

Media Coverage of the 2023 Israeli War on Palestine

The Great Narrative Shift

jad melki
Lebanese American University

1

The Great Narrative Shift

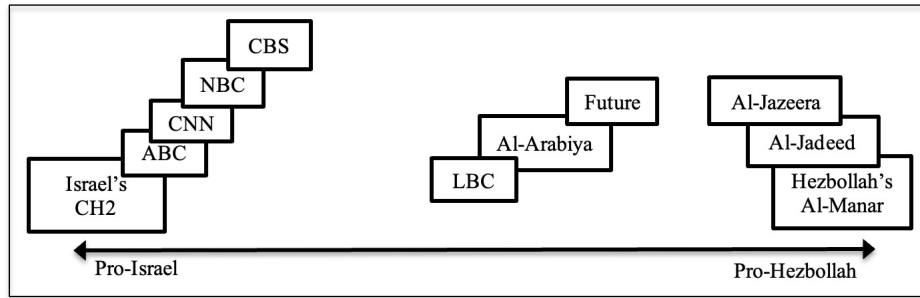
Israeli narrative: “Zionism was a national liberation movement with a strong socialist past and more recent liberal tendencies that entered its ancient homeland, derelict and empty since the exile of the Jews in Roman time, waiting to be resettled.”

Palestinian narrative: “Zionism was a colonialist movement that penetrated the Palestinian homeland by force, with the wish to colonize the country and with possible expansionist ambitions to penetrate the heart of the Arab world”

Ilan Pappé (2008)

2

Media Coverage of Middle East Wars

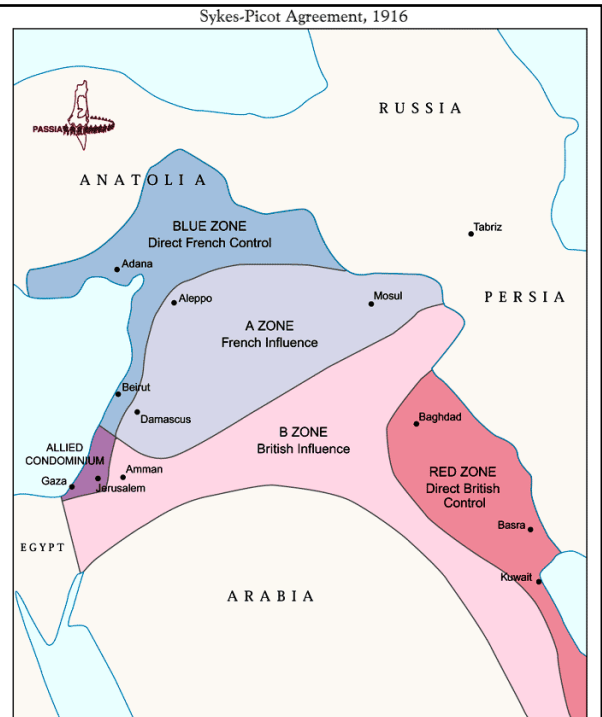


2006 Israeli war on Lebanon

3

100 years of bitter history: Western (British/French) colonial legacies

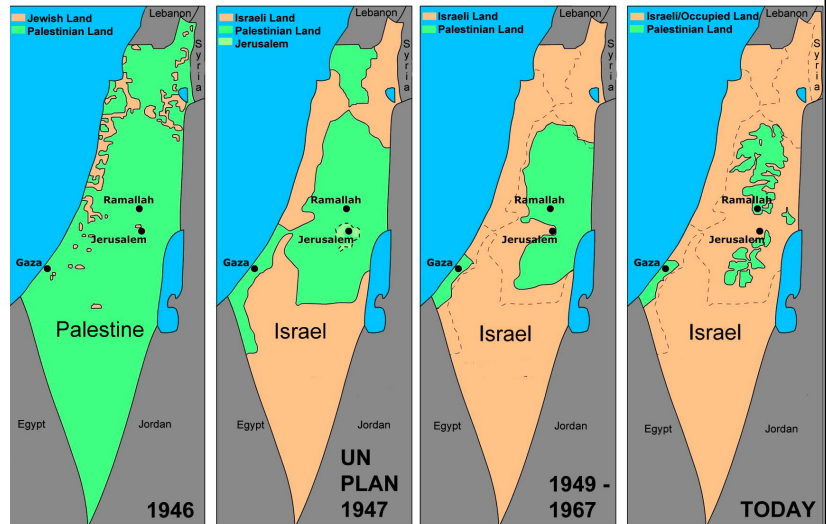
1900-1956
Dividing Greater Syria
Reneging on promises of independence
Forcing the Zionist project on Palestine



4

100 years of bitter history:
 Legacy of U.S. hegemony and ethnic cleansing of Palestine

1967-2000
 Cold War
 War on Terrorism
 Shift from unipolar power



5

Media/Military Changes in Past Two Decades

Major changes in political and military context and methods:

- Destruction of states and regular armies
- Mastering guerilla warfare
- Unified Arenas

Major (military/media) gains in experience by the resistance groups

- U.S. war on Iraq (2003-)
- Israeli war on Lebanon (2006)
- Saudi war on Yemen (2014-)
- Syria war and ISIL (2011-current)
- Israeli attacks on Gaza (2008, 2012, 2014, 2021)
- Russian invasion of Ukraine (2022-)

6

Drastic changes in media ecosystem

Media uses during crises

Year	Legacy media (TV)	Social/Mobile media
2013	88%	38%
2015	88%	60%
2019	88%	65%
2020	86%	74%

7

Oct 7, 2023, Operation Al-Aqsa Flood

Palestinian resistance had the initiative

Media/Military plan put in advance

Cameras as prevalent as guns



8

Oct 7, 2023, Operation Al-Aqsa Flood

Israelis caught off guard

Clumsy military and media response

Multiple failed news frames, clumsy lies



9

Oct 7, 2023, Operation Al-Aqsa Flood

Palestinian+ audiences saw triumph, power, revival, hope

Israeli+ audiences saw defeat, weakness, failure, shock

World's attention fixated on Palestine

Propaganda and misinformation ran unabated

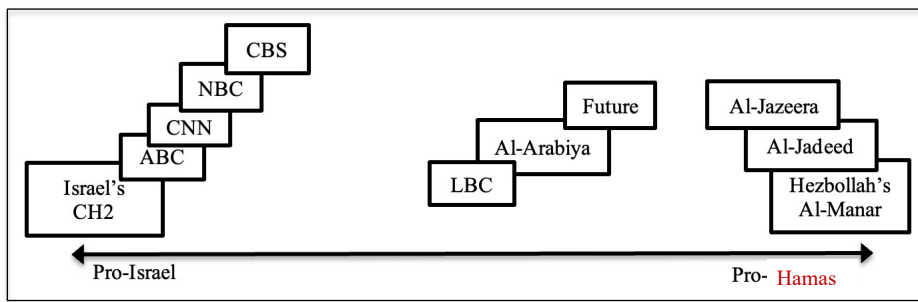
10

Legacy Media Coverage

Legacy media followed predictable trends

Western media mostly pro-Israel

Arab media split between pro-resistance and pro-Israel



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Social Media: 99% vs 1%

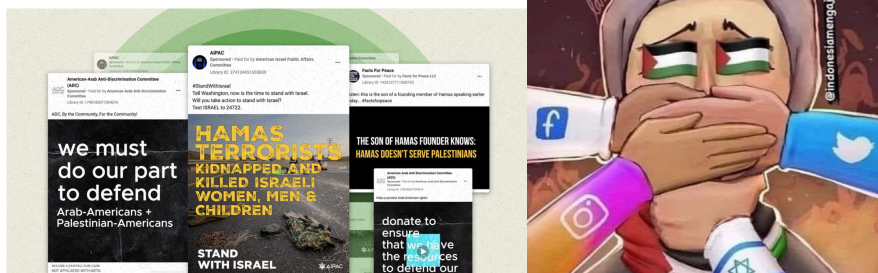
Social media followed unpredictable trends

#Pro-Palestine **8X** more prevalent than #Pro-Israeli

Although Israeli groups spent **100X** more on advertising

Israel advocacy groups outspend pro-Palestinian groups on social media

Organizations including AIPAC have vastly outspent pro-Palestinian groups on Facebook and Instagram even as young Americans grow more critical of Israel.



12

Social Media: 99% vs 1%

Despite Israelis targeting **journalists: 100+ killed**

Despite rampant shadow banning, blocking, filtering

Journalists and bloggers became household names



13

Social Media: 99% vs 1%

Despite Israelis targeting **journalists: 100+ killed**

Journalists featured in stories, protests, interviews

Became heroes and martyrs



14

Social Media: 99% vs 1%

Despite Israelis targeting **doctors and medics: 800+ killed**

Many refused to leave, also became news sources,
heroes and martyrs



15

Social Media: 99% vs 1%

Despite savage Israeli bombardment of **civilians: 34,000+ killed**

Resistance media/military operations remained functional

Regular announcements uninterrupted



16

Social Media: 99% vs 1%

Despite savage Israeli bombardment of **civilians: 34,000+ killed**

Resistance media/military operations remained functional

Press releases continued

Social Media: 99% vs 1%

Despite savage Israeli bombardment of **civilians: 34,000+ killed**

Resistance media/military operations remained functional

Rockets and guerilla attacks ran unabated



Social Media: 99% vs 1%

Despite savage Israeli bombardment of **civilians: 34,000+ killed**
Resistance fighters and leaders became iconic



Sharmine Narwani @snarwani · Jan 27
American narrative collapse: A school in Amman, Jordan held a "dress like a super hero day"

Many students dressed up as Abu Obeida, Palestinian journalists, paramedics, and fighters. There's a lone Spiderman in there too...a relic of the old US narrative hegemony.

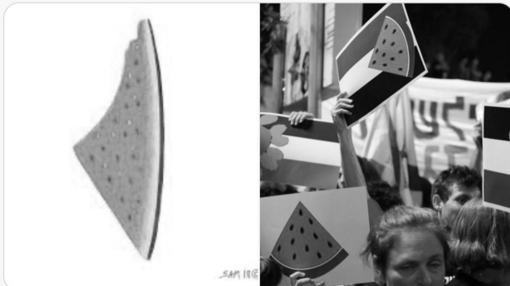


19

Social Media: 99% vs 1%

Despite arrests, violence and doxing, **especially in the West**
Global protests kept issue alive

Meghan.in ♡ 樂☆ LET IT ROCK 🗣️ @Meghanskz143 · Oct 28, 2023
The **watermelon** is a symbol of Palestinian solidarity. In 1967, the Israeli government made public displays of the Palestinian flag a criminal offense in **Gaza** and the West Bank, so Palestinians began using the **watermelon** because it bears the national colors of the Palestinian flag



Hate Detector 🔍 @HateDetectors · Nov 9, 2023
The #BengaluruPolice registered a FIR against those who held a peaceful protest in #Bengaluru with the metaphor of 'watermelon' in the color of the #Palestinian flag, condemning #Israel's continuous bombardment of #Gaza during the ongoing conflict between #Hamas and Israel....
Show more



20

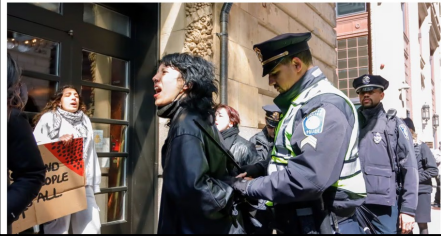
Social Media: 99% vs 1%

Despite arrests, violence and doxing, **especially in the West**
Students put universities in crisis mode

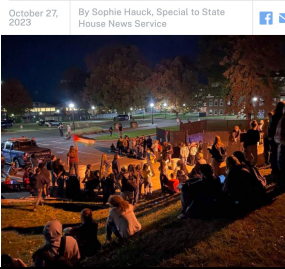
Protest outside Emerson president's inauguration results in 13 arrests, including a dozen students

Emerson Students for Justice in Palestine said they were demonstrating against tuition hikes and the college's 'silence on the ongoing genocide in Gaza'

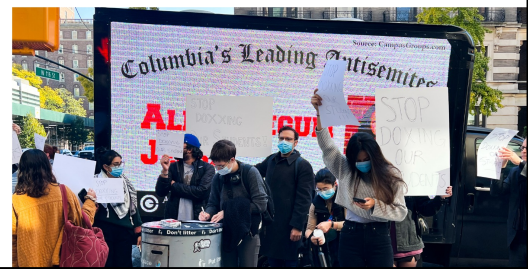
By Nick Stabile Globe Staff. Updated March 23, 2024, 5:20 p.m.



Campus police arrested 57 at pro-Palestinian sit-in at UMass Amherst



'Doxxing truck' displaying names and faces of affiliates it calls 'Antisemites' comes to Columbia



21

Social Media: 99% vs 1%

Despite arrests, violence and doxing, **especially in the West**
Students put universities in crisis mode

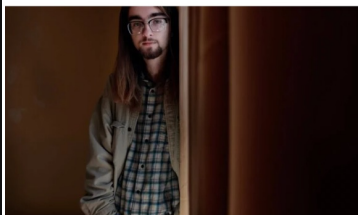
The Intercept

AMID GAZA PROTESTS, UNIVERSITIES ARE CRACKING DOWN ON A CELEBRATED PROTEST TACTIC: SIT-INS

On college campuses around the country, administrators are responding to peaceful sit-ins with sanctions and criminal charges.

They were arrested at a pro-Palestinian sit-in. Now, three UMass students aren't allowed to study abroad.

The students say they're being treated unfairly because of their political views. The university says it's just standard procedure.



UMass Amherst junior Aidan O'Neill at his home in Scituate. "To lose my abroad eligibility at the last second, that was just heartbreaking," said O'Neill. CRAIG F. WALKER/GLOBE STAFF

22

Social Media: 99% vs 1%

Despite false accusation of **“Antisemitism”**
Activists, academics, celebrities joined the media battle



23

Social Media: 99% vs 1%

Artists joined the battle with **resistance art**
Memes, songs, paintings, poetry... filled the spectrum



24

Social Media: 99% vs 1%

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25

Social Media: 99% vs 1%

Artists joined the battle with **resistance art**
Memes, songs, paintings, poetry... filled the spectrum



26

If I must die,
 you must live
 to tell my story
 to sell my things
 to buy a piece of cloth
 and some strings,
 (make it white with a long tail)
 so that a child, somewhere in Gaza
 while looking heaven in the eye
 awaiting his dad who left in a blaze—
 and bid no one farewell
 not even to his flesh
 not even to himself—
 sees the kite, my kite you made,
 flying up above
 and thinks for a moment an angel
 is there
 bringing back love
 If I must die
 let it bring hope
 let it be a tale

Media: 99%

I the battle with r
 iintings, poetry... fi

Palestinians mourn poet Refaat Alareer killed in Israeli air strike

The renowned poet and academic was considered 'the voice of Gaza'.



إذا كان لا بد أن أموت
 فال بد أن تعيش أنت
 لتروي حكايتي
 لتبيع أشياءي
 وتشترى قطعة قماش
 وخيوطا
 (فلتكن بيضاء وبذيل طويل)
 كي يبصر طفل في مكان ما من غزة
 وهو يحدق في السماء
 منتظراً أباه الذي رحل فجأة
 دون أن يودع أحداً
 وال حتى لحمه
 أو ذاته
 يبصر الطائرة الورقية
 طائرتي الورقية التي صنعتها أنت
 تخلق في الأعالي
 ويظن للحظة أن هناك مالكاً
 يعيد الحب
 إذا كان لا بد أن أموت
 فليأت موتي بالأمل
 فليصبح حكاية

Social Media: 99% vs 1%

Artists joined the battle with resistance art
 Memes, songs, paintings, poetry... filled the spectrum



Social Media: 99% vs 1%

Despite powerful **Israeli lobbies** in the West
Alternative media operations reach millions



29

Social Media: 99% vs 1%

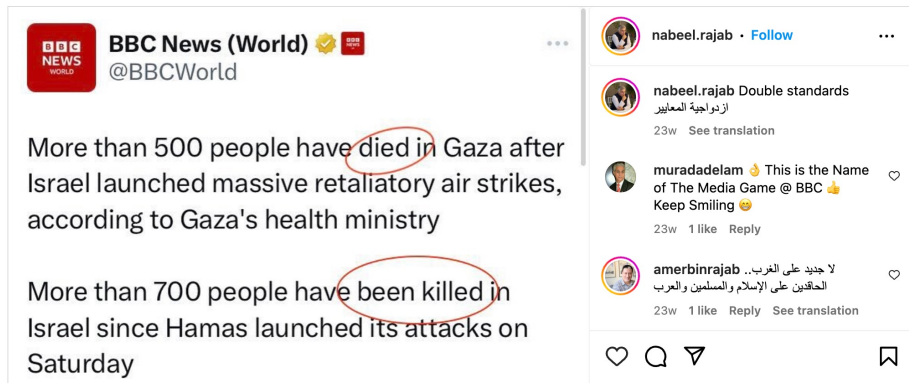
WhatsApp groups dominated news sources
Small news operations meet small guerilla units



30

Social Media: 99% vs 1%

Western media networks discredited
US and UK media bias exposed



31

Social Media: 99% vs 1%

Western media networks discredited
US and UK media bias exposed



32

Social Media: 99% vs 1%

Western media networks discredited

Aggressive treatment of pro-Palestine guests backfired

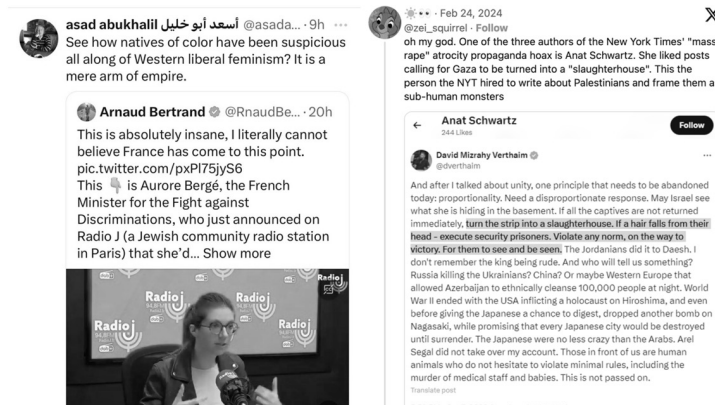


33

Social Media: 99% vs 1%

Western media networks discredited

Rainbow washing highlighted... imperialist feminism exposed



34

Social Media: 99% vs 1%

Western media regurgitating Israeli lies
40 beheaded babies, systematic rape, fetus killed with mother...

The Intercept

JOE BIDEN KEEPS REPEATING HIS FALSE CLAIM THAT HE SAW PICTURES OF BEHEADED BABIES

Many atrocities were committed during the Hamas-led attacks on October 7. Yet the president of the United States continues to repeat debunked falsehoods.

ei THE ELECTRONIC INTIFADA

Watch: Debunking Israel's "mass rape" propaganda

CNN World Watch Listen Live TV

Israeli official says government cannot confirm babies were beheaded in Hamas attack

35

War Turns into Genocide

Genocidal Israeli apartheid settler colonialism exposed

It is **not true** this rhetoric about **civilians** not being aware, **not involved**. It's absolutely **not true**.

Isaac Herzog
PRESIDENT OF ISRAEL

We will turn **Gaza** into a **deserted island**.

Benjamin Netanyahu
PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL

I am very puzzled by the **constant concern** which the world [...] is showing **for the Palestinian people** and is actually showing for these **horrible inhuman animals** [...].

Dan Gillerman
FORMER ISRAELI AMBASSADOR TO THE UN

The emphasis is on **damage and not on accuracy**.

Daniel Hagari
TOP COMMANDER

If the international **media is objective** and shows both sides, it **serves Hamas**.

Yair Lapid
FORMER PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL

The children of **Gaza** have brought this upon **themselves**.

Merav Ben-Ari
MEMBER OF THE KNESSET

We are **fighting human animals** and we are **acting accordingly**.

Yoav Gallant
MEMBER OF DEFENSE OF ISRAEL

The **only thing** that should **enter Gaza** as long as Hamas doesn't release the hostages it holds is **not a gram of humanitarian aid**, but hundreds of tons of **explosives from the Air Force**.

Itamar Ben-Gvir
MEMBER OF NATIONAL SECURITY OF ISRAEL

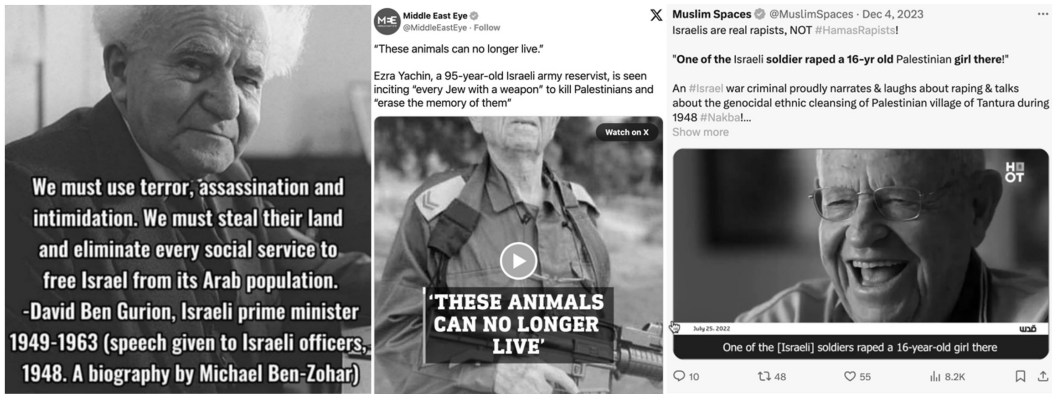
Human animals must be treated as such. You wanted hell, **you will get hell**.

Ghassan Alian
SALON GENERAL OF THE ISRAELI ARMY

36

War Turns into Genocide

World witnessed Israeli brutality and racism
firsthand on mobiles



37

War Turns into Genocide

World witnessed Israeli brutality and racism
firsthand on mobiles



38

War Turns into Genocide

World witnessed Israeli brutality and racism
firsthand on mobiles



39

War Turns into Genocide

World witnessed Israeli brutality and racism
firsthand on mobiles



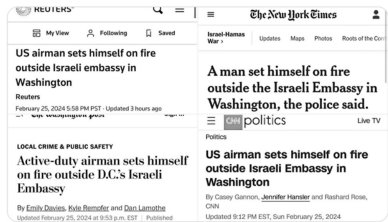
Khalissee @Khalissee

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MEDIA COVER UP ON AARON BUSHNELL
Four major news outlets had almost the exactly same headline for the self immolation of 25 year old Aaron Bushnell.

Not one of them mentioned the words 'Gaza' or 'Genocide,' as the reason for Aaron's protest, or 'Palestine,' his last words spoken.

The White House memo must have dropped quickly.



Osaid - #NotATarget @OsaidesserMD · Feb 28

These 2 Americans broke my heart. [👉](#) is [#Rachel_Corrie](#), an activist who was crushed to death by an Israeli bulldozer. [👉](#) is [#Aaron_Bushnell](#), who died after setting himself on fire near the Israeli embassy in DC calling the US admin to stop supporting the genocide in [#Gaza](#).



40

War Turns into Genocide

World learned about the **Palestinian plight** firsthand on mobiles

41

War Turns into Genocide

Israeli exploitation of Holocaust and false Antisemitism claims
laid bare



מיכל קוטלר-וונש | Michal Cotler-Wunsh @CotlerWunsh · 10h · 🇮🇱
85 yrs after Kristallnacht on Brandenburg Gate: #NeverAgainIsNow

10/7 massacre a reminder: Israel does not exist b/c Holocaust occurred, rather Holocaust could not have occurred had Israel existed. At very least, we would have defended ourselves.

"Responsibility arises from...
Show more



Proletariat2.0 @Proletariat2 · Feb 28
Zionism is Nazism

Nazi Holocaust vs Gaza Holocaust.

A comparison in photos 📷:

Mass graves



42

War Turns into Genocide

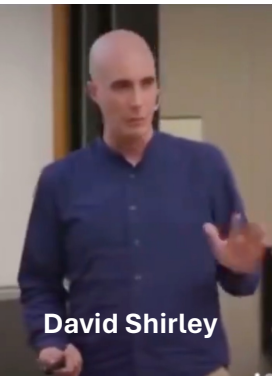
Zionist project lost world sympathy
Including among many Jewish communities

Israeli Peace Activist
Miko Peled
will talk about his new book
The General's Son
Journey of an Israeli in Palestine

*"There are few books on the
Israel/Palestine issue that seem
as hopeful to me as this one."*
—ALICE WALKER



THERE IS
JUSTIFICATION
FOR KILLING
BABIES,
IF IT IS CLEAR
THAT THEY
WILL GROW UP
TO HARM US



David Shirley

43

War Turns into Genocide

Palestinians as **indigenous** people reconfirmed

44

War Turns into Genocide

Israeli claims of victimhood & Palestinian image as terrorist
shattered

The Great
Narrative Shift
of 2023

~~Terrorists~~ ~~Country~~
Indigenous *Colonizer*

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War Turns into Genocide

Global support for Palestine liberation
from the river to the sea

The Great
Narrative Shift
of 2023

~~Terrorists~~ ~~Country~~
Indigenous *Colonizer*

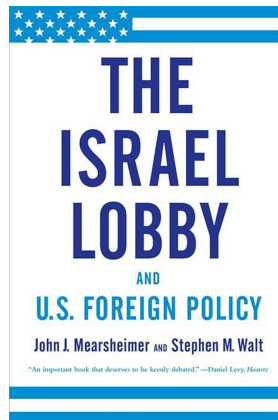
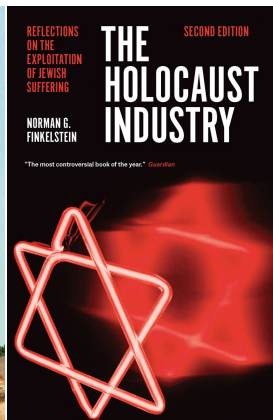
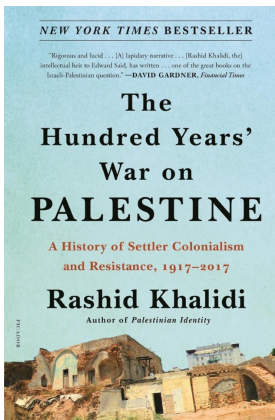
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Alternative News

Al Jazeera English
 Al Mayadeen English
 The Intercept
 Double Down News
 Mondoweiss
 ScheerPost
 The Electronic Intifada
 Breaking Points
 OCT 7 FactCheck

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Books



Media Literacy of the Oppressed: An Emancipatory Pedagogy for/with the Marginalized

Jad Melki

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Chapter 1 – Failures of Mainstream Media Literacy: A Case for an Emancipatory Media Literacy Framework	3
Chapter 2 – Media Literacy of Oppressed Identities: An Intersectional Feminist Approach for the Whole Society	19
Chapter 3 – Media Literacy of Terrorism and Populism: The Symbiotic Relationship between Media and Oppression	41
Chapter 4 – Media Literacy of Colonialism, War, and Genocide: The Clash of Narratives and the Crushing of Worlds	55
Chapter 5 – Media Literacy of Pandemics and Infodemics: Saving Society from the Plague of Fake News, Mis/Disinformation and Conspiracy Theories	115
Chapter 6 – Toward an Alliance of 21 st Century Intersectional Literacies	142
Epilogue – Marginal Issues, False Victimhood, and Performative Solidarity	147
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Documentaries



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Teaching Resources

Media and Palestine, Gretchen King, Lebanese American University
www.media-palestine.online

Palestine 101: Decolonize Palestine.
decolonizepalestine.com

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