

A 5-Point Peace Plan to Protect Civilians, Address Trauma, Invest in Democracy, and Dismantle Hamas and the Israeli Occupation¹

Lisa Schirch

Abstract

There is no military solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. A just political solution is essential. This article expands the narratives of what is necessary at this moment when too many simply say “there is no other way” or “ceasefire” which both leave many questions unanswered. This 5-point peace plan identifies a range of strategic principles and bridgebuilding processes to protect the safety and ensure the democratic freedoms of both Israelis and Palestinians. It emphasises the shared humanity and traumas of both Palestinians and Jewish Israelis. A sustainable peace will require that journalists and political leaders use their power to focus on protecting civilians, dismantling Hamas, ending occupation, addressing trauma, and investing in democracy.

¹ This proposal was first drafted in 2011 during the Israel-Gaza conflict when I presented it to the Obama White House which convened a group of peace process experts to advise on their peace talks in the region. This proposal also grew out of the 3D Security Initiative's Israel-Palestine Congressional Forum which sought to translate peacebuilding expertise to the US foreign policy community to develop alternatives to the Global War on Terror. The Israel-Palestine Congressional Forum brought Palestinian, Israeli, and American Jewish policy experts to inform Congress of policy alternatives. This proposal draws on ten years of work with US security officials to understand how best to end terror groups and support democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan. This proposal also draws from 4 months of research with a wide range of Palestinians and Israelis while living and traveling throughout the West Bank, Israel, and the villages around Gaza. Special thanks to multiple Palestinian, American, and Israeli peace experts for generating elements of this plan. Many asked not to be publicly named so I have excluded all their names.

Introduction

There is no military solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. A just political solution is essential. Too many simply say “there is no other way” or “ceasefire” which both leave many questions unanswered. This five-point peace proposal outlines a diverse set of strategic principles and bridgebuilding processes necessary for the safety and democratic freedoms of Israelis and Palestinians. The article aims to expand strategic thinking on the elements of a sustainable and comprehensive peace process.

While global media and political leaders wave flags and use divisive, binary language of “us against them,” there are thousands of Palestinians and Jews in Israel and beyond already working together to build bridges and affirm their shared humanity. Refusing the binary of supporting one group or the other is essential to address the key needs of both Israelis and Palestinians for safety and justice.

Israelis widely view Hamas as calling for genocide, and its October 7 attacks reinforced that Hamas will use genocidal violence toward civilians. They express confusion and hurt at accusations that they are only foreign colonizers in a land where their ancestors lived, and which is an intimate part of their religious texts. Israelis express deep trauma triggered by the October 7 massacre with memories of centuries of Christian violence against them. Israelis note that alongside the Holocaust, Western countries limited immigration for Jews, Arab countries expelled Jewish citizens, and Jews still today have nowhere else to go. They see Israel as the only Jewish state in a world with dozens of Christian and Muslim states. Jews feel like a threatened minority in a world that mobilises ancient hatred toward them, scapegoating them for crimes other countries commit at larger scales. They fear genocidal threats against them from Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas. In watching pro-Palestinian global protests, they see the echoes of the antisemitic demonisation that preceded the Holocaust. Hamas's threats to destroy Israel have mobilised a sense that Israelis must kill or be killed.

Palestinians widely view the Israeli state as waging a 75-year campaign of terror with Israeli forces committing mass war crimes and genocidal levels of violence against them. Since 1948, Israelis have forcibly driven Palestinians out of their homes and farms to make way for Jewish families and settlements moving to Israel from countries where Jews were expelled or faced persecution. Palestinians note that they are not responsible for the Holocaust or Christian antisemitism. Five million Palestinians have lived their entire lives in refugee camps with deep resentment toward Israelis who live in the villages and homes of their parents and grandparents in the region around Gaza and across the rest of Israel. Palestinians view world leaders ignoring their plight and diminishing their humanity. Palestinians believe Israel's government blocks all efforts to establish a Palestinian state and criminalizes Palestinians' nonviolent movements. Many Palestinians believe that nonviolence will not work. Israeli violence against Palestinians convinces some that there is “no other way” than violence to achieve their human rights and dignity.

The US government continues to support the Israeli government with nearly \$4 billion in aid per year, more than any other country in the world. The US has not sanctioned Israel since right-wing ministers were democratically elected. Ha'aretz reported that right-wing

Christian Zionists in the US have spent more than \$65 million supporting Jewish settlements.²

The October 7 Hamas attack on Israelis will likely create a new generation of far-right Israelis committed to the elimination of all Palestinians in Israel and the denial of a Palestinian state. The mass Israeli military campaign in Gaza and the violence toward Palestinians in the West Bank will also likely create a new generation of Palestinians to support Hamas. It is urgent to lay the groundwork now to prevent such radicalisation on both sides.

A sustainable peace requires understanding the trauma, violence, and injustice all sides perceive. Restoring a sense of safety will require that political leaders, journalists, and communities use their power to focus on protecting all civilians, dismantling both Hamas and the Israeli occupation, addressing trauma, and investing in democracy.

The logic of the Israeli siege on Gaza asserts that Hamas poses an existential threat, and that destroying Hamas is essential. Many Israelis claim there is *no other way* other than the current Israeli military offensive to dismantle Hamas.³ At the same time, Hamas has argued that there is *no other way* to end Israel's occupation of Palestine than through the violence it waged against Israeli civilians on October 7. Combined, the two logics create mutually assured suffering⁴ and fears of genocide for both Israelis and Palestinians

Context and Lessons from the US War on Terror

US military strategists warn that the goal of eliminating Hamas entirely—both its political and military wing—will not be effective without greater protections for Palestinian civilians and a political solution to ensure the safety and freedoms of both Israelis and Palestinians.⁵

First, decades of US research shows that most terror groups end through law enforcement or a political peace process, not through military force. The US military's strategy think tank, the RAND Corporation, asserts that "The evidence since 1968 indicates that most terror groups have ended because (1) they joined the political process (43 percent) or (2) local police and intelligence agencies arrested or killed key members (40 percent). Military force has rarely brought about the end of terrorist groups."⁶

² Judy Maltz. "[Inside the Evangelical Money Flowing Into the West Bank.](#)" *Ha'aretz*. 9 December 2018.

³ Dennis B. Ross. "[I Might Have Once Favored a Cease-Fire With Hamas, but Not Now.](#)" *New York Times*. 27 October 2023.

⁴ The term "mutually assured suffering" is from John Paul Lederach, describing the dynamic of perpetual violence where both Israelis and Palestinians suffer over decades.

⁵ "[The Outlook for Israel's Military Campaign against Hamas.](#)" Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies. 23 October 2023.

⁶ Seth G. Jones, Martin C. Libicki. [How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al Qa'ida.](#) RAND Corporation, Arlington, Virginia: 2008.

Second, a military siege on Gaza to dismantle Hamas is unlikely to be effective, as it is generating widespread support for Hamas and claims that Israel is violating international law with its lack of protection for civilians. The Israeli military siege in Gaza is provoking threats of further violence against Israelis. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as Syria, the US military learned that military campaigns that killed large numbers of civilians and damaged civilian infrastructure led to further recruitment for groups like Hamas. US analysts note the lack of precautions to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure will have a dire effect.⁷ Strategists insist, based on extensive research, that “military effectiveness can be retained while protecting civilians and reducing damage to civilian infrastructure.”⁸

Third, Hamas wages its propaganda war against Israel by mixing its terrorism against Israeli civilians with legitimate public outrage that Israeli forces continue to occupy and repress Palestinians and that the Israeli justice system does little to punish settler violence against Palestinians. Anticipating Israeli retaliation, some analysts assert that Hamas hopes to revive its declining popularity by recruiting war orphans and others affected by the Israeli siege. Some suggest Hamas is sending a message to Arab autocrats not to make peace with Israel that leaves out Palestinians. The current Israeli military siege on Gaza helps Hamas recruit a new generation and build its legitimacy within a global narrative of Palestinian liberation. Every bomb is like a seed, planting a harvest of hate for future Hamas battles. A strategy to ensure the safety of Israelis and Palestinians requires depriving Hamas of a narrative that terrorist violence against Israeli civilians is “the only” way Palestinians will gain freedom.

A Set of Proposals

1. Protect all Civilians in Gaza, the West Bank, and Israel

A ceasefire is the first immediate step necessary to stop the momentum of a widening war and deepening trauma. The Geneva Convention’s principles of *Precaution* (to avoid civilian deaths), *Distinction* (between civilian and military targets), and *Proportion* (the loss of civilian life should be proportionate to the direct and concrete military advantage) require more effort to protect civilians.

- **Announce a ceasefire** premised on the other points in this plan which address the wider issues and meet the needs of both Israelis and Palestinians for security guarantees and space for negotiations for hostage release and humanitarian assistance and corridors.
- **Free the 200+ Israeli hostages** being held inside Gaza. Israeli families of the hostages demand an Israeli ceasefire and negotiations with Hamas to release their relatives.⁹

⁷ Michael J. McNerney, Gabrielle Tarini, Nate Rosenblatt, Karen M. Sudkamp, Pauline Moore, Michelle Gris , Benjamin J. Sacks, Larry Lewis *Understanding Civilian Harm in Raqqa and Its Implications for Future Conflicts*. Arlington, Virginia: RAND Corporation, 2022.

⁸ Karen M. Sudkamp. “[Sparing Civilian Lives in Gaza](#).” *RAND Blog*. 21 October 2023.

⁹ Emily Rose and Crispian Balmer. “[Hostage families face appalling dilemma as Gaza invasion looms](#).” *Reuters*. 23 October 2023.

- **Protect Palestinians in the West Bank** who are experiencing a surge of violence before and after October 7. Prosecute Israeli settlers and IDF forces who kill and injure Palestinians in the West Bank.
- **Release Palestinian political prisoners** who have not been involved in any military activities including planning, carrying out, or giving material support.
- **Provide safe passage out of Gaza** for all women, elderly people over 70, children under 14, and people with disabilities.
- **Provide assurances and guarantees** that Gazan civilians who leave will be allowed to return to Gaza.
- The international community should **allow free passage** and **ensure sufficient humanitarian aid** is distributed only to civilians, not to Hamas fighters.
- The international community in coordination with Israel should **establish safe corridors** and **safety zones** inside Gaza, and international monitoring of hospitals and established civilian zones within Gaza.
- **The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) should focus on protecting Israelis.** The mistakes on October 7 resulted from IDF deployed throughout the West Bank rather than in defensive positions to protect Israelis. Sending IDF into Gaza tunnels and buildings for hand-to-hand combat will not solve the Hamas problem. The IDF has a role in a defensive posture of preventing further attacks rather than provoking further growth of anger toward Israelis.

2. Dismantle Hamas

For many Palestinians and their supporters, Hamas is not an organisation but an *idea* that Palestinians will end the Israeli occupation through violence, not negotiation or nonviolent action. [Hamas's 2017 constitution](#) identifies that there is a political and a military wing of Hamas with different goals. Some Hamas supporters are ready to accept the 1967 borders for a two-state solution.¹⁰

Starting in the 1970s and 1980s, Israeli leaders viewed the secular PLO as a *more significant threat* than Hamas which grew out of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine. While Israel arrested Palestinian nonviolent activists like Mubarak Awad in the 1980s, it allowed Hamas leaders to travel freely.

The international community should pursue a law enforcement strategy against Hamas, in line with what security experts recommend based on decades of research on how to end terror groups.

- **Find and punish Hamas fighters who attacked civilians as well as Hamas leaders who ordered the attacks.** Recognise that law enforcement rather than war is a more effective strategy broadly backed by US military strategists. This will take time, as it did

¹⁰ See "[Hamas Charter](#)" *Wikipedia*.

for the US to track down Al Qaeda leadership. By some estimates, there are 40,000 members of Hamas. The human costs of killing this number of Hamas fighters spread out among Gazan civilians is too high. The cost in the lives of IDF soldiers and Israeli hostages is too high.

- **Dismantle the *ideas* that Hamas represents.** Weaken the entire Hamas political organisation by undermining their recruitment and legitimacy. Recognise that a total siege in Gaza generates greater global support for Hamas. The US military learned in Afghanistan and Iraq that every bomb dropped creates new recruits. By the end of the 20-year war in Afghanistan, there were more Taliban supporters than when they started. Already, the Arab world is mobilised in support of Hamas and the threat of a wider conflict is possible.
- **Recognise that the Israeli siege on Gaza violates international laws** of precaution, distinction, and proportion. International institutions like the ICC can do more to identify and prosecute international law violations on all sides. Israeli leaders should be held to account for decisions that violated Geneva Convention principles.
- **Provide incentives to Hamas for their imprisonment.** For some people in terror groups, martyrdom is preferred over imprisonment. But some Hamas fighters might accept imprisonment in exchange for family protection. For example, the UN could provide safe passage out of Gaza to the families of Hamas who agree to leave forever and live, monitored, in another country in exchange for Hamas arrests.
- **Hold free elections.** The removal of Hamas requires the establishment of a new form of governance in Gaza. The international community should assure Palestinians that they will only support democratically elected leaders in Israel who commit to ending the occupation and to only support democratically elected leaders in Palestine who commit to ending threats toward Jewish Israelis.

3. Dismantle Israeli Occupation

A political solution ensuring that Palestinians have equal rights, democracy, and freedom of movement, as well as reparations is also necessary. The Israeli far right [Likud Party](#) supports Jewish settlers helping to establish a “greater Israel” that would expand to the West Bank. Likud denies and blocks efforts to establish a Palestinian State. In recent years, Israel has attempted to outlaw the nonviolent BDS movement to end occupation, claiming it is antisemitic.¹¹ The Arab Center in Washington DC [criticised](#) both Trump and Biden for hitching “its Middle East policy to a dream wagon of Arab-Israeli harmony that ignored the Palestinian issue.” Israeli and Palestinian civilians will not be safe until there is a just political solution.

The public calls for a political solution are widespread, including from [Ha’aretz and President Biden](#). The steps toward a political solution would need to begin with confidence-building measures to build trust on all sides with perceptions of safety and justice for all increasing over time. US pressure to end the occupation has been missing. US leaders

¹¹ See “[Anti-BDS Laws](#)” *Wikipedia*.

continue to send Israel billions in military aid despite Israel's "mow the lawn" strategy of preventing a political strategy and sometimes explicit reference to [Israel's intended annexation of the occupied West Bank](#).¹²

US diplomat [Dennis Ross states](#) in the *New York Times*,

*"Israel's political leaders need to clearly and publicly emphasize they will leave Gaza and lift the siege after Hamas has been militarily defeated and largely disarmed. They must communicate that they understand a political resolution is needed with the Palestinians more generally. That is not a message Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is now conveying..."*¹³

In *Foreign Affairs*, Salam Fayad similarly [writes](#),

*"Israel would need to formally recognize the Palestinians' right to a sovereign state on the territory that Israel has occupied since 1967. By doing so, Israel would be merely reciprocating the essence of the PLO's recognition of Israel's "right to exist in peace and security," which was enshrined in the Oslo Accords' declaration of mutual recognition in 1993."*¹⁴

- **Find and punish Israeli leaders who authorise, motivate, and carry out attacks on Palestinian civilians.** The international community should pursue a law enforcement strategy against Israeli rightwing leaders inciting and carrying out ethnic cleansing in the West Bank, as well as Israeli leaders responsible for war crimes in Gaza in line with what security experts recommend based on decades of research on how to end radical right-wing extremist groups.
- **Establish an international commission to explore viable political solutions to end the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.** There is no absence of creative ideas for how to end the occupation. What is missing is the political will to make any of them happen. Many Palestinians support a [One State Solution](#) with equal rights and democracy for Jews and Palestinians. Many Israelis and Palestinians support a "[Two State Solution](#)" with a Palestinian state and a Jewish state. But over the last twenty years, the expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank has led many analysts to conclude it is no longer possible or would require thousands of Jews living in the West Bank to either live under a Palestinian state or to move. Two newer political solutions mix the two ideas. The "[Two States, One Homeland: A Land for All](#)" lays out how two democratic states would exist in the same land, with freedom of movement, democracy, and sovereignty for peoples in two democratic states: Israel and Palestine. Palestinian lawyer Jonathan Kuttab's book [Beyond the Two-State Solution](#) imagines what a shared state

¹² See "Proposed Israeli annexation of the West Bank." *Wikipedia*.

¹³ Dennis B. Ross. "[I Might Have Once Favored a Cease-Fire With Hamas, but Not Now](#)." *New York Times*. 27 October 2023.

¹⁴ Salam Fayad. "[A Plan for Peace in Gaza: The Reforms That Could Allow the PLO to Lead and the Palestinian Authority to Govern](#)." *Foreign Affairs*. 27 October 2023.

might look like that meets the urgent need for a sense of security for both Jews and Palestinians.¹⁵

- **Recognise the unique challenges of religiously motivated settlers in the West Bank.** Jewish settlements in the West Bank threaten Palestinian families with land seizures and violent criminal attacks on Palestinian and Bedouin communities. These Jewish communities, many of them Orthodox, want a connection to the land of Abraham and Sarah. With a Palestinian state in the West Bank, they will live under Palestinian sovereignty. A political solution needs to address a diverse set of needs and interests to ensure a sustainable prevention of further violence and land seizures.
- **Recognise that Israeli policies toward Palestinians have violated international law.** The Israeli strategy of delaying and denying work for a democratic Palestine and of labeling any nonviolent movement for equal rights and freedoms as antisemitic has endangered the lives of both Palestinians and Israelis. Israeli state policies have resulted in crimes against humanity in Gaza and the West Bank. Israel and Christian Zionists in the West have supported Jewish settlements in the West Bank, the land set aside for a Palestinian State. Use international law enforcement strategies to address Israeli right-wing rhetoric and policies of ethnic cleansing.
- **Provide reparations and/or return to Palestinians.** A [2003 poll](#) of Palestinian refugees began to explore options for reparations, return, or citizenship in other countries for Palestinian refugees. *A strategy is necessary to research and explore further options for reparations or return for integration into communities.*
- **Recognise that free and fair Palestinian elections are necessary.** The Palestinian Authority (PA) is unpopular for its own repression of Palestinian democracy. They are viewed as corrupt by both Israelis and Palestinians. A political solution requires new Palestinian elections in both the West Bank and Gaza. *An analysis is necessary to address the lack of trust in Palestinian leadership. A strategy is necessary to find new democratic leaders and set a timeline for elections.*
- **Western Christians should give reparations to Palestinians.** Palestinians have had to pay the price for Christian antisemitism in Europe. They continue to pay the price today for Christian antisemitism as Christian Zionists who believe in the necessity of Jewish control over the region, and their belief in the need for Jews to die at Armageddon have financially supported Jewish settlements expanding all over the West Bank. Western Christians have written themselves out of this tragedy. Most have done little to acknowledge or take responsibility for the Holocaust. *An ecumenical group should be formed to identify the role of Western Christians in supporting reparations and justice for Palestinians.*

¹⁵ Jonathan Kuttub. [Beyond the Two-State Solution](#). Washington, DC: Independently published. 2021.

4. Embrace Democracy Movements as a Strategic Goal

Most Palestinians and most Israelis want to live in a democracy and coexist with others. Rather than view the challenge along religious or ethnic lines, it is also important to understand the ideological divisions between autocrats and democrats. On one side, some want to live with democracy, equal rights, and dignity for all people. On the other side, there are those who will manipulate ethnic and religious allegiances to hold onto power.

Within Palestine, the Hamas government in Gaza and the right-wing Israeli government undermine democratic processes for Palestinians. Hamas is a militant group, living under occupation and leading a movement for Palestinian liberation. According to polls by the Washington Institute right before October 7, nearly half of Gazans distrust Hamas. Most Gazans did not agree with Hamas' call to destroy Israel and wanted to maintain a ceasefire.¹⁶ In the West Bank, a majority of Palestinians do not support the Palestinian Authority, set up under the Oslo Accords.¹⁷

Israel is a state, with a seat at the United Nations. In this sense, Israelis have more democratic representation than do Palestinians. According to recent polls by the Israel Democracy Institute, only 20% of Israelis trust their government.¹⁸ Within Israel, 20% of the population are Palestinian citizens of Israel. These Palestinians document a widespread pattern of discrimination and treatment as second-class citizens.¹⁹ A growing democracy movement within Israel opposes right-wing Israeli policies aiming to dismantle elements of Israeli democracy in the Supreme Court.

At the present moment, the democratic hopes of Palestinians and Israelis offer an opportunity for political democratisation.

- **Recognise existing cooperation and Arab-Israeli peace movements and support the progressive co-existence efforts to isolate the extremists on all sides** who want either supremacy, separation, or ethnic cleansing. Within the West Bank, there are already movements of Jews and Palestinians committed to coexistence. Groups bring together Jewish and Palestinian neighbors in the West Bank. Within Gaza and the surrounding Jewish communities, over the last decade, a vast network coordinates Jewish volunteers to take Gazans to receive healthcare from Israeli hospitals. Within Israeli civil society, both Jewish and Palestinian citizens worked together to save lives after the October 7 Hamas attack. Some have organised housing and supplies for the displaced, an operation to locate captives, and joint Jewish-Arab civilian patrols in mixed cities to prevent further violence.

¹⁶ Catherine Cleveland, David Pollock. "[Polls Show Majority of Gazans Were Against Breaking Ceasefire: Hamas and Hezbollah Unpopular Among Key Arab Publics.](#)" *The Washington Institute*. 10 October 2023.

¹⁷ Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research. [Poll #89 on Oslo Accords](#). 13 September 2023.

¹⁸ Tamar Hermann and Or Anabi. "Flash Survey." *Israel Democracy Institute*. 23 October 2023.

¹⁹ Katie Hesketh. "[The Inequality Report: The Palestinian Arab Minority in Israel.](#)" *Adalah*. March 2011.

- **Establish an elite team of mediators drawn from existing Arab Israeli peace movements and efforts.** This team could help to broker some of the agreements and ideas identified in this article.
- **Recognise that Israeli democracy is impossible without Palestinian democracy.** A wing of Israel's democracy movement saw the link between Israeli democracy and Palestinian democracy and called for an end to the occupation. The Israeli democracy movement can more widely embrace the cause of democracy for Palestinians. *A strategy is necessary to build this coalition.*
- **The US and the West should make support for Israel conditional on democratic indicators.** The US \$4 billion in aid to Israel requires conditions to support democratic institutions for Israeli citizens, equal rights for Palestinian citizens of Israel, and a demand for a political solution.
- **The US and the West should support democracy movements in Palestine, and the wider Arab region as well as set a good example with its own democratic governance and reforms.** For many decades, the US and other Western countries have given aid to autocratic regimes when they determined it was in their interest to support the stability and control promised by these regimes. By siding with autocratic regimes, the US undermined democracy movements and contributed to the rise of groups like Hamas.
- **Recognise that a consistent human rights ethic is often missing from Western pro-democracy movements.**
 - Anti-occupation Jewish leaders in the US note that their progressive allies did not condemn Hamas or take a moment to mourn with them before denouncing Israel.²⁰ They point out a double standard. Some progressive Christians joined protests to denounce Israel but did not raise their voices when far larger numbers of Muslims were killed in Yemen by US-made weapons sold to Saudi forces, when Syria bombed its Palestinian refugee camp, or when the world found out China imprisoned a million Muslims in reeducation camps. There is a dynamic in these protests that motivates ancient hatred and scapegoating of Jews.
 - For decades, Western democracies have singled out Muslims in repressive tactics and surveillance that violate basic civil rights. While Western leaders tout Israel as a democracy, at home they are silencing Palestinians and Muslims calling for a ceasefire. Palestinians and Muslims in the West are receiving death threats and losing job offers. In any democracy, people have the right to protest policies. Further protections are necessary for pro-Palestinian calls for democracy and freedom for Palestinians.
 - Too often pro-Palestinian causes and Jewish calls to stop antisemitism are viewed as opposed to each other rather than part of a more consistent human rights ethic.

²⁰ Jennifer Medina and Lisa Lerer. *On Israel, Progressive Jews Feel Abandoned by Their Left-Wing Allies*. *New York Times*. 20 October 2023.

5. Address Trauma from Antisemitism and Islamophobia

A global strategy is needed to widely educate about this history of antisemitism and Islamophobia, the origins of disinformation about Jews, and state commitments to stop both antisemitism and Islamophobia.

- **Address existential fears and trauma.** Both Jews inside and outside of Israel and Palestinians and the wider Muslim world feel existential fear and believe that ancient hatreds that fueled centuries of antisemitic and Islamophobic violence against Jews and Muslims will return to mass waves of violence and genocide. These traumas are triggered by terms that signal, often through coded tropes and language, that the other side intends to commit genocide. Muslim and Christian states should do more to isolate and sanction Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas for their narratives threatening Jews. Western states should do more to challenge Islamophobic policies that threaten Muslims and Palestinian Christians, who are largely ignored and overlooked. Because these fears motivate violent retaliation, all sides should do as much as possible to assure the other sides that they *value all human life*. All sides should reassure each other that a political solution to the problem will end the decades of violence, which each side justifies as self-defense.
- **Improve awareness of Islamophobia.** Many Christians and Jews fear Islam and unjustly conflate threats to Jews with Palestinian protests and national liberation movements. Islamophobia is embedded in policies that target and surveil Muslims. Palestinians must be allowed to protest Israeli occupation and siege without claims that this is all motivated by antisemitism or poses a threat to non-Muslims. Palestinians and the wider Muslim community in Europe and North America are experiencing social media silencing²¹ and physical attacks for their support for Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. At the same time, more public awareness is necessary to distinguish and identify that many Muslim militant groups use Palestinians as a launching pad for their antisemitic attacks on Jews and Israel.
- **Improve awareness of Christian antisemitism by the Left and Right.** Many Christians on the left and the right still have little to no understanding of the role of Christian antisemitism and how antisemitic tropes are baked into Western cultures. On the right, Christian Zionists believe in the necessity of Jewish control over the Holy Land and have financially supported Jewish settlements expanding all over the West Bank. At the same time, other right-wing groups promote hatred of and disinformation about Jews. On the left, tropes that demonize and dehumanize Jewish people are still common. Some Western Christians have written themselves out of this tragedy altogether, forgetting their role in displacing and pushing Jews out of Europe, putting all the blame on Israel rather than examining the role they had in displacing Palestinians. Compared to similar social justice struggles, few understand the history and basis of antisemitism. *A strategy to improve awareness of antisemitism and its manifestations on the left and the right is necessary.*

²¹ Mike Isaac. "[Social Media Users Accuse Facebook and Instagram of Suppressing Pro-Palestinian Posts.](#)" *New York Times*. 16 October 2023.

- **Stop the weaponisation of antisemitism.** While some Palestinians have adopted some antisemitic ideas, Palestinians are not responsible for the Holocaust. Palestinians have legitimate grievances against the Israeli state that have nothing to do with antisemitism. Jews who speak out on behalf of Palestinian rights are not “self-hating Jews.” When the Israeli government denounces all pro-Palestinian protests as antisemitic, this makes a political solution impossible and dilutes attention from the real sources of antisemitism. *A strategy is necessary among and between Jewish groups to separate real antisemitism from politically motivated charges of antisemitism.*
- **Hold and expand the space for human dignity of all people.** In the midst of conflict and war, there is a demand to take sides in a struggle of “us against them.” A movement of people to refuse this binary is already widespread. Resisting the urge to demonize one side or the other is essential to the safety of all sides. Addressing the trauma and fears on all sides requires more people to uphold the human dignity of all Jews and Palestinians.

Invest in a Long-Term Strategy

For too many years, Israelis have lived with safe rooms, bunkers, threats from Iran, and Hamas and Hezbollah rockets and suicide bombers. For too many years, they have hoped that an occupation, a dividing wall, and a “mow the lawn” strategy of brute force could keep Palestinians from pursuing freedom. Today they drop bombs on Gaza hoping to eradicate an idea, the idea Palestinians view as their liberation. Yet every bomb yields a myriad of seeds planting new generations of resentment that make safety for Israelis more difficult to achieve.

For too many years, Palestinians have lived dispossessed from their homes and farms, humiliated by checkpoints and treatment as second-class citizens, and on the receiving end of a brutal violent occupation. For too many years, they have hoped that militant leaders might bring them an end to their suffering. Today they cheer for Hamas to send a message to Israelis that the occupation must end. Yet the killings on October 7 have only planted new generations of resentment and fear within Israel and abroad that make the end of occupation more difficult to achieve.

Both Israelis and Palestinians deserve safety, justice, and dignity. They will only find these basic human rights when they can give them to each other. The international community must insist that a new generation of leaders in Israel and Palestine come from the coexistence movements already working together, and not those extremists in Israel or Palestine who have failed to bring safety or justice for decades.

The Author

Dr. Lisa Schirch is Senior Research Fellow for the Toda Peace Institute where she directs the Institute's "Social Media, Technology and Peacebuilding" programme. Dr. Schirch is Richard G. Starmann Sr. Chair and Professor of the Practice at the University of Notre Dame's Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies in the Keough School of Global Affairs where she directs the [PeaceTech and Polarization Lab](#). In her role with the Toda Peace Institute, she focuses on the impact of social media on conflict dynamics and how to use technology to support social cohesion. She participates as a Founding Member of the [Council on Technology and Social Cohesion](#) and was the lead organiser for the 2023 conference on Designing Technology and Social Cohesion in San Francisco. Dr. Schirch is the author of eleven books including most recently [Social Media Impacts on Conflict and Democracy \(2021\)](#), [The Ecology of Violent Extremism](#), and several action guides including [Synergizing Nonviolent Action and Peacebuilding](#), [Handbook on Human Security: A Civil-Military-Police Curriculum](#), and [Local Ownership in Security](#).

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Toda Peace Institute
Samon Eleven Bldg. 5th Floor
3-1 Samon-cho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160-0017, Japan
Email: contact@toda.org

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