



ISRAEL NEWS
A collection of the week's news from Israel
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee of
Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation

backing and that actions by the Houthis or others will not alter the strategic picture. Hamas now finds itself more isolated than ever, as its allies in the Middle East begin to realize that continuing this struggle is a lost cause.

Commentary...

Breaking the Paradigm in Gaza By Oded Ailam

Overnight Monday, the Israel Defense Forces launched a large-scale military operation in the Gaza Strip—a precise and determined strike that hit Hamas's leadership at the exact moment the organization believed it was beginning to recover and rebuild from the previous phase of fighting. The shock within Hamas is evident, as the successful elimination of senior figures in both its military and political wings in Gaza sends a clear and sharp message: Israel will not allow the organization to continue rebuilding its power and conducting negotiations from a position of superiority.

As a well-known Arabic proverb says: "If your enemy is in a hurry, slow him down. If he is slow, confuse him."

Hamas has applied precisely this strategy—endless, prolonged negotiations aimed at exhausting Israel and improving its own position. The terrorist organization understands that the hostages are its ultimate bargaining chip, which is why it believes that time is on its side.

In recent weeks, it has become clear to all that Hamas is not genuinely interested in reaching a final agreement for the return of all hostages. Instead, it has been using the negotiations as a tactic to strengthen its military and political stance. Hamas has added new demands that were never included in the original document presented by U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff, insisting on a prolonged ceasefire without making significant concessions, and pinned its hopes on internal pressure within Israel to force it into accepting Hamas's terms completely.

At the same time, Hamas has continued recruiting fighters, restoring its tunnel network, planting explosives and receiving indirect backing from the Arab League and Egypt—bodies that have not explicitly demanded that Hamas disarm or cease to exist as a political entity.

Israel has decided to break the paradigm by resuming military action. While this step does carry risks for the hostages, the alternative—giving Hamas more time to prepare and solidify its control—is far worse. Further delays could result in hostages dying in tunnels while the IDF is forced to fight a more fortified and emboldened enemy. Renewing the fighting is meant to exert real pressure, making Hamas leadership understand that it cannot continue to stall and dictate the rules of the game.

As Napoleon Bonaparte once said: "A sudden and painful strike is better than a hundred useless conversations."

Israel has chosen exactly this strategy—not to be dragged into endless talks that only benefit Hamas, but rather to apply calculated and powerful force to create a real change on the ground.

The analysts were wrong: Trump and the green light to Israel

Even before the renewal of fighting, many analysts in Israel predicted that the Trump administration would not allow Israel to use significant force in Gaza. They claimed that the president was only interested in "ending wars" and would not support a large-scale military operation. These assumptions turned out to be entirely false—anyone familiar with Trump's character, a tough New York real estate mogul, knew that in a critical moment he would not hesitate to back a forceful response.

Trump, dating back to the 1980s and 1990s, forcibly evicted tenants in Atlantic City and New York, sometimes using mafia-style tactics to advance his real estate projects. This is not to justify or praise his methods—but that's who he is. When he sees an interest at stake, he acts decisively. Right now, the American interest is to demonstrate control and support Israel against Hamas, Iran and Hezbollah.

Israel's move carries a clear message beyond the Gaza Strip. The fact that the Americans have given a bright "green light" to this operation signals to Hamas and its backers that they should not expect leniency from the United States. Hezbollah, which has refrained from escalating the northern front, understands that Israel has strong

Alongside military pressure, Israel must also act on the diplomatic front to further isolate Hamas. First and foremost, it should push for heavy American pressure on the Arab League and Egypt to make it clear to Hamas that holding its ground will lead to a complete cutoff of support and total isolation. The hasty invitation of a Hamas delegation to Cairo on Tuesday after the attack indicates that Israel's message has been received loud and clear.

The decision to renew fighting was made unanimously by both Israel's political and security leadership, underscoring its strategic importance. Now, the Israeli public must demonstrate unity and solidarity, avoiding divisive political discourse that could weaken the impact of the operation and strengthen Hamas's claims in the international arena.

Israel is not falling into Hamas's time trap and is not allowing it to dictate the rules of the game—it is breaking the paradigm, acting on its own timeline, and redefining the terms of engagement. There is reason to believe that this move will bring Hamas to the negotiating table with a newfound understanding that the rules have changed.

(Jerusalem Center for Security and Foreign Affairs Mar 19)

The Road to Normalization with the Arab World Goes Through Iran By Israel Kasnett

The second Trump administration has met with responses varying from enthusiasm to anxiety, depending on who you ask. In Israel, there is concern among some that issues important to Jerusalem might be less so to Washington; U.S. President Donald Trump has said he is focused on "America first" and ending wars.

Many Israelis would like to see Israel finally annex parts of Judea and Samaria with American support, but it is far more likely that Trump's main focus will be the expansion of the Abraham Accords. The more nations normalize relations with Israel, the more beneficial for America, as it reduces the chances of war in the Middle East, freeing Trump to focus on domestic issues.

According to Efraim Inbar, a senior researcher at the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security, the expansion of the Abraham Accords "is a Trump administration objective."

Trump's former Middle East envoy, Jason Greenblatt, confirmed this last December when he told delegates at Qatar's Doha Forum that "there's just no way that President Trump isn't going to be interested in trying to expand the Abraham Accords."

Among the possible candidates for normalization with Israel are Mauritania, Somalia, Niger, Azerbaijan and Indonesia—but the single most important country is Saudi Arabia.

For several months, Saudi Arabia has consistently and emphatically underscored that a ceasefire in Gaza is an indispensable prerequisite for initiating or advancing any meaningful discussions with the United States regarding normalization of relations with Israel. The Saudi leadership has repeatedly emphasized that without a cessation of hostilities in Gaza, no progress can be made on this front.

Furthermore, they have articulated a broader condition: Beyond just a ceasefire, there must be tangible and substantial steps forward in the pursuit of Palestinian statehood—however that may ultimately be defined—as a critical component of any potential normalization process. This insistence on both a halt to the conflict and a credible path toward a Palestinian state reflects Saudi Arabia's seemingly firm stance that these issues are non-negotiable foundations for engaging in any diplomatic momentum with the United States and Israel.

However, whether the Saudis will actually insist on these conditions to move toward normalization with Israel is debatable, and it is unclear whether their public statements differ from those they express in private.

Despite all the talk of pending normalization with other countries, according to Jonathan Schanzer, executive director at the Washington, D.C.-based Foundation for Defense of Democracies, "We may unfortunately be far off from new agreements, at least the

way things stand right now.”

“The war in Gaza is not yet over,” he said, “and it remains a serious wedge issue between Israel and its Arab friends.”

Schanzer also told JNS he believes that the Arab states will “harbor doubts” about normalization as long as the Iranian axis remains undefeated.

“What’s needed now is an end to the war and an end to the threats of Iran and its proxies. From there, the path is paved (albeit with many bumps and potholes) for a new Middle East,” he said.

The Iranian axis, including Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen, remains a formidable threat. While the Trump administration has ordered strikes against the Houthis, and while Hezbollah and Hamas have been weakened by Israel, it will take time before it is safe to declare all three proxies non-threats. Hezbollah still has aspirations to reconstitute. Hamas has yet to be defeated, and it is likely we will witness more fighting in Gaza to achieve this goal.

It is promising to note however that despite all that has occurred since Oct. 7, 2023, the Abraham Accords, formulated in 2020 during the first Trump administration, have held fast.

At the time, the Trump administration secured normalization agreements between Israel and four Arab countries—Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates.

Inbar warned that no concessions should be made to the Saudis in exchange for a normalization agreement, “particularly in the nuclear arena.”

He predicted that Indonesia, the largest Muslim country, could be next to normalize with Israel, and that “if there is a change in Dhaka, Bangladesh could be another option.”

At the moment, Israel is engaged in negotiations with Lebanon, and while the chances are still slim, it is possible a normalization agreement or even full diplomatic relations could emerge from the talks.

According to Inbar, Israel “should realize that another flag of a Muslim state in Tel Aviv is less important than the bilateral relations under the table.”

He suggested that Israel should try to bring more embassies, “or at least an economic office,” to Jerusalem.

“Trump moved the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem, and we should convince him that his gesture should be emulated by newcomers to the Abraham Accords,” said Inbar. (JNS Mar 18)

Don’t Reject Allies Who Oppose the Red-Green Anti-Semitic Alliance By Jonathan S. Tobin

At a moment in history when Jews are facing an unprecedented wave of post-Holocaust anti-Semitism, some of the leading lights of the Diaspora have other priorities. That’s the only conclusion to be drawn from the decision by a number of prominent figures and organizations to boycott a conference being sponsored by the government of Israel.

The event is an effort to convene an international response to the surge of Jew-hatred that has swept across the globe since the Hamas attacks in southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023. Those who have pulled out of the conference, organized by Israel’s Minister of Diaspora Affairs and Combating Anti-Semitism Amichai Chikli, include Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO and national director of the Anti-Defamation League; Felix Klein, Germany’s anti-Semitism czar; Ephraim Mirvis, chief rabbi of the United Kingdom; and French Jewish author Bernard-Henri Lévy.

Their reason?

They won’t appear at the same event as members of what they term Europe’s “far-right” political parties such as France’s Rassemblement National, Hungary’s Fidesz Party or Spain’s Vox Party. Chikli’s critics feel that these parties are tainted by their association with the continent’s dark history of fascism and the Holocaust. The fact that they have all reconstituted themselves in recent years to deal with contemporary challenges and aligned themselves with Israel and against anti-Semitism is meaningless to them.

As much as these liberal and left-wing Jews are attacking Chikli for granting legitimacy to the new European right, their choice has little or nothing to do with the fight against anti-Semitism that is currently happening. Instead, it is just a reflection of how much of the traditional leadership of Jewish communities outside of Israel has prioritized partisan politics in their respective countries when they

should be laser-focused on the struggle against Jew-hatred going on in the streets and on college campuses of the Diaspora.

It’s easy to see how the generation that came of age in the mid-20th century might instinctively draw back from conservatives, whether in the United States or Europe. Anti-Semitism on the left was far from unknown in that era, as even a cursory review of the actions of Joseph Stalin—the head of the totalitarian Soviet Union—reveals. But the primary threat to Jews then and in the previous century was from the right. It was the fascist right that perpetrated the Holocaust.

Even looking beyond the history of the events from 1933 to 1945 in Europe, throughout the Diaspora, it was invariably the political parties on the right that scapegoated or openly attacked Jews. Conservatives generally were at best neutral in this struggle while religious and right-leaning nationalist parties in Europe were almost always the ones who marginalized Jews or collaborated with the Nazis during the Shoah. Indeed, even in the United States, hostility to Jewish citizens was more likely to be found among religious believers than skeptics or liberals. Political liberals were far more likely to be among the defenders of Jewish rights than their political opponents.

We must honor the memory of those times, and never forget what led to the Holocaust and who it was that was responsible for the murder of 6 million Jews. But it is incumbent on those now alive to understand that the assumptions about anti-Semitism that were reasonable in the past no longer necessarily apply to the problems of the present.

The primary challenge to contemporary Jewish life comes from a different direction.

Anti-Semitism still exists on the right. The rise of a “woke right” in the United States in which a minority of conservative figures like media types Tucker Carlson and Candace Owens, who either platform Jew-haters and Holocaust deniers or engage in it themselves, is deeply troubling.

Still, in 2025, the parties and leaders who are most likely to be ardent defenders of Israel and opposed to anti-Semitism in their own countries are on the right.

President Donald Trump is the best example of this trend.

He has not only been the most pro-Israel president since the modern-day Jewish state was born in 1948. Trump has also done more to combat anti-Semitism on college campuses than any of his predecessors. The war he is waging on institutions of higher learning that enabled or tolerated the hatred of Jews is essential to that struggle. The administration’s efforts to rid the woke catechism of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and other toxic leftist ideologies not just from higher education but other sectors of society has the potential to do a great deal to ensure the safety of American Jews. And it was his opponents who have largely embraced the doctrines of the “progressives” that are most associated with anti-Semitism today.

But to many political liberals, especially within the Jewish community, Trump remains anathema. That’s not only because of his policies they might oppose but because they still assume that a conservative populist must be an antisemite, no matter what he says or does.

That might have been true in the 1930s or ’40s. But not these days, when the sector of the population is most likely to be antisemitic is on the political left or members of mainline liberal Protestant denominations.

That’s the same reason that many liberal Jews assume that evangelical and conservative Christians have to be hostile to them or Israel, even though the vast majority are not only pointedly philo-Semitic but the most ardent American friends Israel has.

And that’s also why the two political parties in the United States have essentially exchanged identities when it comes to attitudes toward Israel and the Jews. Where once the Republicans were at best divided in their stance even before the advent of Trump, they have since become a virtual lockstep pro-Israel party, eager to display friendship to Jews. The Democrats have gone in the opposite direction as progressives who embrace intersectional and woke ideology have split the party on Israel and rendered it—as the stances of former President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris showed—as, at best, neutral on the post-Oct. 7 surge of anti-Semitism.

Indeed, part of the problem is that Diaspora Jewish liberals are equally as disdainful of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and

fellow Likud politicians like Chikli as they are of Trump since the two governments are seen as political allies.

The situation in Europe is more complicated, but the same unwillingness to live in the present applies.

Anti-Semitism has always existed in the United States, though it was not a major political issue or official state policy. In Europe, attitudes toward Jews were a defining issue throughout the continent. Most right-wing parties can trace their origins to factions that were part of their nations' dark past with respect to the treatment of Jews or the Holocaust.

People and political parties, however, do change.

The reasons for this may not be because they have all suddenly fallen in love with the Jews. The primary factor that caused people to change their minds is that in the 21st century, they understand that the threat to their nations isn't coming from the Jews. It's from the red-green alliance of Marxists and Islamists.

In the past, they may have seen Jews as outsiders who didn't fit into a blood and soil version of national identity. But today, they rightly understand that the mass migration of Muslims from the Middle East and North Africa is fundamentally altering the character of many European nations for the worse. That is combined with neo-Marxist efforts to discard the traditions of Western civilization as irredeemably racist, much like the left's war on America via critical race theory and The New York Times' "1619 Project." This unlikely alliance of leftists and Islamists is producing a changing political landscape that could doom their national traditions and culture in places like Britain, France, Sweden and other countries. It's also making them unsafe for Jews.

Recognizing this fact makes them realists as opposed to racists or xenophobes. And part of that realism is knowing that Jews and the State of Israel are their natural allies in an existential struggle for the future of Europe and the West.

The evolution of these parties is a long process. And some, particularly like those in Germany and Austria, haven't completed that journey. Despite its electoral success, the German AfD Party remains tainted by the antisemitic attitude of some of its candidates for parliament and their nostalgia for the Nazi era. That's also true of Austria's Freedom Party.

That's why they weren't invited to the Jerusalem conference.

If Chikli had chosen to invite them, then the boycotters would have had a leg to stand on. Still, an argument can be made that encouraging people like AfD leader Alice Weidel, who has personally opposed anti-Semitism and supports Israel, would do more to combat anti-Semitism in Germany than shunning her.

Chikli wisely chose not to do so, but that didn't matter to Diaspora liberals.

Other right-wing European parties have conclusively rejected their antisemitic past, as France's RN has done, even though that obligated its leader, Marie Le Pen, to eject her late father from the party. Her putative successor, Jordan Bardella, who may be its candidate to lead the country at the next presidential election, has no such associations. Outspoken in opposing Jew-hatred and supporting Israel, he will be at the anti-Semitism conference. But he is just as unacceptable to many liberal Jews as open antisemites.

The same is true for their attitudes toward Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who is an ardent friend of Israel and his country's Jewish community. Yet left-wingers not only routinely falsely accuse him of authoritarianism but also of being associated with anti-Semitism, even though Jews in Budapest are far safer than they are in London, Paris, Amsterdam or Stockholm—something that even his domestic political opponents will concede.

Those Jews who won't associate with them or members of their parties often identify with the parties of the European left or center. Some, like Levy, a principled supporter of Israel but a man of the left, still cling to the idea that the right is not kosher.

He fails to see that it is the political left, such as the La France Insoumise Party (LFI), led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, that is the current home of French anti-Semitism—and the clear and present danger to their country and its Jewish population. LFI combined with the supporters of French President Emmanuel Macron to defeat RN in parliamentary elections earlier this year, despite the right-wingers getting the most votes.

Some argue that the new European right are not reliable allies or are squeamish about opposition to mass immigration, even when it transforms some countries into hostile environments for Jews.

This makes no sense. That's especially true for liberal Jews who can now see that their former allies have abandoned them in the wake of Oct. 7, and now, as many Democrats do, share or tolerate the views of the antisemitic intersectional left.

American Jewish liberals may see their domestic concerns, such as support for legal abortion, as more important than Trump's backing of Israel and opposition to woke anti-Semitism. Their European counterparts, who face an even more virulent and popular strain of Jew-hatred, are even more misguided.

But in the wake of the atrocities done by Hamas and Palestinians in Gaza—and the way that the worst mass slaughter of Jews since the Holocaust encouraged and empowered antisemites everywhere—such attitudes are a luxury that Jews on either continent can no longer afford.

Former Soviet prisoner of Zion and Israeli political leader Natan Sharansky had it right when he posted on Facebook that he would attend the conference:

"For many years I've been stubborn and continue to insist even today that it's important that the fight against anti-Semitism will include all political camps—from left to right."

By standing aloof from Chikli and the anti-Semitism conference, people like Greenblatt are gratifying their fellow political liberals, as well as those who are opposed to the Israeli government, for reasons that have nothing to do with this issue. The same is true of European Jews who prefer to hold onto the political alliances of the past that no longer serve their community's interests. But they have a responsibility to unite with all people—no matter where they stand on the political spectrum or their nation's past—who are willing to support the Jews in a moment of unique peril. By shirking that duty in order, they are showing us what they consider to be most important, and it isn't the safety of the Jewish people. (JNS Mar 20)

Something has Changed ... By Sarah N. Stern

Sitting here in Israel, I ask myself if this is the same Middle East it was before Oct. 7, 2023. Yes, the war that was waged on Israel on seven fronts continues into its 17th month, and at least 59 hostages are still not home with many no longer alive.

However, something else has changed.

Although still a threat, Hezbollah has been severely neutered. The Israeli Air Force sent a squadron of F-151 planes on Sept. 27, dropping more than 80 bombs. The body of Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's commander-in-chief, was found lying in the rubble the next day. Also eliminated by the Israeli forces were Ali Karaki, commander of Hezbollah's southern front, and Abbas Niforushan, deputy commander of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

The real display of Israel's power came a few weeks earlier on Sept. 17-18 as part of the Israeli operation of blowing up thousands of Hezbollah-owned beepers and pagers. This secret maneuver eliminated Ibrahim Aqil, the commander-in-chief of Hezbollah's unique elite unit, the Radwan Force.

The Israel Defense Forces have entered and removed dozens of meters of underground tunnels in Southern Lebanon—many lying under children's bedrooms, replete with RPGs, Kalashnikovs, missile launchers, grenades and explosives.

There is still a threat from Hezbollah, but they are now a mere shadow of the fighting force they once were.

Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad remain active in the Gaza Strip. During the last year and a half, despite their enormous losses, Hamas has still recruited between 12,000 and 23,000 new fighters. Before the Hamas-led terrorist attacks in Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas had approximately 30,000 fighters, but the IDF claims that approximately one-third had been eliminated.

That doesn't mean the fighting in Gaza is even remotely over.

The Fatah Party, otherwise known as the Palestinian Authority, remains a huge problem.

According to Itamar Marcus, founder and president of Palestinian Media Watch, while the United States and many other countries agree that the Hamas terror organization must be removed, there is disagreement as to who should lead after the end of the war. Mahmoud Abbas, with the backing of some European countries, has demanded that the administration be given to the P.A./Fatah, while the security control be given to the Palestinian Authority Security Forces (PASF).

But as Itamar explains, "Not only has the PASF failed to play an

active role in its task of fighting terrorism, it plays an active role in Palestinian terrorism against Israelis. Senior officers in the PASF simultaneously have senior roles in the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, an internationally designed terror organization. Moreover, when these P.A. and Fatah terrorists have been killed, they have been honored by the P.A. with military funerals. Both the P.A. and Fatah openly and proudly showcase the terror activities of the PASF members, glorifying their conflicting roles with praise."

As P.A. leader Mahmoud Abbas has said: "By day, (the P.A.) Security Forces, by night self-sacrificing fighters."

In a publication by Marcus, "Terrorists in Uniform" he outlines how scores of members of Fatah and the P.A. Security Forces work simultaneously for the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade. Indeed, according to the Spokesman for the PASF, "The highest number of martyrs and prisoners is from the Security Forces members."

We also see weapons smuggled into Judea and Samaria (more commonly known as the "West Bank") from Iran and through Jordan.

Looking north, an unstable Syria is being led by Abu Mohammad al-Julani (Ahmad al-Sharaa), a man who has recently changed his army fatigues of Al-Qaeda into a suit and a tie. An emerging civil war is starting between the Alawites (an Arab ethno-religious group that lives primarily in the Levant) and the jihadists. Clashes have also erupted between Lebanese tribal groups and the Syrian Armed Forces in the Bakaa Valley. And, of course, are concerns related to the neighboring Kurds.

This weekend, the United States launched massive attacks against the Iranian backed Houthis in Sanaa, the capital of Yemen. The Houthis have been launching attacks against American and Israeli ships in the Red Sea for more than a year, and have, mostly unsuccessfully, launched drones against Israeli cities. They are vowing to continue their attacks.

And the Israelis are bracing for a counterattack on their civilian infrastructure.

Looking to the east, the looming threat of an Iranian nuclear bomb remains. Iran has thousands of gas centrifuges spinning. According to the International Atomic Energy Administration (IAEA), the Islamic Republic already possesses enough highly enriched uranium for six nuclear bombs. On Oct. 26, the Israeli Air Force carried out an airstrike on Iran's Parchin nuclear facility, destroying sophisticated equipment used to make explosives around their uranium enrichment, rendering it very difficult to replace and rebuild.

What, therefore, has changed?

Sitting around a table with a group of young soldiers and their families, it seems that the illusions of their parents, of Oslo in the 1990s, of the disengagement from the Gaza Strip in 2005 and of real peace with their neighbors have been extinguished. Wishful thinking, they say, is not a policy.

Despite tremendous costs on the individual level, they know that Israel is here to stay.

There is a feeling of resolution among the people. They recognize in their core that this is their land—the only land they have. They say that is worth fighting for—and worth making the ultimate sacrifice for. (JNS Mar 17)

Breaking 'Sumud': Palestinian Society Must Free Itself of This Fantasy By Avraham Russell Shalev

US President Donald Trump's plan to allow Gazans to emigrate from the war-torn enclave has provoked fierce rejection from the Palestinians and the Arab countries.

Egypt recently proposed its postwar plan, according to which Hamas would cede power to an interim body until a reconstituted Palestinian Authority can take control of Gaza.

Despite Arab and international opposition, the United States has reiterated its commitment to President Trump's emigration plan. The Palestinians and Arab states reject the plan because they understand it means a resounding defeat for the Palestinian national movement. Ironically, only such a defeat can pave the way to peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is driven by Palestinian irredentism – the belief in reclaiming lost land at any cost. The Palestinian national movement is not merely about statehood but the total reversal of 1948, as reflected in Hamas's rhetoric and actions.

The popular chant calls for the liberation of Palestine "from the river to the sea." There is a universal consensus among Palestinian

groups, ranging from secular to Islamist, that Jewish sovereignty is inherently illegitimate and will ultimately end in "Palestine's liberation."

This mythology of "return" and "liberation" serves as the ideological fuel for the century-long Palestinian war against Zionism and the State of Israel. During the October 7 attacks, Hamas terrorists referred to Israeli border towns as "settlements" and their residents as "settlers," framing their actions as a step toward reversing the Nakba.

It is no surprise that most of the perpetrators of the October 7 massacre were graduates of UNRWA's education system, which emphasizes the ultimate "right of return" to the villages from which Gazans' grandparents and great-grandparents left during the 1948 war.

The *sumud* (steadfastness) ideology plays a key role in this struggle. Hamas's 1988 Charter declared, "The land of Palestine is an Islamic Waqf consecrated for future Muslim generations until Judgment Day," prohibiting any territorial compromise. The 2017 revision maintained that "Palestine is a land seized by a racist, colonial Zionist project."

Mahmoud Darwish, the revered Palestinian poet, captured this sentiment in "Those Who Pass Between Fleeting Words," a poem calling for Jews to "leave our country" – a vision of total Palestinian sovereignty from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

In the Palestinian imagination, Jews are settlers who merely "pass" through occupied Palestine, as opposed to the indigenous Palestinians who are deeply rooted in the land. As Darwish so vividly wrote: "O those who pass between fleeting words Carry your names, and be gone [...] So leave our country Our land, our sea Our wheat, our salt, our wounds Everything, and leave The memories of memory O those who pass between fleeting words!"

Even amid Gaza's destruction, Hamas celebrated displaced civilians' "return" to northern Gaza as a nationalist victory. One Gazan stated, "It's the joy of return... We had thought we wouldn't return, like our ancestors." Hamas sustains these myths to keep Palestinians committed to an endless war against Israel.

Despite *sumud*'s propagation by Palestinian nationalists, the facts show that Gazans overwhelmingly yearn to escape Hamas' failed and repressive rule. According to a survey carried out before the outbreak of the war by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, 44% of Gazan youth between 18-29 were considering emigrating from the Strip. Nearly a third (31%) of the total population considered emigration.

While there is no official data, it is estimated that 250,000 people have left Gaza since Hamas took control in 2007. By allowing those who reject Hamas's rule to go, Israel and the international community can expose *sumud* as an artificial construct that only serves Palestinian revanchism.

Recently revealed documents captured from Hamas's Khan Yunis Brigade show that Hamas considers emigration a serious threat to its rule. The terror group has carried out an ideological campaign warning young people against emigrating, claiming that this would be a betrayal of Islamic values and the Palestinian cause.

In his widely acclaimed book *Embracing Defeat*, historian John W. Dower demonstrates how Japan's utter defeat in World War II wholly discredited Japanese militarism and fascism. Japan's unconditional surrender to the Allies in 1945 shattered the myth of military invincibility and undermined the legitimacy of Japanese expansionism.

The destructiveness of the Allied response, culminating in the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, left Japanese society devastated. The repudiation of Japanese militarism was key to rebuilding Japan and embracing pacifist and democratic values.

Currently, the international community colludes with Hamas to keep Palestinians trapped in Gaza. However, the fact of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians choosing to abandon Gaza would fatally undermine *sumud* and Palestinian nationalism. Hamas launched the current war to advance its vision of a Palestine liberated from the Jewish presence – Trump's plan would force the Palestinians to pay a steep price for their military adventure.

The loss of land and resources that it would entail might free Palestinian society from its deadly fantasy of Israel's destruction. By embracing defeat, Palestinian society might rebuild itself along peaceful lines and accommodate itself to Israel's existence. For the sake of peace, Israel and the international community must embrace Trump's plan for Gaza. (Jerusalem Post Mar 9)