

## **“Saviors” of The West at What Cost?**

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Bombs and artillery rain down on hospitals in Gaza. Israel's hasbara reaction driven approach, aka pull the trigger and make excuses later, retroactively stated that Hamas was harboring weapons in the hospital and using the civilians as a shield from attacks, despite there being little to no evidence to support the claim. Events like this paint the Zionist nation in an extremely negative light, and despite both actions and quotes that constitute the label of genocide, there are still people who believe that what is taking place within Gaza is not a genocide. On September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024, *The Wall Street Journal* released an opinion article by columnist Gerard Baker titled, "Israel Defends Itself—and May Save Western Civilization." Throughout the article he paints Israel and its actions as both justified and inspirational, to the degree that we should be thanking the Zionist state. Gerard Baker writes that "we" as members of the "west" should thank Israel for contributing to the defense of western civilization. Baker writes that the only appropriate response to Israels "defense" of itself from the western world should be "Thank you" and "How can we help." Gerard Baker throughout the article, comes across as not only distasteful but almost apathetic to the crisis in Gaza throughout this article. This issue will shape the perception of not only Israel but the broader Western World in a negative light, which is why articles like this need to be addressed.

Baker opens the article, "How will we ever repay the debt we owe Israel? What the Jewish state has done in the past year—for its own defense, but in the process and not coincidentally for the security of all of us—will rank among the most important

contributions to the defense of Western civilization in the past three-quarters of a century.” If by “we” Baker means the United States, WE owe Israel absolutely nothing. According to *The Council of Foreign Affairs* (2024) since October 6<sup>th</sup> the United States has allocated at least 12.5 billion in military aid to Israel. Israel owes a debt to the United States. Baker writes that Israels actions have been in the defense of not only itself but all of us. Question; how does a country 6,600 miles (about twice the width of the United States) away indiscriminately bombing an occupied territory aid in defense for the United States? It doesn’t. Baker stated that Israel’s actions were in self-defense, this is patiently false. According to a United Nations Office of the High Commissioner (2024) report, there were at least 136 strikes on 27 different hospitals and 12 other nursing facilities as well as refugee camps. According to the report, Israel retroactively justified these strikes by alleging that the hospitals were being used for military purposes by Hamas, despite insufficient information to support these claims. Hospitals holding injured civilians are not military objectives, and under international law constitute war crimes. Israel’s actions throughout the past year have sewn hatred towards the Zionist state by nearly all of its neighbors and tarnished the reputation of all its supporters. October 7<sup>th</sup> was a horrific tragedy, but as the phrase goes; an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind. Baker’s assertion that we owe a debt to Israel for its actions is not only completely illogical; it is a superfluous claim that implies that Israel has not been heavily aided by the Western World since its inception.

Despite glaring evidence of actions that constitute the label of war crimes, Baker makes the claim, “In Europe, they have gone even further, as usual, rewarding Hamas and Hezbollah by nominally recognizing a nonexistent Palestinian state and prosecuting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on bogus war-crimes charges.” If providing aid to

dying, starving refugees is rewarding Hamas and Hezbollah then so is providing aid to any group with a radical party in charge. Would offering humanitarian aid to people who need it in Somalia be “rewarding” al-Shabaab? Netanyahu is a war criminal- which is not an opinion; it is a fact. According to PBS News Hour (2024) “The world’s top war crimes court issued warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant. The court said they committed crimes against humanity for intentionally depriving Gazans of food and directing attacks against civilians.” Israeli strikes have disproportionately targeted innocent people and have been using collective punishment as a tool. Benjamin Netanyahu (2023) quote, “You must remember what Amalek has done to you.... We do remember. And we are fighting.” You may be wondering what Amalek means. To quote both the Hebrew Bible and King James edition Bible, 1 Samuel 15:2-3: “[2] Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. [3] Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.” This paints a clear intent of collective punishment towards Palestine, and Netanyahu was not the only Israeli leader make claims like this. Dana Bash (2023) of CNN interviewed president of Israel Isaac Herzog and this is what he had to say regarding Palestinians; “It’s an entire nation out there that is responsible. It’s not true, this rhetoric about civilians not -- not aware, not involved, it’s absolutely not true. They could have risen up. They could have fought against that evil regime.” Israeli authorities have framed their military objectives as eliminating Hamas, securing the release of hostages, and preventing future threats from Gaza. However, the scale and consequences of their actions suggest additional motivations, including retribution and collective punishment. While Israel

justifies its operations as essential for national security, the extent of destruction and civilian casualties are a clear indication of use of collective punishment which prohibited by both international and non-international law. Actions speak louder than words.

Baker finishes the article stating, “We should show them [referring to Israel] our gratitude, and if we are willing to be really honest, acknowledge a little of our own shame.” What gratitude towards Israel could the average American possibly have for Israel and its actions? Their disregard for the suffering in Gaza has tarnished any remaining good faith for The United States in the Middle East and has completely subverted rhetoric in favor of Zionism in not just the U.S. but the world. According to an *OCHA* report last updated April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2025, there has been 52,400 reported fatalities with 15,600 of the casualties being children, and 8,300 being women. Israel has once again begun a blockade of all resources from entering Gaza, including food, water, and humanitarian aid – yet another example of the IDF’s use of collective punishment. Gerard Baker believes that Israel is acting in self-defense. While Israel may be acting in self-defense in the wake of the October 7<sup>th</sup> attacks, they are clearly using the horrific tragedy as a justification for ethnic cleansing and mass deportation of Gaza. Baker believes that we should feel “shame” for acknowledging the unjust actions committed by Israel. Baker is right. We should feel shame. Shame for our government not putting a stop to this violence. Shame to our media for painting anyone who may disagree with Zionism or Israel’s actions as an antisemite and shame for people who use Israels actions as an excuse for antisemitism.

Last summer I toured Auschwitz. It was one of the most harrowing, eye-opening and horrific places that I had ever been. The level of hatred placed upon the Jewish people by the Nazis was a scale of industrialized dehumanization and organized genocide to an unprecedented scale that will hopefully never be seen again. The Jewish people have long throughout different societies historically been expelled, genocided, and treated like second class citizens. A people that has suffered more than nearly every other group. I understand the fundamental reasoning for Israel to exist as a state. I understand that Israel is an outlier in the middle east, and that it does, on some level, have a reason to fear its neighbors. Jewish people, like any other group have the right to self-determination. However, the idea of Contemporary Zionism in Palestine has been weaponized to support the actions of ethnic cleansing of the region, in the motivation to create a Jewish ethnically homogenous state. Despite this history, the government of Israel either cannot see the scope of their horrendous actions or are purposefully ignoring them, displaying a level of hypocrisy that will forever be associated with the Jewish state and the ideas of Zionism. When self-determination is used as the pretext for displacing groups of people in an already populated region, it is not self-determination; it is settler colonialism.

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