

**IDAN LANDAU**

**EXTERMINATE  
EXPEL  
RESETTLE**

“SO WHAT WAS THE REAL MOTIVATION FOR THE OPERATION? TO ANSWER THAT QUESTION, WE NEED LOOK NO FURTHER THAN THE SUKKOT EVENT ORGANIZED BY SETTLERS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS ON OCT. 21, TITLED ‘PREPARING TO SETTLE GAZA.’ THERE, THEY LAID OUT A VISION FOR BUILDING JEWISH SETTLEMENTS ALL ACROSS THE GAZA STRIP AFTER CLEANSING THE ENCLAVE OF PALESTINIANS. GAZA CITY, FOR EXAMPLE, WOULD BECOME ‘A HEBREW, TECHNOLOGICAL, GREEN CITY THAT WOULD UNITE ALL PARTS OF ISRAELI SOCIETY.’ AND IN THIS, AT LEAST, THEY ARE TELLING THE TRUTH: ISRAELIS HAVE ALWAYS UNITED AROUND THE DISPLACEMENT AND DISPOSSESSION OF PALESTINIANS.”



**ISRAEL'S  
ENDGAME IN  
NORTHERN  
GAZA**

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So we all bear the weight of responsibility for this, albeit some more than others. The army refusal movement arose too late and too slowly, yet it requires all encouragement and support and any voice it can be lent. The consensus concerning the war of extermination poisons Israeli society and blackens its future so profoundly that even small pockets of resistance can proliferate stamina and hope to those who have not yet been carried away by the currents of madness.

We can also look for partners in this fight abroad, where the critical lever of pressure is the pipeline of American weapons. Since October 7, this pipeline has worked at an unprecedented rate (to date, \$17.9 billion worth of arms shipped to Israel), facilitating a long list of war crimes. But something else was also unprecedented: for the first time, that pipeline was somewhat impeded, even if only temporarily, when a delivery of 2,000-pound bombs was delayed ahead of the Rafah invasion.

This is merely a drop in the ocean, but it points to what needs to be done. And it would not have happened without the continuous pressure that activists put on their representatives in the Democratic establishment, which eventually percolated to the White House. Petitions, letters to congresspeople, publishing testimonies — any tool used to sway public opinion against the automatic support of Israel can help.

The struggle to end this intensifying war of extermination and transfer in Gaza, particularly in the north, is first and foremost a human fight. It is a fight for life, both in Gaza and Israel: for the very chance that life can continue to exist in this blood-soaked land. Nothing could be more patriotic.

arrangements only serves one purpose: an evasion from the bloody reality. It is a refusal to face our own actions, a refusal to claim responsibility for the catastrophe — for which Hamas indeed carries considerable blame, but we carry much more. And ultimately, a refusal to see Palestinians as humans, just like us.

I've spent countless hours reading testimonies from Gaza over the past year, and one phenomenon that struck me as particularly horrifying, even though it does not result in the most horrible crimes, is the way Israeli soldiers treat the Palestinians as if they were sheep or goats, herding them from one location to another. Like a flock of animals, snipers and drones corral them, firing live ammunition at anyone who refuses to move or takes too long. Planes and drones deliver evacuation notices and then almost immediately bomb those who did not yet manage to escape. Such dehumanization cannot help but trigger our associations with scenes depicting the Nazis loading Jews into cattle cars.

The web of crimes described here is not so abstract — a vast part of the Israeli public takes part in them. Hundreds if not thousands recorded themselves in action, while many more called for extermination outright. The majority, however, is not so explicit or smug. Most just serve the military over hundreds of days of reserve duty “because we must protect our country.” They commit crimes while giving it no thought, or half a thought, or only a silenced, trampled-upon thought.

They can come up with myriad excuses, but each one crumbles in the face of more than 16,000 dead children — over 3,000 of them under the age of 5 — who have all been identified by their name and ID numbers. And they crumble in the face of the destruction of all civilian infrastructure, which does not and cannot have a purely military purpose.

## **Exterminate, Expel, Resettle**

Look at these two photos, which were both taken on Oct. 21, 2024. On the right, we see a long line of displaced people — or, more accurately, women and children — in the ruins of Jabalia refugee camp, in the northern Gaza Strip. Men over the age of 16 are separated, waving a white flag and holding up their ID cards. They are on their way out.

On the left, we see a camp built by the settler organization Nachala just outside Gaza, as part of an event celebrating the festival of Sukkot. The event was attended by 21 right-wing ministers and Knesset members and several hundred other participants, all of whom were there to discuss plans for building new Jewish settlements in Gaza. They are on their way in.

These photos tell a story that is unfolding so rapidly that its harrowing details are already on the brink of being forgotten. Yet this story could start from any point during the past 76 years: the Nakba of 1948, the “Siyag Plan” that followed it, the Naksa of 1967. On one side, displaced Palestinians with all the belongings they can carry, hungry, wounded, and exhausted; on the other, joyful Jewish settlers, sanctifying the new land that the army has cleared for them.

But the story of what is happening right now, on either side of the Gaza fence, revolves around what has come to be known as the “Generals’ Plan” — and what it conceals.

## **THE BLUEPRINT**

The “Generals’ Plan,” published in early September, has a very simple

In the meantime, many of those displaced are not settling south of the Netzarim Corridor but rather on the outskirts of Gaza City, afraid that if they leave the north altogether, they may never be able to return. If the army expels them from there as well, this will be yet further evidence that the cleansing operation is not being guided by operational considerations.

## **A FIGHT FOR LIFE**

What is left for us to do? Inside Israel, we are few who see the reality in front of us with clear eyes. But what little we can do, we must.

First of all, we must tune out the heckles from the peanut gallery: from “But what about Hamas’ charter?!” to “But, Iran!” and “But they’re barbarians!” None of this is relevant in the face of the genocide that our army is carrying out as you read these words (and I don’t choose that term hastily; here are four Israeli historians that reached this conclusion, who are greater experts than I). How, exactly, does the massacre of October 7 justify the burning of schools and bakeries? What does Hamas’ charter have to do with denying medical equipment from entering Gaza, leading to wholesale death of wounded people?

We must also ignore the caricature that is “the opposition.” The “alternative” that Israel’s “center left” offers lies between a “strategic occupation” of more territory on the one hand, and a policy of “separation” on the other that still allows the army complete freedom of action in the occupied territories or even contemplates a revival of the “Jordanian option.”

The incessant rambling about grand multilateral political

journalists in Gaza reported on another bombing of a shelter in the very same refugee camp, in which 10 people were killed and 30 wounded. The testimony of a paramedic who was there reveals the horror: a drone announced from the air that residents of the compound had to evacuate, and no more than 10 minutes later, before most people had managed to leave, the site was blown up.

The “Generals’ Plan,” is thus not only a deceit but also an operational flop. The threatened population was not inclined to voluntarily evacuate into the path of flying bullets and mortar shells, preferring familiar to unfamiliar horrors as is human nature (then again, who in the Israeli army is capable of perceiving Palestinians as human?). Even extermination as an instrument of terror was not enough to persuade the residents of northern Gaza to evacuate “voluntarily.” And so infantry forces were sent to the shelters to force the displaced, at gunpoint, to come out and start marching south (after the men were separated and taken for questioning or arrest).

All the signs indicate that Israel is not planning to let the displaced return. In this sense, the destruction in northern Gaza is unlike anything we have seen before. The army really does make sure to burn, destroy, and raze every building after the Palestinians leave — and sometimes while they’re still inside. Even the Americans and the Europeans can see the writing on the wall this time.

How long will it take to totally cleanse northern Gaza of its population? It is difficult to predict exactly, between the stamina of local residents to remain, the maximum daily death toll that the army allows itself based on its own considerations, and the international reaction. Certainly, it appears that the current assault will continue for weeks to come.

goal: to empty the northern Gaza Strip of its Palestinian population. The plan itself estimated that about 300,000 people were still living north of the Netzarim Corridor — the Israeli-occupied zone that bisects Gaza — although the UN put the number closer to 400,000.

During the first phase of the plan, the Israeli army would inform all of those people that they have a week to evacuate to the south through two “humanitarian corridors.” In the second phase, at the end of that week, the army would declare the whole area a closed military zone. Anyone who remained would be considered an enemy combatant, and be killed if they didn’t surrender. A complete siege would be imposed on the territory, intensifying the hunger and health crisis — creating, as Prof. Uzi Rabi, a senior researcher at Tel Aviv University, put it, “a process of starvation or extermination.”

According to the plan, providing the civilian population advance warning to evacuate guarantees compliance with the requirements of international humanitarian law. This is a lie. The first protocol of the Geneva Conventions clearly states that warning civilians to flee does not negate the protected status of those who remain, and therefore does not permit military forces to harm them; nor does a military siege negate the army’s obligation to allow the passage of humanitarian aid to civilians.

Besides, the lip service to humanitarian law falls flat when considering that the man spearheading the plan, Maj. Gen. (res.) Giora Eiland, has spent the past year calling for collective punishment against the entire population of Gaza, for treating the enclave as if it were Nazi Germany, and for allowing disease to spread as a step that will “bring victory closer and reduce harm to IDF soldiers.” After rattling off like that for 10 months, he recognized an opportunity — in consultation

with a number of shadow advisors, to whom we will return — to pilot an extermination plan in northern Gaza. He diligently delivered it to politicians and the media, disguised in a mask of lies about adhering to international law.

The media and the politicians did what they always do: manufactured a distraction. While Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant hastened to deny, anonymous officials and soldiers in the field were already briefing the media that the plan was starting to be implemented.

The reality, however, is even more appalling. What the army has been implementing in northern Gaza since early October is not quite the “Generals’ Plan,” but an even more sinister and brutal version of it within a more concentrated area. One could even say that the plan itself and the intense international media and diplomatic storm it has created has helped keep everyone in the dark as to what is actually going on, and obscure the two ways in which the plan has already been redefined.

The first, most immediate distinction is the abandoning of provisions for reducing harm to civilians, i.e. giving residents of northern Gaza a week to evacuate southward. The second departure concerns the real purpose of emptying the area: while portraying the military operation as a security necessity, it was, in fact, an embodiment of the spirit of ethnic cleansing and resettlement from day one.

### **ATTENTION DIVERTED**

The catastrophe in northern Gaza is growing by the minute, and the

the area currently under siege contains less than a fifth of Gaza’s population. Proportionally, then, this is equivalent to the record numbers in the first two months of the war, when the army killed an average of 250 people per day through incessant airstrikes. It is therefore no wonder that the residents of northern Gaza say the last few weeks have been the most difficult since the beginning of the war.

### **FORCED OUT, NEVER TO RETURN?**

Barring the possibility of mass annihilation by means not yet seen, Israel appears to be choosing something of a middle ground between extermination and transfer. The extermination was intended as a form of terror and intimidation, the army’s way of persuading the residents of northern Gaza to evacuate “voluntarily.” But even that was not enough. And so soldiers were sent to shelters to round up the refugees at gunpoint and send them south, after the men were separated and taken for questioning or arrest.

On Oct. 21, the Israeli public broadcaster, Kan, published drone footage of Palestinians being rounded up and forced southward. Kan titled it “Gazans leaving Jabalia.” They are “leaving” in the same way the residents of Lyd, Al-Majdal, and Manshiyya “left” in 1948. Gazan residents themselves testify: “Whoever does not follow orders is shot.”

And so it is: women and children in one line, separated from men over the age of 16 holding up ID cards in another — a forced displacement captured by the cameras of the displacing force. In years to come, Israel will write in the history books: they left of their own accord.

And just as Israeli TV broadcasted images of this “calm departure,”

Gaza and Israel is.

Harris, for her part, will not risk the final days of her campaign by making any strong statements. She certainly won't jeopardize the Democrats' Jewish vote by issuing Israel a real ultimatum — in fact she has already said so. And if she wins? There's no rush. The new president will need to study the situation. "We are closely following what is happening in Gaza, and working with our allies toward a solution to this tragic situation," she'll be sure to say.

Europe has no levers of influence on Israel in the immediate future, and in any case the internal difference of opinions within the EU — and, first and foremost, Germany's resolute support for Israel — thwart any drastic shift in policy. In The Hague, the mills of justice grind slowly.

Salvation can only come from Washington, but Washington is busier every passing day with Trump's latest scandalous statement. The poison machine of the American right, aided by Elon Musk, is already in high gear in the production of disinformation and fake news. The inevitable result will be that once again, no one will care about Palestinian bodies piling up.

All this provides Israel with a window of opportunity of a month or two, during which it can even intensify the extermination operation in northern Gaza. As far as I can see, nothing will stop it during this period, or probably even after. The intensifying war in Lebanon and Israel's north also acts as a further smokescreen.

How many Palestinians will Israel exterminate in northern Gaza before then? The killing of over 1,000 in the four weeks since the current operation began may not sound like a lot compared to the numbers we saw at the beginning of the war, but we have to remember that

confluence of circumstances means that the unimaginable — extermination of thousands of people inside the besieged area — is no longer beyond the realm of possibility.

The current military operation began in the early hours of Oct. 6. Residents of Beit Hanoun, Beit Lahiya, and Jabalia — the three localities north of Gaza City — were ordered to flee to the Al-Mawasi area in the south of the Strip through two "humanitarian corridors." Israel presented the attack as a means to dismantle Hamas infrastructure after the group had reestablished itself in the area, and to prepare for the possibility of Israel taking over responsibility for acquiring, moving, and distributing humanitarian aid around the Strip — in other words, for the return of the Israeli Civil Administration that governed Gaza until the "disengagement" of 2005. The first cause was only partially true, and the second was no more than a smokescreen.

For Palestinians in those areas, things looked rather different. The army attacked residents in their homes and in shelters with airstrikes, artillery, and drones, while soldiers moved from street to street demolishing and setting fire to entire buildings to prevent residents from returning. Within a matter of days, Jabalia had turned into a vision of the apocalypse.

As opposed to the picture painted by the army, implying that residents in the northern areas were free to move south and get out of the danger zone, local testimonies presented a frightening reality: anyone who so much as stepped out of their home risked being shot by Israeli snipers or drones, including young children and those holding white flags. Rescue crews trying to help the wounded also came under attack, as well as journalists trying to document the events.

One particularly harrowing video, verified by The Washington

Post, shows a child on the ground pleading for help after being wounded by an airstrike; when a crowd gathers to help him, they are suddenly hit by another airstrike, killing one and wounding more than 20 others. This is the reality amid which the people of northern Gaza were supposed to walk, starved and exhausted, into the “humanitarian zone.”

In view of this brutality, the Israeli propaganda machine spurred into action to offer a slew of excuses as to why civilians were not evacuating — primarily that Hamas was “beating with sticks” those who tried to leave. If Hamas did indeed stop civilians from evacuating, how can the army then claim that those who chose not to evacuate are terrorists condemned to be killed? But listening to the residents themselves, one could hear the same desperate cry repeatedly: “We cannot evacuate because the Israeli army is shooting at us.”

On Oct. 20, the army circulated a photo of a long line of displaced Palestinians, beside a caption worded as mundanely and numbingly as a weather forecast: “The movement of Palestinian residents continues from the Jabalia area in the northern Gaza Strip. So far, more than 5,000 Palestinians have evacuated from the area.”

Observant viewers would have noticed that all of the heads in the picture were covered: it is a line of women and children, who were not “evacuated” but forcibly uprooted. Where are the men? Taken away to unknown locations. We may yet hear of their time in Israeli detention camps a few months from now, describing the torture and abuse that have killed at least 60 Gazan prisoners since October 7.

Unlike what was stated in the “Generals’ Plan,” civilians were not given a week to evacuate, as Eiland later acknowledged; from the get-go, the army treated the northern areas as a military zone in which any

objectives of the operation ... have mostly been achieved.” Eiland now expects that for Palestinians, northern Gaza “will slowly turn into a distant dream. Like they have forgotten Ashkelon [Al-Majdal], they will forget that area too.” This is no longer the voice of a mindless military tactician but rather of a full-blown advocate of ethnic cleansing.

And so we have cut through all the layers of deception in the “Generals’ Plan”: contrary to what was stated, the plan itself is a war crime; the army did not provide any grace period for evacuating civilians; the military justification is questionable, and certainly in no way proportionate to the intensity of the drastic operation; and the ultimate goal of the plan is not military but political — resettling Gaza.

## **ISRAEL’S WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY**

Right now, around 100,000 residents remain besieged in Beit Lahiya, Beit Hanoun, and Jabalia, starving and thirsty. Entire families are being massacred and entire neighborhoods flattened every day. Israel’s destruction of healthcare infrastructure and blocking of medical aid has rendered hospitals defunct, unable to care for the wounded. All the while, a partial communications blackout and the near total absence of journalists within the besieged areas keeps us largely in the dark.

Is it possible to foresee what comes next? Some will inevitably look to the United States for answers. In a few days, Americans will go to the polls in what is sure to be a close race between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris. If Trump wins, the Israeli leadership can breathe a sigh of relief. He will not stop any Israeli plan, however brutal — even for the simple reason that he is not clear on what the difference between



with the Forum of Reserve Commanders and Fighters, which published the plan. Among the founders of the Forum is Maj. Gen. (res.) Gabi Siboni from the Misgav Institute, which was descended from the now defunct Zionist Strategy Institute, a front organization for — surprise, surprise — Kohelet.

Over the course of years, Kohelet has perfected the ability to significantly influence the public agenda in Israel through extensions and sub-branches operating under seemingly innocuous names, with its researchers sometimes even denying any relation to it. Sarid practically quoted Kohelet's operating manual when he explained in an internal Zoom meeting of Tzav 9 members: "We've come up with a clever strategy here: taking a controversial core issue, and then as civilian organizations we come and offer the solution to the government. We come from all sides. We've offered solutions from both the right and the left."

Eiland was aware that Sarid and members of the Forum of Reserve Commanders and Fighters were striving to reestablish settlements in Gaza, but denied that his plan was intended to prepare the ground for it. This is what a denial by a useful idiot sounds like.

Like any good commander in the IDF Central Command, who is sent to secure a religious celebration of settlers at Joseph's Tomb in Nablus, or to block the exits from the Palestinian villages of Kafr Qaddum and Beita, he will keep claiming that he merely provides "security" solutions that have nothing to do with the settlers' agenda. "It's not political," they explain to us over and over again, while the messianists rejoice, shedding an occasional tear over "the bloody price to be paid."

But was he really a useful idiot? This week we learned that Israel's political leadership is pressuring the military to prevent the residents of Jabalia from returning to their homes, "despite the fact that the

movement is met with deadly fire. This is the first way in which the plan has been used as a lightning rod to divert attention and criticism from a much more brutal reality than what it proffers.

## **A POLICY OF EXTERMINATION**

Since the Israeli army began its operation in northern Gaza, it has killed over 1,000 Palestinians. The Israeli Air Force usually bombs at night while the victims are sleeping, slaughtering entire families in their homes and making it more difficult to evacuate the wounded. And on Oct. 24, rescue services announced that the intensity of the bombardment left them with no choice but to cease all operations in the besieged areas.

Some of the most notable attacks include the bombing of a home in the Al-Fallujah area of Jabalia camp on Oct. 14, killing a family of 11 along with the doctor who came to treat them; an attack on the Abu Hussein School in Jabalia camp on Oct. 17 that killed 22 displaced people who were sheltering there; the killing of 33 people in three houses in Jabalia camp, among them 21 women, on Oct. 19; the leveling of several residential buildings in Beit Lahiya on the same day, killing 87 people; airstrikes on five residential buildings in Beit Lahiya on Oct. 26, which killed 40 people; and the massacre of 93 people in the bombing of a five-storey residential building in Beit Lahiya on Oct. 29.

The extermination operation that is currently underway in northern Gaza should not come as a surprise to anyone who has paid attention to Israel's war crimes over the past year, and the countless

investigative reports that the world's most respected media outlets have written about them. From dropping 2,000-pound bombs where there are no military targets nearby to the regular killing of children by sniper fire to the head — these past atrocities show us what the Israeli army will continue to do if they're not stopped.

There are only three major medical facilities within the encircled area of northern Gaza, to which the hundreds of casualties of the past few weeks have been directed: the Indonesian Hospital and Kamal Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahiya, and Al-Awda Hospital in Jabalia. Yet the Israeli army has also subjected these hospitals to attacks, rendering them unable to treat the wounded. Reports by Doctors Without Borders and the UN have defined the situation as “immediately life threatening.”

At the start of the operation, the Israeli army ordered the three hospitals to evacuate within 24 hours, threatening to capture or kill anyone found inside them — not quite the “week of grace” stated in the “Generals’ Plan.” The army bombed Kamal Adwan and its surroundings in the early stages of the operation, before subjecting it to a three-day raid which removed it from service entirely and saw most of the doctors detained.

The army has also repeatedly bombed both the Indonesian Hospital and Al-Awda. Two patients in the former died due to the resulting power outage, before the hospital stopped functioning altogether. This is the reason why even mild injuries often end in death — because medical teams simply do not have the resources necessary to treat them.

Israel, of course, deems every house and every alley in Gaza a potential threat and a legitimate target. And what will be the excuse for denying six medical aid groups that work with the World Health

8,000 settlers from the Strip, was left deliberately open, never allowed to heal: a “trauma” being re-lived and passed down year after year, bleeding its poison into the infamous Kohelet Policy Forum — a right-wing think tank responsible for much of the current government's masterplans — and to a whole row of right-wing politicians imbued with hatred and an insatiable desire for revenge.

It was the reincarnation of an old fundamental Israeli theme: the eternal victims can never sin. It is the mindset that turned the trauma of October 7, in the words of Naomi Klein, into “a weapon of war,” seamlessly infusing the Hamas attack with Holocaust imagery.

And of course, far-right minister Orit Strook knew it before anyone else, predicting in May 2023: “About [resettling] Gaza — I don't think that the people of Israel are mentally there right now, so it won't happen today or tomorrow morning. In the long-term, I suppose there will be no choice but to do it. It will happen when the people of Israel will be ready for it, and sadly we will pay for it in blood.” How sad she really was about it is hard to tell, since the very same Orit Strook, in the midst of the war, rejoiced at the surge of new settlements and outposts in the West Bank and described it as “a time of miracles.”

What is the connection between this overflowing cauldron of messianism and the “Generals’ Plan”? That was revealed earlier this month, when Omri Maniv of Channel 12 found that although the military generals are the face of the plan, the brains behind it is the right-wing organization Tzav 9 — the group responsible for setting humanitarian aid trucks on fire before they could enter Gaza, and which was consequently sanctioned by the United States along with its founder, Shlomo Sarid.

According to Maniv's report, it was Sarid who connected Eiland

displacement and dispossession of Palestinians.

That event was only the latest to call for annexation and settlement of the Strip, coming after an ecstatic January conference in Jerusalem that was attended by thousands, including no fewer than 26 coalition members. And while only a quarter of the Israeli public supports resettling Gaza, the significant presence of ministers and supporters from Netanyahu's Likud party shows that at the political level, it is growing increasingly mainstream.

Daniela Weiss' Nachala movement has already drawn up the plans: six settlement groups, with 700 families waiting in line. All they need is a window of opportunity — one moment when national attention is distracted (in Lebanon, the West Bank, Iran), one moment of determination in Bezalel Smotrich's "decisive" style, and the stake will be planted across the fence.

They will call it a "military outpost" or an "agricultural farm," a time-tested strategy of winking at the right while feigning security justifications to the left. The army will never abandon them: these are our "finest boys," the military is their flesh and blood. And so the return shall come to pass.

### **THE BRAINS BEHIND THE 'GENERALS' PLAN'**

The observant among us could see the way the wind was blowing from the very first week of the war. While most Israelis were still wrapping their heads around the magnitude of the disaster of October 7, the settlers were already drawing maps and sticking settlement pins on them.

The wound of the "disengagement," when the military uprooted

Organization from entering Gaza? Most likely, it is a punishment for sending Western doctors to the Strip who later published testimonies about Israeli snipers targeting children. A UN report published shortly beforehand concluded that Israel is carrying out "a concerted policy to destroy the health-care system of Gaza" as part of "the crime against humanity of extermination."

### **A POLICY OF STARVATION**

These attacks have been accompanied by a complete siege that has blocked all food and medical supplies from entering northern Gaza, which appears to have been an intentional starvation policy. According to the UN's World Food Program, Israel began cutting off food on Oct. 1 — five days before the military operation.

This fact received official, albeit indirect, acknowledgement in the form of a U.S. ultimatum on Oct. 15, demanding that Israel allow aid shipments to enter northern Gaza within 30 days or face a halt in U.S. weapons deliveries to Israel. This indicates, as humanitarian groups had warned, that no such aid was being allowed in before then. The 30-day grace period is laughable; as the EU's foreign policy chief stated, within 30 days thousands of people might die of starvation.

Moreover, an exposé by Politico strengthened the feeling that like previous such "threats," the latest demand from Washington was but an empty ceremonial gesture to reassure liberal consciences. Already in August, the top U.S. official working on the humanitarian situation in Gaza told aid organizations in an internal meeting that the United States would not countenance delaying or stopping weapon shipments

to Israel to pressure it on humanitarian aid. As for the breaking of international humanitarian law, the sentiment expressed by the representative, according to one of the attendees, was that “the rules do not apply to Israel.”

Israel’s starvation policy in northern Gaza has not been limited to preventing the entry of food. On Oct. 10, the army bombed the only flour store in the area — as clear a war crime as you’ll find, forming a significant part of the genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice. Four days later, the army bombed a UN food distribution center in Jabalia, killing 10 people.

Aid agencies have provided urgent warnings about this escalating disaster, alerting as to their inability to fulfill their basic functions amid the impossible conditions Israel has created in northern Gaza. A new IPC report about hunger in Gaza predicts “catastrophic outcomes” of severe malnutrition, especially in the north.

On Oct. 16, Israeli media reported that following U.S. pressure, 100 aid trucks had entered northern Gaza. But journalists in the north were quick to correct the record: nothing at all had entered the besieged areas. On Oct. 20, Israel denied a further request by UN agencies to bring in food, fuel, blood, and medicines. Three days later, in response to a request for an interim order by the Israeli human rights group Gisha, the state admitted to the High Court that no humanitarian aid had been allowed into northern Gaza up to that point. By this time, we are already talking about a three-week-long food siege.

Since then, Israel claims to have allowed a trickle of aid trucks into northern Gaza — but without photographic evidence, it is very hard to know how many have reached their stated destination.

## **WINKING AT THE RIGHT, FEIGNING SECURITY JUSTIFICATIONS TO THE LEFT**

From the very start, the military rationale for such a drastic operation was questionable. Eiland spoke of “5,000 terrorists” hiding in the north, but anyone following the situation on the ground closely could see that encounters with Hamas operatives in these areas were few and far between.

Indeed, as Haaretz’s Yaniv Kubovich revealed, “commanders in the field ... say that the decision to start operating in northern Gaza was made without detailed deliberations, and it seems that it was mainly intended to put pressure on the population of Gaza.” Military forces were told to prepare for the operation, the report continued, “even though there was no intelligence to justify it.”

Furthermore, there was no unanimity among senior defense officials regarding the necessity of the maneuver, and there were plenty in both the army and the Shin Bet who thought it might endanger the lives of hostages. Sources who spoke to Haaretz testified that the soldiers who entered Jabalia “did not encounter terrorists face-to-face,” though at least 12 soldiers have since been killed in northern Gaza.

So what was the real motivation for the operation? To answer that question, we need look no further than the Sukkot event organized by settlers and their supporters on Oct. 21, titled “Preparing to Settle Gaza.” There, they laid out a vision for building Jewish settlements all across the Gaza Strip after cleansing the enclave of Palestinians. Gaza City, for example, would become “a Hebrew, technological, green city that would unite all parts of Israeli society.” And in this, at least, they are telling the truth: Israelis have always united around the