

Matthias Küntzel

October 7th and the Shoah

Institute For The Study Of Contemporary Antisemitism (ISCA), Indiana University, United States

ISCA Research Paper 2024-5, November 2024

“Hitler has imposed a new categorical imperative on human beings”, wrote the philosopher Theodor W. Adorno in 1966: “to organize their thoughts and actions so as to ensure that Auschwitz is not repeated, that nothing like this happens again.”¹

Was this categorical imperative flouted on 7 October 2023? Despite the vast differences between Auschwitz and the massacre by Hamas, did something “like this” happen again?

On the Sabbath of 7 October 2023, Hamas created hell on earth in southern Israel. What occurred was not just a declaration of war on Israel and Jews, but the announcement of their elimination. The burning of whole families, the mutilations, the most brutal imaginable rapes and tortures – all this was not the work of common murderers killing out of greed or self-interest, but of radical Jew-haters in whose eyes every Jew is guilty because he is a Jew. The Hamas assailants and their allies, therefore, see themselves as pursuing a noble and higher mission: making the world Jew-free. “Our mission was only to kill. Killing without distinguishing between men, women, and children. Kill anyone you see,” as one participant subsequently explained.²

In light of these events, is it permissible to relate the Nazis’ massacres of Jews during World War II to 7 October? asked the writer and Nobel prizewinner Herta Müller. “I believe it is even an obligation to do so”, she continued, “because Hamas itself wanted to reawaken the memory of the Shoah. And they

¹ Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, Frankfurt/M. 1994, p. 358.

² Jeffrey Herf, “An Interrupted Genocide”, *Quillette*, July 18, 2024.

wanted to demonstrate that the State of Israel is no longer a guarantee of the survival of the Jews.”³

Anyone who wants to get to the roots of the ideological origins of the Hamas attack cannot avoid the issue of the Nazis’ Jewish policy and its legacy in the Arab world. For there are indeed clearly identifiable lines of continuity linking the anti-Jewish terror of the Nazis with that of Hamas. ⁴

Lines of continuity

One of these lines relates to different views of the Shoah. While the majority of humanity views the murder of 6 million Jews as a colossal crime, in the Islamist milieu we find people openly describing the Nazi murders as a brilliant achievement that should be repeated. A prominent example is the preacher Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who died in 2022. At the time, he was the most important and most popular leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, the organization whose Palestinian branch Hamas considers itself to be. These are the words that al-Qaradawi shouted out to the millions of viewers of the TV channel Al-Jazeera in early 2009:

”Throughout history, Allah has imposed upon the [Jews] people who would punish them for their corruption. The last punishment was carried out by Hitler. [...] He managed to put them in their place. This was divine punishment for them. Allah willing, the next time will be at the hand of the believers.”⁵

In this passage, Qaradawi claims that the Jews brought about the Shoah because of their “corruption”. However, Hitler succeeded in punishing them. Furthermore, while the murder of millions was “divine punishment,” it was not enough. A further punishment is necessary, this time to be meted out by faithful Muslims. So, in all seriousness, Qaradawi announces nothing less than a

³ Herta Müller, “Ich kann mir die Welt ohne Israel nicht vorstellen”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 3 June 2024.

⁴ A comparison with the massacres perpetrated by ISIS would be instructive but cannot be conducted here. It should, however, at least be noted that religious fervor provides a significant moment of difference between Hamas’ antisemitism and that of the Nazis. The French political scientist Pierre-André Taguieff talks of a “sacralization of cruelty,” since the goal of the Jihad is to “inject terror into the hearts of the enemy in order to make his destruction easier.”

⁵ Sheik Yousuf Al-Qaradhawi, “Allah Imposed Hitler upon the Jews to Punish Them,” MEMRI-TV, # 2005, January 28, 2009.

new Holocaust and the end of Israel as a religious mission and Allah's command.

This outburst is far from being an isolated case. In their definitive study, *Arab Responses to the Holocaust*, Meir Litvak and Esther Webman report that "Justification [of the Holocaust] was not confined to marginal or radical circles and media, but appeared among mainstream producers of culture, and did not arouse any significant criticism or condemnation in the Arab public discourse."⁶

As confirmation, virtually no one protested against Qaradawi's murderous statement.

A further line of continuity relates to the ideological history of Hamas. Its parent organization, the Muslim Brotherhood, was receiving money from Berlin already in the 1930s. Nazi agents devoted themselves to educating its leadership, organizing joint "Palestine meetings" and evening training sessions on "the Jewish question." Newly discovered archival sources reveal that the highest levels of the Nazi leadership took a keen interest in this activity: "and likewise GOEB.[Goebbels] had spoken about it with much praise."⁷

As early as 1937, eleven years before the foundation of Israel, a pamphlet entitled *Islam and Judaism* was published in Arabic that combined the Jew-hatred of early Islamic sources with elements of European antisemitism. The Nazis would subsequently distribute this publication in the Muslim world in large quantities and different languages. Then, in April 1939 the Nazis began radio broadcasts in Arabic that would disseminate Goebbels' antisemitic anti-Zionism in the Arab world on a daily basis until April 1945.⁸

Decades later the seed sown by the Nazis and Islamists would sprout. Thus, in the still valid Hamas Charter of 1988 we find the Jew-hatred of early Islamic sources mixed with Nazi-style antisemitism. In this document, "the Jews" are declared to be the global enemy who not only control all media but also unleashed both world wars. Just like Adolf Hitler in *Mein Kampf*, Hamas in their

⁶ Meir Litvak and Esther Webman, *From Empathy to Denial. Arab Responses to the Holocaust*, London 2009, p. 195.

⁷ Matthias Küntzel, *Nazis, Islamic Antisemitism and the Middle East*, London and New York 2024, p. 32.

⁸ Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World*, New Haven, CT 2009. See also David Motadel, *Islam and Nazi Germany's War*, London 2014 and Küntzel, *Nazis, Islamic Antisemitism*.

Charter cite the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as proof of nefarious Jewish designs and declare in Article 7 that, “the time of the resurrection will not come before the Muslims fight the Jews and kill them.”

Completing the picture are discoveries recently made by Israeli soldiers in the Gaza Strip, such as the book by Hamas founder Mahmoud al-Zahar entitled *The End of the Jews*. It praises the Holocaust and calls for it to be completed,⁹ Also in circulation are Arabic editions of *Mein Kampf*, which recently reached no. 6 on the Palestinian bestseller list.¹⁰

What we are dealing with here is a Jew-hatred that the Nazis had started to incite a whole decade before the foundation of Israel. It is a hatred that exploits and radicalizes the anti-Jewish resentment of the early period of Islam and is persistently the cause of, rather than a reaction to, the violence in the Middle East. This hatred is directed against all Jews, even those most strongly committed to reaching an agreement with the Palestinians, many of whom actively sought peace with their Arab neighbors in Gaza. That was the case with those slaughtered on 7 October. And yet, an intense animosity is directed against anything Israel does. Hamas official Ghazi Hamad has clearly stated that massacres like that of 7 October will be continually repeated until Israel is destroyed.¹¹ And it is absolutely certain that if Israel military forces had not intervened on that day the Hamas commandos would have gone on killing endlessly.

The failure of the world

The fact that this new mass murder of Jews could not be prevented results from a failure by the Israelis and the western world and indeed of the international community as a whole.

For advance notice had been given of what happened on 7 October. Hamas has never concealed its murderous plans. On the contrary, it has proclaimed the murder of Jews to be a religious duty. “We must attack every Jew on Planet Earth”, declared Hamas’ former interior minister in Gaza, Fathi Hamad, in 2019

⁹ “President Isaac Herzog at Munich Security Conference presents antisemitic texts found in Gaza,” 17 February 2024.

¹⁰ “No need to apologize: Hamas are indeed the ‘New Nazis,’” *Jewish News Syndicate*, 06.03.2024

¹¹ Hamas Official Ghazi Hamad: “We Will Repeat The October 7 Attack, Time And Again, Until Israel Is Annihilated”, MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 10923, November 1, 2023.

in a speech broadcast by the Hamas TV station Al-Aqsa. “We must slaughter and kill them, with Allah’s help. ... We will lacerate them and tear them to pieces, Allah willing.”¹² And here is what Yahya Sinwar, the mastermind behind the 7 October attack, said at the end of 2022: “We will come at you with countless missiles, we will come at you in a boundless flood of soldiers, we will come at you with millions of our people, like the returning flood.”¹³

The global public, however, which annually commemorates the Holocaust, does not want to know anything about such statements or the threats in the Hamas Charter. Just as in 1933 the world refused to take Hitler’s explicit Jew-hatred seriously, now, decades later, it refuses to take seriously the genocidal proclamations of Hamas and other Islamist groups. People behave as if Hamas does not really mean what it says or wish for what it calls for. And so it was that only Islamists foresaw and ardently prayed for the 7 October massacre. The rest of the world was taken by surprise.

And what happened afterwards? How has the global public and the West, in the light of the experience of the Holocaust and several decades of “Holocaust education,” reacted to 7 October?

To this day the majority of people in the non-Jewish world refuses to support and show solidarity with terrorized Jews. Once again they are leaving the Jews in the lurch, as they did in 1938. In July of that year, 31 of the 32 states taking part in the Evian Conference refused to take in Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany and Nazi-occupied Austria. Only the Dominican Republic was prepared to do so.¹⁴ And now, 85 years later, there is once again little trace of empathy with Jews confronting a massive worldwide rise in antisemitic hatred.

“And here is the most astounding thing: There was scarcely a pause, scarcely a moment of numb silence. Immediately the explanatory and orientational machinery went into action, ever more openly directed against Israel.”¹⁵ To this day there has been far too little serious attempts to analyze what came to

¹² “For Hamas Leadership, Beheading Is A Recommended Practice,” MEMRI, Special Dispatch No. 10904, October 25, 2023.

¹³ Cited after Christian Meier, “Aus dem Tunnel an die Spitze”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 8 August 2024.

¹⁴ Israel Gutman, ed., *Enzyklopädie des Holocaust, Band I*, München-Zürich 1995, pp. 426f.

¹⁵ Thomas Schmid, “Israel muss siegreich sein, um großzügig werden zu können”, *WELT*, 15 November 2023.

fruition on 7 October or what should be done to explain and counter the hatred of women and Jews displayed on that day. Holocaust researchers have written a great deal about eliminatory antisemitism. In relation to 7 October, however, this knowledge has more or less gone to waste. Notably, the Hamas Charter has, with few exceptions, played almost no role in the subsequent discussion.¹⁶ Thus, an event that Jews throughout the world experienced as part of the global Jewish destiny and an existentially decisive turning point has been treated in many universities and by government officials in the West as a passing episode: most people have carried on as if nothing had happened.

At the same time the initial demonstrations of solidarity almost immediately turned into campaigns of accusation against Israel. Almost everywhere Israel – and so the Jews – have been blamed for Hamas’ terrorism. Almost everywhere the massacre has been interpreted as a response to 56-years of “occupation” and Israel deemed directly or indirectly responsible for the war in Gaza. Regrettably, even prominent Holocaust researchers - professors who really should know better - have ingloriously distinguished themselves by joining in the effort to attribute prime responsibility for the massacre to its victims. A notable example is Omer Bartov, Professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island

Israel’s guilt?

In an interview with the *Frankfurter Rundschau* about the roots of the 7 October massacre, Bartov made no mention of Hamas’ antisemitism, as if no such thing existed. By doing so, he gave the impression that the onslaught on Israel had nothing to do with Jew-hatred. Instead, he attributed responsibility for the atrocities solely to Israel and the “oppression of millions of Palestinians.” This, he claimed, had led to their “violence, anger and vengefulness.” The “abhorrent” Hamas attack must therefore be “viewed as an attempt to attract attention to the plight of the Palestinians.”¹⁷ Some may consider this explanation plausible, but it overlooks the facts.

¹⁶ Among these exceptions is a three-part Webinar series produced in early 2024 by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research and curated by Prof. Jeffrey Herf on “The Origins and Ideology of Hamas.” See <https://www.yivo.org/IdeologySeries-Release>

¹⁷ Ulrich Seidler, “Genozidforscher zu Hamas-Attacke: ‘Netanjahu hat den Wind gesät,’” In *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 16 October 2023.

Firstly, it misrepresents Hamas' action and therefore also the motives for it: 7 October was no spontaneous act of revenge and anger, but a strategic blow that had been painstakingly prepared months in advance. Moreover, it is clear that this action was in no way intended to alleviate the "plight of the Palestinians." On the contrary, the Hamas leadership have throughout acted in such a way as to maximize that suffering, because the resulting catastrophe in Gaza offers them new opportunities to pillory Israel and so more effectively pursue their real goal of eliminating it and the Jews.

Secondly, the massacre was not a response to provocative actions by Israel, which in the preceding months and years had been taking steps to stabilize the situation in Gaza and raise living standards there. For years Israeli governments had been allowing funds from Qatar to reach Hamas and had permitted tens of thousands of Gazans to earn a living in Israel. The hoped-for stability, however, proved illusory: the grisly payback came on 7 October.

Thirdly, Bartov equates "millions of Palestinians" with the ideological warriors of Hamas, thereby dismissing the multiplicity of positions inside this camp. He seems to consider "Palestinians" exclusively as victims incapable of responding with anything other than "rage and vengefulness". He ignores the fact that Hamas has decided of its own volition to strive to replace Israel with its own Islamic state.

Fourthly, scholars are unanimous in considering antisemitism to be a fantasy that bears no relation to really existing Jews or criticism of their actual actions. Bartov takes his distance from this consensus when, in the interview, he argues that Israel ultimately caused the 7 October terrorist attack, overlooking the fact that antisemitism contradicts the everyday logic of cause and effect. So, just as there was no rational reason for the murder of the six million, there was also none for the pogroms that followed the ritual murder libels or for the 7 October attack. What was and is at work here are pure hatred and the most malevolent of all ideologies.

Fifthly and finally, Bartov facilitates a reversal of the victim/perpetrator relationship. His whole stance depends on suppression of the facts about the ideological program of Hamas and its inheritance from National Socialism. But anyone who screens out Hamas' antisemitism has to find another explanation

for its terrorism. And if Israel is ultimately to blame, then the logical consequence is that the more terrorism, the greater will be Israel's guilt.

Such twisted logic has surely made a major contribution to the fact that the unparalleled antisemitic crime of 7 October has been followed by an unparalleled wave of hatred of Israel and a widespread and intensifying antisemitism.

The two errors are closely connected: firstly, Hamas' crimes are detached from their ideological sources and thus pardoned or rationalized; secondly, a space is created for the expression of a classic trope of modern antisemitism – the assertion that Jews are responsible for their own persecution. The notion that Israel is to blame is based on the dogma that there is no link between the antisemitism of Hamas and that of the Nazis. One is a precondition for the other.

It is remarkable to find this pattern at work in an otherwise outstanding scholar such as Omer Bartov. For, before he mutated into a prominent "critic of Israel", Bartov had taken full cognizance of and had publicly denounced the Nazi-like content of the Hamas Charter. In an essay from 2004, he wrote that "The most explicit and frightening link between Hitler's anti-Semitism and the contemporary wave of violence, hatred, paranoia, and conspiracy theories can be found ... in the official charter of the Palestinian Hamas movement" and that "It contains ... the most blatant anti-Semitic statements made in a publicly available document since Hitler's own pronouncements." There is, he continues, "a Hitlerite quality to the new anti-Semitism". This meant, according to Bartov in the German version of the essay from 2004 (which he republished unamended in 2019) that, "Islamism has adopted a very European, Nazi-like and genocidal antisemitism."¹⁸

A taboo on the Holocaust?

In relation to 7 October, however, Bartov has decided to forget what he once knew. Thus, in the afore-mentioned *Frankfurter Rundschau* interview, which

¹⁸ Omar Bartov, "Der alte und neue Antisemitismus", Christian Heilbronn, Doron Rabinovici and Natan Sznaider (Eds.), *Neuer Antisemitismus. Fortsetzung einer globalen Debatte*, Berlin 2019, p. 54. The original version of Bartov's essay bore the title "He meant what he said. Did Hitlerism die with Hitler?", *The New Republic*, February 2, 2004; see: <https://newrepublic.com/article/96369/hitler-wwii-middle-east-islam>.

was published a week after the massacre, he criticized any attempt to link Hamas' terrorism and the Holocaust in any way.

He described such comparisons as “false, erroneous, and ideologically driven.” On November 20, together with other well-known authors such as Christopher R. Browning, Michael Rothberg, and A. Dirk Moses and twelve others, he issued “An Open Letter on the Misuse of Holocaust Memory.” Here the signatories, among them the director of the Berlin Center for Research on Antisemitism, Stephanie Schüler-Springorum, voice their opposition not only to abuses of the memory of the Holocaust, which do exist and deserve criticism, but also to any reference to Nazism and the Holocaust in efforts to understand the roots of the 7 October massacre. In their view, such “Comparisons of the crisis unfolding in Israel-Palestine to Nazism and the Holocaust ... are intellectual and moral failings.”

In their Open Letter, they admit that 7 October reminded many Jews of the Shoah and also of earlier pogroms. At the same time, they vehemently reject such associations: “Appealing to the memory of the Holocaust obscures our understanding of the antisemitism Jews face today, and dangerously misrepresents the causes of violence in Israel-Palestine.”¹⁹

This key remark in the Open Letter is remarkable for two reasons. It assumes, firstly, that the antisemitism that Jews are facing today has little or nothing to do with the Jew-hatred that culminated in the Holocaust. This is, as we have already seen, false. The ideological, historical, and semantic connections that link the antisemitism of Hamas to that of the Nazis and the scholarly literature that presents these connections can now be ignored only if one is desperate to willfully ignore them.

Moreover, anyone who refrains from mentioning these connections not only makes Israel solely responsible for the Jew-hatred in the Arab world, but also downplays it by attributing a putatively rational motive to it.

¹⁹ “Open Letter on the Misuse of Holocaust Memory”. *The New York Review of Books*, November 20, 2023. In addition to those mentioned above, the Letter was also signed by: Karyn Ball, Jane Caplan, Alon Confino, Debórah Dwork, David Feldman, Amos Goldberg, Atina Grossmann, John-Paul Himka, Marianne Hirsch, Raz Segal und Barry Trachtenberg.

An example of this downplaying was provided by the American political scientist, Marc Lynch. In a review of Paul Berman's *The Flight of Intellectuals* in *Foreign Affairs* magazine, Lynch was unable to see any antisemitism in the previously-cited statement by Qaradawi, in which the preacher had described the Holocaust as a "divine punishment" and declared that a further punishment is necessary, this time to be meted out by the Muslims. For Lynch these remarks showed nothing more than that "Qaradawi is ... certainly hostile toward Israel."

The author of the reviewed book, Paul Berman, was not prepared to accept this. "Lynch ... hides behind euphemisms – in this case, his phrase 'hostile toward Israel,' when what he really means is 'Hitlerian'", Berman wrote in the subsequent edition of *Foreign Affairs*. In reply, however, Lynch failed to respond to the proposition that he could have meant "Hitlerian". Instead, he simply reiterated his initial position that "Qaradawi has voiced extremely hostile views of Israel."²⁰

Here, in the face of all the evidence, Lynch, like many of his colleagues, defends the dogma of discontinuity, i.e. the thesis that there is no connection between Hitler's hatred of Jews and Islamist hatred of Israel. This thesis has contributed and continues to contribute hugely to the widespread refusal to take the radical Jew-hatred of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas seriously. In fact, it facilitated the 7 October massacre.

Let us now return to the Open Letter of Bartov et al, according to which referring to the Holocaust "*dangerously* misrepresents the causes of violence in Israel-Palestine." Is it dangerous to relate my knowledge of the Holocaust to 7 October? And, if so, what precisely is the nature of this danger?

The Open Letter itself provides us with a clue. While Hamas' massacre is referred to repeatedly by euphemistic references to the "current crisis," the signatories place the blame for the "widespread killing" solely on Israel, whose 75-year history is deemed responsible for the "spiral of violence" "There is no military solution in Israel-Palestine", they wrote just a few weeks after 7

²⁰ Marc Lynch, "Veiled Truths: The Rise of Political Islam and the West", *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2010 and Paul Berman, "Islamism, Unveiled and Marc Lynch, Lynch Replies", *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2010.

October, without explaining how Hamas' murderous rampage could have been stopped without the use of military force.

It thus becomes clear why they find "references to the memory of the Holocaust" not only false but "dangerously" so: it is because it would undermine the dichotomy between, Zionist perfidy, on the one hand, and innocent Palestinian victimhood, on the other, a dichotomy to which they are deeply committed.

Benjamin Netanyahu and his military policy are often criticized, perhaps deservedly so. On the other hand, no argument can justify lack of clarity about the real threats to Israel and ignorance of the real ideology that motivates its enemies. Whoever commits these sins of omission is demonizing Israel by giving the impression that the country wantonly desires war.

And herein lies the difference between sincere "criticism" of the Israeli government and the other kind of "criticism of Israel" that is presently so widespread. In the former case, the special threats to the country are taken into account while, in the latter, this context of Israel's existence is denied or simply not mentioned.

An example of such withholding of evidence is provided by a statement entitled "The Elephant in the Room," published by Bartov et al. on 17 August 2023, in which criticism is directed solely at the Israeli "occupation regime" without reference to Israel's enemies. 49 days after the publication of this statement, which garnered over 2,000 signatures in the space of a week, Hamas shocked the world with its massacre.

It was Islamic antisemitism that had now revealed itself to be the real elephant in the room, as *the* factor that few people want to see although it affects everything. This specific blind-spot has, however, remained in place post-7 October: almost all the signatories of the Elephant statement have said nothing further.

On December 8, 2023, historians Jeffrey Herf and Norman J. W. Goda issued a critique signed by 31 other scholars that rejects the sweeping accusation of Holocaust abuse made in the Open Letter on the Misuse of Holocaust Memory.

Herein, Herf, Goda, et al. describe the 7 October massacre as “the biggest mass murder of Jews since the Holocaust” and insist that, “In terms of ideas, there is a Nazi connection to Hamas.” They address “the distinctive form of Islamist Jew-hatred that emerged in the 1930s with the Muslim Brotherhood” and emphasize that “this mix of Islamist and European Jew-hatred, while not shared by the entire Arab/Muslim world, has maintained a shadow over the Middle East as regards the existence of a Jewish state.” They criticize the anti-Zionist thrust of the Open Letter and conclude by calling for an “unflinching gaze at the connections between past and present in the Hamas dictatorship and its actions.”²¹

In a brief reply, the signatories of the Open Letter reject Herf and Goda’s critique. Anyone who claims, they write, that there is definite ideological common ground between National Socialism and Hamas has simply been taken in by the “myth of a Nazi-like Islamic antisemitism.”²² A myth? Something that does not really exist? Such a blatantly dismissive attitude is intellectually untenable. This is notably true for Omer Bartov, who only a few years previously had written, “When an organization that describes itself as a liberation movement advocates the destruction of the Jewish state, one cannot react as if it had advocated something else. Where clarity ceases, complicity begins.”²³ How true!

Failure of Holocaust education

Many today, however, do not want to hear about the disturbing reality – that via the antisemitism of the Middle East a piece of the Nazi past lives on in the present. In repudiating any references to the Shoah, Bartov and his co-signatories are fleeing from this fact. Since 7 October, it is no longer viable to separate Holocaust history from the present; nor can that massacre be

²¹ Jeffrey Herf, Norman J.W.Goda, and 31 others, “An Open Letter on Hamas, Antisemitism, and Holocaust Memory”, *The New York Review of Books*, December 8, 2023. The other 29 signatories are: Joseph Bendersky, Russell A. Berman, Paul Berman, Richard Breitman, Magnus Bretchken, Martin Cüppers, Havi Dreifuss, Ingo Elbe, Tuva Friling, Sander Gilman, Stephan Grigat, Susannah Heschel, David Hirsh, Günther Jikeli, Martin Kramer, Matthias Küntzel, Meir Litvak, Dan Michman, Joanna B. Michlic, Benny Morris, Cary Nelson, Bill Niven, Alvin Rosenfeld, Gavriel Rosenfeld, Roni Stauber, Norman A. Stillman, Karin Stögner, Izabella Tabarovsky, James Wald, Thomas Weber, und Elhanan Yakira.

²² Ibid.

²³ Omer Bartov, “Der alte und neue Antisemitismus”, op. cit., p. 55.

understood by anyone who does not understand the Holocaust and the significance of the antisemitism that underlay it.

For this reason, too, 7 October must be the occasion for a scientifically-grounded recall of the Holocaust and for opposition to attempts to relativize its historical significance or dismiss such remembrance as a fig-leaf behind which the Israeli government seeks to hide (alleged) misdeeds.

The months following the massacre have exposed a failure on the part of hitherto existing Holocaust education. It, too, has too often not wished to acknowledge and present the lasting impact of Nazi ideology in the Muslim world. In November 2023, Dani Dayan, Chairman of Yad Vashem, admitted as much, saying that “We at Yad Vashem are experts in Nazi ideology, but not in the barbarous ideology of Hamas. We have not investigated it.”²⁴

Such ignorance and avoidance must end. If we want to rise to the challenges we face today and are likely to face tomorrow, every future Shoah commemoration must be an anti-antisemitism commemoration that no longer places under taboo the genocidal Jew-hatred that continues to live on after Auschwitz in the Middle East. At the same time, the struggle against antisemitism must always be conducted in such a way as to create a Holocaust awareness that embraces not only the uniqueness of the crime but also the uniqueness of the hatred that made it possible.

But now let us return to Adorno’s categorical imperative, according to which human beings must “organize their thoughts and actions so as to ensure that Auschwitz is not repeated, that nothing like this happens again.” So, did something “like this” happen on 7 October?

I leave the answer open. What is certain is that the successful massacre of 7 October encouraged and strengthened the Islamist forces in the region. Their aim is not a “two-state solution” but a second final solution. Under the leadership of the Iranian regime they are energetically preparing to totally destroy the Jewish State of Israel – a goal that they explicitly and loudly announce to the whole world.

²⁴ Detlef David Kauschke, “Nie wieder ist jetzt”, *Jüdische Allgemeine*, 9. November 2023.

Even Adolf Hitler did not make his intentions so plain. The Iranian Revolutionary Guards boast about how they intend to “raze the Zionist regime to the ground in less than eight minutes.” An Iranian TV documentary shows simulated attacks on Israel’s nuclear power station, the Knesset, and the Culture Center in Tel Aviv, while the Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, has declared that by 2040 Israel will no longer exist. A countdown clock in Tehran shows the number of days remaining until this projected end. The Islamists are doing their utmost to ensure that something like Auschwitz really does happen again.

Will humanity, following the Holocaust and the 7 October massacre, fail once more, instead of putting a stop to Jew-hatred in good time? Will we continue to underestimate the impact of destructive ideologies on the course of history and once again ignore the writing on the wall?

At the present time, 47% of the world’s Jews live in Israel. Were the hated “Zionist entity” to be eliminated, most Jews would also disappear. In the words of Alvin Rosenfeld, “There will be no Jewish future worthy of the name without the State of Israel.”²⁵ But it is not only as a haven of safety for Jews that Israel is more important than ever. It has been a symbol of otherness and difference, bringing together people from diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and values. Hamas’ counter-concept is fascistic homogeneity. Israel is not inherently better than other countries, but its existence is decisive for the future of the world.

Translation: Colin Meade

This essay was first published by Indiana University’s Institute For The Study Of Contemporary Antisemitism as [ISCA Research Paper 2024-5](#).

²⁵ Alvin H. Rosenfeld, “Longing for Auschwitz. The ultimate aims of the war against the Jewish state would rival the worst horrors of our history,” Tablet Magazine, March 04, 2024.

