.

If this campaign had truly been about freeing hostages, its focus would have been on the fundamental enablers: Hamas, Iran, Qatar, the United Nations, UNRWA, and the International Red Cross. These institutions did nothing to protect our people, and in many cases, actively abetted terror. But rather than hold them accountable, protestors aimed their anger at Jerusalem instead of Gaza City.

This emotional campaign pressured Israel into trading thousands of terrorists, murderers who will regroup, rearm, and strike again. We've seen it before. By forcing our government into a corner, the activists raised the price for hostage returns and incentivized future kidnappings.

Even now, some leaders of the campaign have gone so far as to accuse the Prime Minister of wanting hostages to remain in captivity—a baseless, grotesque slander that only strengthens Hamas's hand. This isn't just a failure of policy. It is a failure of morality.

We did not go to war to retrieve hostages. We went to war to dismantle Hamas, an Iranian proxy that raped, murdered, and kidnapped our citizens. The hostages are not the reason for the war; they are its cruelest consequence. We know realistically that they will only come home when Hamas no longer exists. Any other pretense is political trickery to undermine our success.

We must bring our people home, but not through capitulation; only through total victory. Israel must destroy Hamas, retake full control of Gaza, and end the cycle of terror that makes hostage-taking an effective tool of war.

The world is starving for moral clarity. And Israel, once a beacon of such clarity, must return to that role. We cannot appease global confusion by sacrificing our principles. We must lead. Boldly. Unapologetically.

Let the rallying cry be no longer "Bring Them Home Now," but rather, "Let My People Go." And let it be directed not at Israel's government, but at the monsters who hold them captive. (JNS Aug. 7)

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## **Bibi-Bashing and the Quest for a Mythical Middle Way in Gaza**

By Jonathan S. Tobin

Once again, Israel is at a crossroads in the war that began on Oct. 7, 2023. The conflict is currently stalemated, with the remnants of the Hamas terrorists who led the assault on southern Israeli communities 22 months ago still in control of about 25% of the Gaza Strip. They are also still holding hostage what is believed to be some 20 live kidnapping victims and the bodies of 30 others.

What's worse, they've orchestrated a food shortage in Gaza and succeeded in getting the international press and much of the international community to buy into the blood libels they've circulated about the Jewish state committing genocide and intentionally starving children. With most of the world concentrating on demonizing Israel, Hamas has felt no pressure to negotiate a ceasefire/hostage-release deal that both Washington and Jerusalem thought was likely last month.

As a result, what's left of Hamas is content to let Palestinians in Gaza go on suffering the privations made inevitable by the war they started for as long as necessary. And the terrorists think all they need

to do is hang on and wait for the West to hand them a reward in the form of a state they will only use to continue their century-old war on the Jewish presence in Israel.

What can the Israeli government do about this dreadful situation?

None of the options is good. But that hasn't stopped commentators from offering a lot of advice to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about what he should be doing. Even those who purport to care about Israel often wind up being tripped up by the general disdain with which the pundit class views the Israeli leader.

The impulse to blame and delegitimize him and his political allies is so great that it has distorted the discussion about next steps in Gaza in ways that make it difficult to maintain the distinction between well-meaning yet foolish suggestions and those that are clearly ill-intentioned.

Two prominent examples of such voices are those of New York Times columnist Bret Stephens and Times of Israel editor David Horowitz. The pair, both former editors of The Jerusalem Post, care about Israel. As such, a lot of supporters of the Jewish state who are centrists or political liberals look to them for guidance as to what to think about the situation.

The trouble is that both are also victims of Netanyahu derangement syndrome. No matter what the prime minister says or does, or the choices that he faces, they always manage to find a way to blame him—even when, as is the case now, the fault for Israel's problems lies with Hamas.

Their endless carping about their least favorite Israeli politician isn't, in and of itself, that important. But at a moment when it appears that Netanyahu is finally going to make a fateful decision about the next step in the war against Hamas, their efforts to foster the illusion that there is some mythical "third way" option—other than the two obvious choices facing the Jewish state—is particularly unhelpful.

They argue that the prime minister is too blind, cynical or power-hungry to appreciate this path out of Israel's troubles. Indeed, Stephens goes so far as to write that if Netanyahu chooses a different path forward other than the one he recommends, "no thoughtful person can be pro-Israel without also being against" Netanyahu. That says a lot more about him and other Bibi-haters than it does about the prime minister or the dilemma he faces.

Netanyahu is a flawed individual who has hung on far longer in power than would be optimal in any democracy. But the reason he has won so many elections is that, for all of his shortcomings, he's someone who has always been willing to avoid magical thinking about Israel's strategic situation and its enemies.

And though Bibi-haters like Stephens and Horowitz may claim to be sensible centrists who are more clear-eyed about Israel's dilemmas than the prime minister, their claims that Netanyahu is avoiding an acceptable path to ending the war because of his corruption and malign extremism is as disingenuous and libelous as the smears hurled at the Jewish state by anti-Zionists.

What are the options facing Israel in Gaza?

It can, as most of its ill-wishers demand, give up on the war to destroy Hamas and, by one means or another, concede that when the dust settles, it will return to ruling Gaza.

That can happen via a negotiated settlement or by Israel withdrawing from most or all of the Strip in the absence of any agreement. Such an outcome might grant Israel's exhausted armed forces something of a reprieve, and perhaps quiet, or at least slow down the international campaign to demonize and isolate the Jewish state. But it would also mean that sooner or later, Israel would again be faced, as it was on Oct. 6, 2023, by a fortified Hamas-run Palestinian state that is armed to the teeth and ready to make good on its pledge to commit more Oct.7-style attacks replete with the same atrocities.

The most obvious alternative to that dismal prospect is for Israel to finally go into the last parts of Gaza still under Hamas control, wipe out the terrorists and destroy their last strongholds. That would ensure that the Islamist group, whose goal remains the destruction of the Jewish state and the genocide of its population, would be conclusively defeated and remove the threat of additional Oct. 7-style invasions.

The downside to that scenario is that this will likely endanger the remaining living hostages and expose the Israel Defense Forces—whose soldiers, though still dedicated to their mission, are already exhausted from 22 months of war—to more attacks and casualties. There's also the very real possibility that such an effort will bog down the IDF in a drawn-out guerilla war that will lead to even more international opprobrium directed at Israel and create pressure that will endanger the support Netanyahu is still getting from the Trump administration.

All indications are that Netanyahu is choosing the latter.

Perhaps he is doing so in the hope that this will motivate much of the Arab and Muslim world, as well as other sympathizers of the Palestinians elsewhere, to pressure Hamas to agree to a deal that will, at least temporarily, pause the war and lead to the ransoming of some of the remaining hostages, albeit at the same unfair and exorbitant prices exacted from Israel previously.

Given that Hamas seems to believe that continued suffering in Gaza is to its advantage, the odds of this threat leading to an agreement seem slim. Netanyahu also knows that the chances of third parties like the Arab states that recently called on Hamas to lay down its arms being willing to take responsibility for Gaza are also a fantasy.

Which means that Netanyahu's choice is simple: surrender to Hamas or go all in to defeat it. But that's not how some pundits see it.

In particular, Stephens is claiming that there is a third way involving, as former Prime Minister Naftali Bennet has claimed, Israel's maintaining of a perimeter around Hamas-run areas from which the IDF can squeeze it; withholding of construction materials and arms that the terrorists can use to continue the war; and flooding of the remaining Islamist-ruled areas with food, so as to answer the demands for Israel to prevent starvation in the Strip.

This option, which is also endorsed by the Foundation for Defense of Democracies' Jonathan Schanzer in an article in Commentary magazine, would allow Israel to "declare victory" and thus escape from the trap of an endless unwinnable war in the streets of rubble-strewn Gaza.

That sounds sensible, but it would no more solve Israel's long- or short-term problems than the surrender option.

By choosing to complete the destruction of Hamas, Netanyahu is showing that he understands, even if he is too politically astute to say so explicitly, some basic truths about the conflict that his critics are choosing to ignore or deny.

One is that the belief that Israel can improve its image abroad, or answer the lies about its causing starvation in Gaza, by choosing sensible policies is a myth. Netanyahu has made some mistakes in conducting the war, one of which was the thought that Hamas had a lower tolerance for Palestinian suffering than Israel. But the demonization of the Jewish state's war policies, which began the day after Oct. 7 rather than as a result of some policy blunders, illustrates that the claims of "genocide" and "starvation" have nothing to do with Israeli actions.

Israel was already being falsely accused of "occupying" Gaza prior to Oct. 7, despite the fact that it had withdrawn every soldier, settler and settlement from the Strip in 2005. And it was being labeled as guilty of starving Palestinians even before there was an actual food shortage there manufactured by Hamas.

Those lies will continue to be spread even if Israel gives up the effort to destroy Hamas. Any decision based on the hope that its image will improve by some act of generosity or appeasement is a dangerous delusion.

The second truth is one that has also been obvious since the war began: Hamas will never willingly release all of the hostages it took on Oct. 7. Israelis desperately want to free those who remain alive and their continued plight is a festering wound at the heart of the nation. But Hamas will not give them up in exchange for anything but an internationally recognized Palestinian state that will be used as a platform to continue the war against Israel.

The two war goals of defeating Hamas and freeing the hostages have always been mutually exclusive. It is Netanyahu's job—and an unenviable one, given the pressure he is put under by some of the hostage families and their many sympathizers—to choose to defend

Israel's security.

The third truth is that it is simply untrue that "declaring victory" is consistent with conceding Hamas control over any part of Gaza.

Hamas has suffered tremendous losses to its military forces and ability to shoot rockets and missiles at Israel. But hanging back and letting it stay where it is in a portion of the Strip is simply a formula for an eventual return to the status quo ante of Oct. 6, 2023, which means not merely that the terrorists will be right to claim that they have won the war they started, but that they will continue it.

The option Stephens and other Netanyahu-bashers propose as an alternative to occupation of all of Gaza would bring with it all the problems that a complete takeover of the Strip would entail—with none of its benefits, such as destroying Hamas and preventing it from dominating Palestinian politics.

Like it or not, and the IDF's leadership understandably dreads the job that lies ahead, there's no way to ensure that Gaza doesn't return to being a Hamas fortress without occupying all of it and ensuring that Israel is in charge of its security for the foreseeable future. The naysayers notwithstanding, military experts like John Spencer still insist that defeating Hamas is possible and necessary. They should be heeded.

Netanyahu's right-wing coalition partners may fantasize about resettling Gaza and say things about the Palestinians that are hard to defend. But that doesn't mean they are wrong about the need to prevent anyone but Israel from being in charge of the Strip.

Hate Netanyahu all you like but there's no third way around those facts.

Some may think that the best way of defending Israel from the blood libels that are now being mainstreamed by the international media is by joining in the smears of Netanyahu. They seem to think that putting all the blame on him and his allies for the continued suffering caused by Hamas will give a pass to the IDF and the rest of the country. But Israel-haters hate all Israelis and Jews, not just Netanyahu. By choosing to try for a decisive victory in the war against the terrorists, rather than a compromise that will give them an undeserved triumph, Netanyahu is choosing the least bad of all the available options.

As was the case during the first year of the war when he had to contend with a hostile Biden administration, Netanyahu deserves great credit for not bending to foreign pressure and insisting on the Jewish state continuing its efforts to defeat its foes. He needs the same fortitude now.

One can be pro-Israel without being a fan of the prime minister's. But the idea that one cannot support the Jewish state without also wishing to see its courageous and democratically elected leader toppled by undemocratic means is to mistake Netanyahu or Trump derangement syndrome for a sensible outlook on the Middle East. Those who engage in such dishonest advocacy, whether they intend it or not, are helping those forces seeking to isolate and demonize Israel rather than help it. (JNS Aug 7)

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### **'Hasbara' and the Traitors Among Us** By Ruthie Blum

The release on Thursday and Friday of two hostage videos—the first by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad captors of Rom Braslavski and the second by the Hamas monsters holding Evyatar David—coincided with the global propaganda campaign claiming that Israel is purposely starving the population of Gaza.

To give credence to the bald-faced lie that spread around the world faster than the coronavirus, The New York Times devoted its front page on Friday to a photo of an emaciated child in the arms of his mother. The image rightly sent chills up everybody's spines. Ditto for a picture, circulated simultaneously across every platform, of a different spindly child, this one lying in a hospital bed, with his mother nearby.

Viewers of the snapshots were so quick to believe that the condition of the kids was proof of Israeli war crimes that they ignored a crucial clue about there being more to the story than met the eye: Both mothers appeared well-fed.

As it turned out, the little boys in question were suffering from

genetic diseases. One of them was even transported by Israel for treatment abroad, and his situation is now improving.

Called out, The New York Times issued a minuscule clarification barely noticed by readers. But the damage had been done. This included warnings by France, Britain and Canada that they would recognize Palestinian statehood come September, during the next session of the U.N. General Assembly.

The response of the international press to the truth behind the photos was to shrug. Heaven forbid facts should get in the way of the carefully constructed narrative, which is why detractors refuse to acknowledge the millions of meals distributed to non-combatants by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation.

Nor does the anti-Israel choir sing about the pernicious role of the United Nations in abetting Hamas to retain control of the food—so much so that the terrorists don’t need to steal it anymore. But they do appropriate any supplies entering on trucks—free of charge, of course—and sell them at prices no Gazan, or anyone else for that matter, could possibly afford.

This brings us to Israeli patriots at home as well as champions abroad. As they have done during every war waged against the Jewish state, these genuine well-wishers are wringing their hands about the country’s lack of effective public diplomacy, known in Hebrew as *hasbara*.

Their main complaint pertains to what they consider a void in the information space. And their favorite culprit is the government, as though such a bureaucracy is or should be the key source of data with which to refute the onslaught of falsehoods launched like missile barrages at Israel and the Jews.

What few seem to grasp is that the best defenders of Israel are those who aren’t on the government payroll. Such influencers are numerous and tireless. But as truth-tellers, they’re no match for their malicious counterparts, whose aim is to vilify, not verify.

This isn’t Israel’s only disadvantage. Another involves disagreements among the powers-that-be in Jerusalem—and their advisers—about which messages to emphasize.

Take the latest hostage videos, for example. It took more than three days for the Braslavski family to give the government permission to publicize two out of the full six minutes of the shocking clip, which the PIJ says it recorded days before losing contact with his captors.

The film shows 21-year-old Rom—kidnapped on Oct. 7, 2023, from the Nova music festival, where he worked as a security guard—so skinny and weak that he’s barely able to move. That his traumatized parents didn’t want the whole thing aired is understandable.

The David family agreed to have their son’s misery broadcast in full, but only 24 hours after Hamas released the gruesome footage. No one can pass judgment on their hesitation, since a skeletal Evyatar, 24, is seen in the video digging his own grave.

The unfathomable pain of the hostages’ families is one basis for the government’s previous demand that local media not broadcast any such clips. The other rationale was that Israel shouldn’t promote Hamas propaganda, the purpose of which is to heighten internecine Israeli strife and cause protesters to cry for an end to the war.

Both reasons were and still are perfectly legitimate; nevertheless, the policy hasn’t been helpful in terms of *hasbara*. The same applies to the argument early on in the war over whether to disseminate, as widely as possible, the 47-minute movie—a collection of Hamas’s boastful documentation of the brutal atrocities its members, as well as Gazan civilians, committed on that fateful Simchat Torah nearly two years ago.

Rather than make it accessible to the general public in Israel and around the globe, the government decided to provide special screenings for politicians, ambassadors and journalists. Even then, some of the faces of victims were blurred to protect the feelings of their families, many of whom didn’t want the bloody, invasive visuals to be on display.

At the time, there was a serious debate about it. One side favored highlighting the events of Oct. 7—the worst attacks on Jews since the Holocaust—as a tool to further Israel’s public-diplomacy efforts. On the other side were those who feared the video would be doctored or turned into snuff. This camp opposed exploiting and thereby

cheapening the horrors for publicity’s sake.

The controversy arose again with the fake-news blitz about Israel’s imposition of a famine in Gaza. On Monday, however, a number of families of Oct. 7 victims submitted a petition to the Tel Aviv District Court for approval of a 4-billion shekel (\$1.2 billion) class-action lawsuit against Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, for enabling Hamas to use its platforms to show off their atrocities.

Just imagine the outcry, then, if the government had disregarded the will of the families in order to bolster *hasbara*, especially with swaths of the international community having zero sympathy for Israel specifically and Jews in general.

But this public-diplomacy challenge pales in comparison to that posed by the current left-wing Israeli “intelligentsia,” along with like-minded former heads of the political and military establishment. Indeed, countering antisemitic tropes is difficult enough without having homegrown “leaders” and “experts” provide fuel for Israel’s enemies.

Examples abound, but let’s begin with Channel 12 anchorwoman Yonit Levi, who concluded her nightly news show on July 27 by saying with a sigh, “Maybe it’s time to acknowledge that this isn’t a public-diplomacy failure, but a moral failure, and to start from there.”

Three days later, former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert told the German outlet Spiegel International, “There are a number of events that could be seen as war crimes. More than I can list. More than anything, though, it is the illegitimate war that is being waged out of the personal, political interests of [Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu]. As a consequence, Israeli soldiers are dying, additional hostages may be losing their lives and many innocent Palestinians are being killed. That is a crime.”

Then came award-winning novelist David Grossman’s Aug. 1 interview in the Italian daily La Repubblica. Expressing “immense pain and a broken heart,” he said, “For many years, I refused to use that term, ‘genocide.’ But now, after the images I have seen and after talking to people who were there [in Gaza], I can’t help but use it.”

This echoed the words of expat Israeli historian Omer Bartov, whose guest essay in The New York Times on July 15 was titled: “I’m a Genocide Scholar. I Know It When I See It.”

More recently, on Sunday, some 1,000 prominent Israeli performers signed a petition reading: “We, the people of culture and art in Israel, find ourselves—against our will and against our values—complicit, as Israeli citizens, in the horrifying events in the Gaza Strip, particularly the killing of children and uninvolved civilians, starvation, displacement of the population and the senseless destruction of Gaza’s cities. We call on all those involved in shaping and implementing this policy—stop! Do not issue illegal orders and do not follow them! Do not, God forbid, commit war crimes! Do not abandon the principles of human morality and the values of Judaism! End the war. Free the hostages.”

Meanwhile, a separate petition, signed by more than 1,400 designers, architects and visual artists states: “Before our eyes, a horror of historic proportions is taking place. We bear responsibility as human beings and as Israelis for the atrocities currently being committed in our name against a population located just a few kilometers away from us—living in an impossible reality and under immense suffering. We are deeply concerned for the fate of Gaza’s residents, the hostages, our sons and daughters and for the future of our society—both present and future.”

The icing on the cake appeared on Monday, with a short video of former chiefs of the Shin Bet, Mossad, Israel Defense Forces and Israel Police denigrating their country. “We’re hiding behind a lie,” asserted one participant. “We’re on the eve of defeat,” declared another. The rest proffered similarly inane—albeit dangerous—remarks.

Israeli *hasbara* may leave a lot to be desired. But what good is public diplomacy when the traitors among us parrot, if not craft, the enemies’ talking points? As Evyatar David’s father, Avishai, put it simply: “Whose side are they on?”

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