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7 October and the Alt-Media: a Critical Examination



JOHN WARE

This report by John Ware in Fathom Journal on atrocity denial after 7 October is an essential record for anyone who cares about truth and facts in media reporting: meticulous and scrupulous in its assessment of evidence and sources. It is also utterly heartbreakingly harrowing. **Dave Rich**, author of *Everyday Hate: How antisemitism is built into our world & how you can change it*

Such an important piece of work. **Simon Sebag Montefiore**, historian, author of *Jerusalem: The Biography*

This deserves to be read. It will take you a while, but if you're still interested in meticulous, fact-based reporting, as I hope you are, you definitely won't regard it as time wasted. **Robin Lustig**, Journalist and broadcaster, former BBC presenter, author of *Is Anything Happening?*

A forensic exposé of alternative media and its fanatical opposition to a Jewish state in the Middle East. Essential reading for anyone seeking to unmask the odious denialism that emerged after 7 October and understand the sinister reasons behind it. **Richard Ferrer**, editor of *The Jewish News*

John Ware proves that my memory of a journalism that had important stories to tell the whole country, and which constructed them around fixed points of fact, is not vain nostalgia. His BBC Panorama documentary about Jeremy Corbyn and antisemitism was excellent. He was then forced to defend it against endless, obsessive, often antisemitic attacks, lawsuits and libels. In *7 October and the Alt-Media: A Critical Examination*, John Ware sets out just some of the evidence that is in his reporter's notebook. **David Hirsh**, author of *Contemporary Left Antisemitism*

This article shreds to pieces atrocity denialism. John Ware has done an incredible job collating and detailing it in a dispassionate, factual, evidenced manner. This should be a multiple award-winning piece. It is a remarkable, brave and searing piece of the very finest journalism. **Andrew Fox**, research fellow at the Henry Jackson Society, specialising in the Middle East, Defence, and Disinformation. Served in the Parachute Regiment; three tours of Afghanistan (including one with US Special Forces), as well as the Middle East, Bosnia and Northern Ireland.

Hugely important. The author is one of Britain's foremost investigative journalists. This report exposes media outlets regarded by far too many as reliable, as effectively propaganda channels for Hamas. The result, especially for the attitudes of British Muslims, is disastrous. **Paul Gross**, Senior Fellow at the Menachem Begin Heritage Center in Jerusalem

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For Jews everywhere – not just Israelis – the denial that Hamas committed atrocities on 7 October has a familiar historical ring. Yet it is a fact that Hamas, most Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, and supporters around the world have insisted unarmed Israelis were not massacred at the Nova music festival, nor were women and men raped.

Direct to camera, one Hamas Politburo member after another has flatly denied that the Qassam Brigades did any such things. Also direct to camera was the evidence that they did commit murder, often sadistically, their violence immortalised by Hamas's own body cams which they proudly broadcast for propaganda purposes.

Outright 'Atrocity Denialism' in the face of irrefutable facts is the latest civilisational clash between those struggling to maintain the norms of society – and a growing constituency who seem beyond reason.

Polling shows that less than 10 per cent of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza accept Hamas committed atrocities. Amongst British Muslims, that figure rises to only 24 per cent. A survey of post 7 October sermons by 80 Imams across England shows overwhelming support for Palestinian 'Resistance', many laced with antisemitic references. Prominent UK Islamist activists have insisted there was no murder or rape whatsoever; many of Britain's best-known artists belong to an organisation that has demanded cinemas not show filmed evidence of Hamas's murderous exploits on the spurious basis that the documentary

makers have somehow been in cahoots with the Israeli government.

This civilisational clash could not be more fundamental because it is about basic humanity, facts, evidence and decency, irrespective of what one may think about how Israel has been conducting the war in Gaza.

The mainstream media has broadly given credence to Israeli claims that Hamas committed widespread sexual abuse on 7 October.

Yet the mainstream media has been losing the trust of British Muslims. A majority now consider the BBC to be pro-Israel. Some of that vacuum is being filled by online alternative media outlets who typically challenge narratives they say the mainstream media don't.

In 2019, the Community Security Trust showed how UK based alt-media accounts and networks of Labour-supporting Twitter accounts promoted, endorsed and spread the idea that allegations of antisemitism against Jeremy Corbyn's Labour party were fake news. Now five US based alt-media outlets have been aggressively trying to show that allegations of widespread rape by Hamas and other armed groups are also fake.

Evidence of sexual violence is typically elusive, especially in the murder and mayhem of a violent conflict and can take months or even years to emerge. It leaves few forensic traces, and we rarely hear from its victims because murder often follows rape. For its

few survivors, trauma and stigma can trap them in silence for years, sometimes forever. And on 7 October there was murder and mayhem.

Nonetheless, the five US based alt-media outlets (one with UK-based associate editors) claim to have subjected Israeli allegations of widespread sexual violence to careful examination.

They've concluded that by the Spring, allegations of widespread sexual violence had begun to 'unravel.' They argue that Israel conspired to demonise Palestinians by portraying them as savage sexual predators, incapable of controlling themselves around Israeli women for the pre-eminent purpose of justifying "genocide" against Palestinians.

Their journalism has not been without influence.

A major target has been the mainstream media (including the BBC) for accepting 'Zionist propaganda', in particular the *New York Times* for an expose last December claiming to have uncovered a pattern of rape, mutilation and extreme brutality against Israeli women.

Fifty-nine 'professors of journalism and scholars of news media' at colleges and universities across America, took exception to the *Times*' investigation. They demanded an independent investigation by 'journalism experts' into the 'entire process that led up to its publication.'

Their case replicated in large part the alt-media's critique that the *Times*' expose had provided the Israeli government with a new

excuse to 'fuel the fire' of 'plausible' genocide. In fact, despite some errors, much of what the *Times* reported has subsequently been echoed in two UN reports.

The US-based alt-media's conclusions about sexual violence on 7 October also influenced those of a major documentary broadcast in March by Al Jazeera TV's English language channel. It too concluded that allegations of widespread and systematic rape were false. The programme's UK producer says he 'relied heavily' on the work of five US based alt-media outlets.

In this eBook, I also examine forensically the allegations of sexual violence on 7 October. I argue that in their attempt to persuade the public and politicians that there was little or no sexual violence on that day, the alt-media has:

1. Selected facts that bolster their animus against Zionism at the expense of facts that do not.
2. Shown a determination to undermine every new piece of evidence that indicates sexual violence was prevalent, in particular by:
 - Casting doubt on claims that hostages have been raped in captivity – whereas the evidence shows convincingly that some have been subjected to sexual violence.
 - Suggesting the reason no rape survivors have come forward is because there was no rape – whereas ten survivors of rape and gang rape (including a young girl) are now reported to be undergoing

therapy for their ordeal.

- Claiming there are only a handful of witnesses to rapes – whereas there are at least nine who have come forward to say they saw rape or heard from their hideouts women being attacked in a way that sounded like sexual assault; a further six witnesses are reported to have come forward to an Israeli mental health institution.
- Discrediting almost every witness who has come forward by claiming their evidence has been inconsistent – whereas, on closer examination, these alleged inconsistencies either don't exist, or are minor.
- Endeavouring to show that two UN reports demonstrate an absence of evidence of sexual violence – whereas both reports (conducted independently of each other) indicate the opposite and

that sexual violence including rape and gang rape happened in multiple locations.

In short, the evidential picture that's emerged to date in Israel has followed a familiar course from previous violent conflicts where sexual violence was present. Instead of the picture unravelling, as the alt-media insists, the opposite appears to have materialised: it shows that a pattern of sexual violence was inflicted on women and men over a wide area and in many places.

As the general election demonstrated, the febrile politics of the Israel-Palestine conflict are now mainstream in British politics. Four independent candidates have been returned to Parliament on a 'Gaza' ticket. The 'alt-media' is likely to play an increasingly influential role in how this divisive conflict plays out in Britain and elsewhere.

(Warning: the following contains descriptions of violence, including sexual violence.)

INTRODUCTION

Last May, London's oldest cinema, the 112-year-old 'Phoenix' in East Finchley, became the target of a chillingly doctrinaire protest by Palestinian supporters.

The cinema was due to host a private screening of an Israeli documentary called '*Supernova – The Music Festival Massacre*'[\[1\]](#)

The documentary is mostly footage from Hamas' own cameramen and GoPros, CCTV footage, dash cams and mobile phones of survivors of the Nova music festival-goers on 7 October. It succeeds in a way that no movie ever could by conveying in real time the paralysing terror of confronting death minute by minute in the face of marauding gunmen firing automatic weapons at anyone that moved and rocket propelled grenades at cars that tried to escape.

The Israeli director Duki Dror says the footage is so horrific that 'you have to say: "Humanity – please watch."' [\[2\]](#) But pro-Palestinian activists including some of the UK's best-known artists didn't want anyone to watch. They demanded that any cinema planning to show the documentary boycott it.

Wanting to ban a documentary that exposes the evils of Hamas – with footage shot by Hamas itself – takes some explaining, you might think. But not to the protesters. 'Say no to art washing' [\[3\]](#) howled their red paint graffiti defacing the cinema's iconic art deco frontage.

It was left to Artists for Palestine UK (APUK) – whose 2000 plus members include film

directors Mike Leigh and Ken Loach [\[4\]](#) – to explain the boycott rationale: the documentary had been 'co-sponsored by the Israeli government.' [\[5\]](#)

Supporting APUK was a group called 'Cultural Workers Against Genocide' [\[6\]](#) – the 'genocide' against Palestinians that is, not the one highlighted in the documentary.

Equally surreal is the notion that the documentary has in some way been in cahoots with the Israeli government.

It was one of twenty two independently produced Israeli documentaries, dramas, and comedies exhibited at an annual UK-Israeli film festival called Seret [\[7\]](#) which is a UK registered charity for the 'advancement of education of the public arts, in particular Israeli film and television in the UK.' [\[8\]](#) 99 per cent of the cost of running the festival is raised by Seret from donations and crowdfunding. [\[9\]](#) Israel's London embassy provides a token one per cent contribution, [\[10\]](#) and the festival's annual launch has been attended by embassy representatives [\[11\]](#) – just as embassies of other countries routinely support festivals promoting their nation's arts and culture.

That's the extent of the 'co-sponsorship' by the Israeli state which has had no editorial control over any of the programmes exhibited at Seret. As the festival's co-founder Odelia Haroush explains, it's 'not about admiring Israel. It's just about showing the cultural and social diversities within Israeli society through film.' [\[12\]](#) In any case, most Israeli film makers are on the Left, contemptuous of

the Netanyahu government. The Israeli media generally is famously fiercely independent and critical of Israeli governments and institutions.

Yet to APUK these tenuous connections to the Israeli state were sufficient to accuse the Phoenix cinema of colluding in a 'strategy by the Israeli state to "whitewash and cover up its crimes against the Palestinian people"'^[13] Or, put another way, by exposing the crimes of Hamas, the Phoenix had colluded in using art to whitewash the crimes of the Israeli government.

So strongly did Leigh and Loach feel about this that they resigned as patrons of the Phoenix cinema. 'My resignation shows what

I think of their decision,' said Loach. 'It is simply unacceptable'^[14]

Their resignation also shows something else – the moral confusion and decadence that's increasingly disorientated the hard Left. How else to explain the absence of empathy, at least in public, for Israelis hunted down in their hundreds like prey? For those exhibiting indifference to the suffering of only one side in this conflict but not the other, the blood must run pretty cold.

Beneath the moral basement to which Messrs Loach and Leigh et al have sunk, however, lies an even darker recess filled by those who deny Hamas committed any atrocities at all.

1. ATROCITY DENIALISM

Dr Azzam Tamimi and Dr Anas Altikriti

Amongst UK based Palestinians who insist Hamas did not massacre 364 music festival goers on 7 October are two prominent London based academics. One is Dr Azzam Tamimi who is also chairman and editor in chief of a Muslim Brotherhood aligned TV station broadcasting daily to the Arab diaspora from its London studios. Al Hiwar TV often hosts supporters and members of Hamas, offspring of the Palestinian branch of the Brotherhood. Mohamed Sawalha, a one-time commander of Hamas military operations on the West Bank, makes regular appearances. As a fugitive from Israel, he was granted asylum here and has lived in London since the 1990s from where he has travelled abroad as a reported representative of Hamas's politburo.[\[15\]](#)

On 27 October Tamimi said: 'Hamas did not target a single (Israeli) civilian.' [\[16\]](#) Gesticulating with his hand for emphasis, he looked as if he really meant it.

He spoke those words despite the airwaves having been dominated for three weeks with visual evidence of one of the worst acts of international terrorism on record: clips of young people being mown down by automatic fire, documents found on the bodies of Hamas 'fighters' to 'kill as many people as possible' and 'capture hostages',[\[17\]](#) and the triumphant immortalising of Hamas deeds on Telegram by Hamas itself. 'Time for photographs,' posted one gunman, snapping a shot of blood running down

the street from a corpse.[\[18\]](#) The facts are that Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups attacked distinct civilian targets in 24 locations.[\[19\]](#)

I think we can be confident Dr Tamimi would not have missed at least some of this evidence. As Editor in Chief of Al Hiwar TV, and a long-time vocal supporter of Hamas, it's not just his job to keep abreast of events in Israel and Gaza; promoting Hamas as a moral exemplar of 'resistance' has been his life's mission. 'Today we are all Hamas! Today we are all Hamas! Today we are all Hamas!' he implored the crowd at a London rally in 2009. [\[20\]](#)

The same goes for his fellow broadcaster Dr Anas Altikriti, also a passionate advocate of 'resistance'[\[21\]](#) by Hamas who in 2012 posted a smiling photograph of himself with Hamas's then prime minister Ismail Haniyeh.[\[22\]](#) Referring on X to the 'allegation' that Hamas had committed the 'mass slaughter of Israeli citizens on the 7th of October' he posted: 'That too was a lie...'[\[23\]](#)

You might especially puzzle at Altikriti's outburst when you discover that he is Chief Executive of an outfit called the Cordoba Foundation whose stated aim is to 'provide a strong voice of tolerance and reason.' [\[24\]](#)

You might also puzzle at Tamimi's relationship to reality when he told a South London Mosque last November that for Hamas to commit atrocities was unthinkable. 'See, Hamas (is) a Muslim movement' he soothed.

‘They train their members on Islamic values before they train them on resistance tactics. And they are told that in warfare in Islam, you don’t ever harm non-combatants. It’s *haram*, you couldn’t do this.’^[25]

He had this advice for his fellow Muslims when confronted with questions over the Israel-Palestine conflict: ‘Very simple. Just tell the truth.’^[26]

Is there anything, I wonder, to be gained by seeking to reason with people apparently incapable of being influenced by the facts when the facts are in front of them? To paraphrase the 18th century satirist Jonathan Swift, is there any point in trying to reason a man out of a thing he was never reasoned into in the first place?

In Tamimi’s case, probably not.

‘We don’t need to invent anything,’ he told his audience. ‘If the truth is on your side, the truth is your weapon. The Zionists, on the other hand, need to lie and they need to lie constantly, continuously, non-stop.’^[27]

Unlike Dr Tamimi of course, who in a recent seminar ‘Understanding Hamas and why that matters’ maintained that it was the IDF who ‘started shooting people, especially those coming out of the dance festival.’ He’s even convinced that ‘most of the people shot on that day actually were shot by (*Israeli*) helicopter gunships’^[28] as if to emphasise the IDF are so trigger happy with heavy weapons they don’t much care who they kill.

This is fake news. At least eight helicopter gunships did fly multiple sorties on 7 October, but a UN inquiry says it has been unable to

confirm allegations that they ‘shot at civilians or civilian cars including in the area of the festival.’^[29] There is evidence that in the frantic chaos of the day,^[30] a woman from Kibbutz Nir Oz was killed by helicopter fire targeting her abductors taking her to Gaza. Al Jazeera has also reported that a number of Israelis taken hostage may have been killed by helicopter fire targeting Hamas and others returning to Gaza.^[31] However, reliable sources^[32] say it was a fraction of the overall death toll which *Al Jazeera* has also acknowledged.^[33]

One source of the falsehood that the IDF killed ‘most’ Israelis who died at the supernova music festival was a 14 second clip of footage posted on X on 9 November from an IDF Apache attack helicopter purporting to show it firing at people as they fled on 7 October.^[34] The clip went viral and was watched 28.2 million times. In fact, the clip had been released by the IDF showing the Apache firing at Hamas fighters in northern Gaza not on 7 October, but a day later, on 8 October.^[35] An analysis by the French TV network France 24 geolocated the footage 10 kms from the music festival site.^[36]

The international NGO Human Rights Watch also says evidence collected by them ‘indicates that only relatively few civilians died during fighting between Israeli armed forces and Palestinian armed groups.’ HRW found no evidence to support the claim that most deaths were caused by ‘heavy weapons only used by Israeli forces and not by Palestinian armed groups.’^[37]

Messrs. Tamimi, 69, and Altikriti, 55, are public figures, both now British nationals with a combined following (including AlHiwar TV) of over 400,000 on X but neither felt an obligation to justify the nonsense they disseminated about 7 October when I invited them to do so earlier this year on a BBC Panorama programme I was preparing on Hamas.

A letter sent to both men summarised the evidence of the mass murder of unarmed Israeli civilians which we had gathered from witnesses and the Israeli police: children shot in the head at close range (testimony of the head of the Israeli police forensic division, central district); women raped (eyewitness testimony); sexual molestation (photographs of dead women with their pants down); both breasts cut from a woman (morgue photograph); repeated attempts to behead two Israeli women (CCTV); the full beheading of a soldier (headcam).^[38]

There was a certain *hauteur* in both men's response to the BBC's invitation which out of pique they chose to make public on X: to Dr. Tamimi, I was a 'discredited journalist who doesn't deserve attention';^[39] to Dr. Altikriti, I was merely too 'low level' to merit a response, only for his pride to get the better of him by doubling down on his first denial, 'I continue to insist' that atrocity allegations are 'lies'^[40] Altikriti posted.

Their haughtiness reminded me of a previous encounter I had with Tamimi when I interviewed him in 2005, just after 7/7 when suicide bombers killed 52 Londoners on the

London underground and a bus. During the Second Intifada, he had famously justified Hamas suicide bombing of Israeli citizens on the basis that 'the blood of martyrs provides nourishment and sustenance for those who continue this struggle.'^[41] In fact, Tamimi himself had said that sacrificing his own life for justice for Palestine would be 'a noble cause' and would be 'the straight way to pleasing my God and I would do it if I had the opportunity.'^[42] When I sought to explore the civilisational chasm between us – that pride in a nation of martyrs eager to die was not in any sense normal and undermined a near universal world order that relied on a desire for life – he said he was merely explaining why Palestinians resorted to killing themselves. When I replied that I thought his comments were more glorification than explanation, he shot back 'So what?'^[43] – as if to say, he couldn't give a monkey's what I or anybody else in Britain thought.

All This Nonsense'

Another academic, Dr. Khalid El-Awaisi, a lecturer in Early Muslim History/ Islamic Jerusalem Studies at University of Aberdeen,^[44] told Muslims at the Masjid-e-Umar in Bradford on 21 October: 'What you heard about attacks on concerts, and all this nonsense, it turns out to be lies.'^[45] A prominent 'Influencer' Dilly Hussain also posted: 'There was no massacre of 260 Israelis at a rave.' Such 'lies' were just 'disinformation to dehumanise Palestinians and justify a genocide in Gaza.'^[46] Hussain later appears to have accepted there was a 'massacre' but

like Azzam Tamimi accused the IDF of ‘very likely’ being responsible. ‘It was not (caused) by Palestinian fighters.’[47] He also showed himself to be every bit as crass as a British IDF soldier just back from Gaza who he threatened for posting a selfie flaunting a bra he and his IDF mates had rifled from a Palestinian woman’s bedroom. ‘We will find you. And we will account you (sic)’ warned Hussain in a menacing video directed at the soldier, adding ‘within the remit of the law, of course.’ [48] Hussain – an amateur boxer – has never been one to pull his punches. He once branded a female Muslim critic a ‘stupid liberal cow’, a ‘fat cow’ and a ‘p***head’.[49] He continues, however, as deputy editor of a popular Islamist news outlet called Five Pillars[50] (Facebook following 511,000)[51].

*‘Women, children and civilians were exempt’:
 Hamas Denialism*

These UK atrocity denialists chimed with the official line from Hamas’s politburo who also adopted a ‘black is white’ approach to solid facts. ‘Women, children and civilians were exempt’ from the attack, insisted Mousa Abu Marzouk to the BBC. [52] Body cam recovered from Hamas fighters shows the precise opposite.

To take just one of many examples. A Hamas gunman driving past Kibbutz Sufa screams to his comrades: ‘Settlement brothers! Cars. There’s people there. They look like civilians, it’s a settlement! Let’s go inside, settlers brother, come on, enter!’ Then there’s the 17-year-old Israeli boy, Tomer Arava who

Hamas used to lure other civilians from their safe rooms[53], promising his mother Dikla that they will not shoot him[54] – only to later do exactly that.[55] There’s also the ice blooded intention to set houses on fire, knowing that civilians hiding in their safe rooms, including children, would suffocate to death.[56] Recording the desecration of bodies by filming decapitations and standing on the heads of the dead[57] are further examples of the barbarism that these young jihadists committed on 7 October. There are plenty more.

‘So Hamas didn’t kill any civilians on that day?’ senior Hamas spokesman Osama Hamdan was asked on Norwegian TV last November. ‘No’ Hamden insists. ‘What about the pictures we’ve seen of your fighters with body cams shooting at civilians?’ responds the interviewer. ‘No there is (sic) no pictures like that’, Hamden replies. The interviewer then shows Hamden Hamas’s own body-cam footage of shooting civilians in a car and spraying houses with gunfire. ‘They are not civilians, they are settlers. OK?’ says Hamdan, as if oblivious to the fact that Hamas itself had taken the trouble to headcam record and post its murderous feats on social media.[58] As each Politburo member lied bare faced to the camera were they perhaps counting on 7 October to animate enough useful idiots on the anti-Zionist Left to confuse the wider public?

There’s been no shortage. It’s the ‘repellent’ Israelis who tell lies – all the time, says the Liverpool comic Alexei Sayle, himself a fervent anti-Zionist. ‘They lie and they lie,

and they lie and they lie and they lie and they lie and they lie and they lie ...' Sayle repeats this 27 times in a sing-song voice. For a comedian he is excruciatingly unfunny.[59]

The 'lie' that has especially incensed many anti-Zionists in Britain and around the world, is that besides murdering civilians, Hamas also raped Israeli women and inflicted sexualised torture on them, and on men, including genital mutilation. 'Claims of rape by some mainstream media are false, spurious and evil,' posted Dr Anas Altikriti. 'They feed into the genocidal narrative adopted by Zionists to justify the crimes committed by the terrorist apartheid state.' Three Hamas buzzwords in one sentence: 'Genocide, terrorist, apartheid' signed off with a haughty swipe at the *Washington Post*[60], for giving credence to Israel's claims of sexual violence: 'Try another one.' [61]

The UN Human Rights Council Contradicts Hamas' Denials

Independently of each other, three separate inquiries – two by UN bodies, and one by Human Rights Watch have now all concluded that Palestinian 'fighters' did indeed commit 'acts of gender-based violence' on 7 October.

The UN Human Rights Council is no friend of Israel's. But its inquiry commissioned by UNHRC demonstrates just how preposterous atrocity denialism is in the face of facts. The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel has concluded that

- i. 'Sexual abuse' was amongst multiple war crimes committed by 'members of the military wing of Hamas and Palestinian armed groups.' [62]
- ii. Women were 'subjected to GBV (Gender Based Violence) during the course of their execution or abduction' and 'women's bodies were used as victory trophies by male perpetrators'[63] who posed with their bodies in the streets of Gaza in videos and photos.
- iii. Hamas and other armed groups 'committed the war crime of intentionally directing attacks' against unarmed civilians.[64]

Even so, three authoritative polls in Gaza and the West Bank conducted in November, February and May by the respected Ramallah based Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research have consistently shown that over 90 per cent of Palestinians do not regard Hamas as having committed war crimes on 7 October. Most had not seen videos broadcast by international news media of Hamas murdering Israeli women and children in their homes. But even when shown this evidence, 54 per cent of Palestinians still didn't regard Hamas as having committed atrocities.[65]

And here in Britain, atrocity denialism appears to have got some traction beyond just activists. Public condemnation by the social activist Nimco Ali (herself a survivor of genital mutilation) of the 'silence' of women's organisations over Israelis as 7 October victims of sexual violence[66] was greeted by a man spitting at her feet as she was having a coffee,

shouting ‘there was no rape, you liar.’^[67]

Hosting a Saturday phone-in, LBC radio’s Narasha Devon told her audience that there were ‘conflicting stories’ about whether Israeli women really were raped and mutilated on 7 October: ‘There are some academics who are saying that there is absolutely no evidence that any sexual assaults took place.’ Unlike others, Devon has at least had the grace to subsequently admit she wasn’t in possession of the facts.^[68]

British Muslims, British Imams

A recent poll suggests most British Muslims still aren’t. It found that only one in four accept that Hamas committed murder and rape in Israel on 7 October.^[69] And a survey conducted by the blogger Habibi of sermons by 80 imams across England in the aftermath of 7 October does not suggest mosques have done much if anything to counter atrocity denial.

I showed the results to a senior Kings Counsel specialising in anti-terrorism legislation. While many imams confined their comments to supporting a Palestinian victory without mentioning Hamas by name, but by referring, for example, to ‘Resistance’ (making it lawful), some, he said, were ‘stirring up racial hatred’ with a handful ‘expressing support for Hamas in a way that encourages others to support Hamas’^[70] which is unlawful because Hamas a proscribed terrorist organisation.^[71] Thirty eight sermons made blatantly antisemitic references like ‘the filth of the Jews’,^[72] ‘usurping Jews’, ‘the unjust haters, monkeys and pigs’,^[73] ‘the trend of the Yahud (Jews) to lie time and time again about

what the Muslims are doing in Palestine.’^[74], ‘Zionists are soldiers of the devil ... the biggest criminals in this world. No place they went to, from the 19th Century, only they cause problems. People fight them. Everywhere they went.’^[75]

Thirteen sermons denied Palestinians had committed atrocities: ‘You can see the atrocity propaganda being disseminated ... right?’ said Adil Tagari, imam at the Masjid e Salaam in Preston on 20 October. ‘Because of the simple fact which is (that) the oppressors own the media. The media is stuffed right in their back pocket. They control the narrative with their web of lies and they have their web of deceit and the world’s politicians, unfortunately as we see, especially in the West, are all reading from the same script. They’re all singing from the same hymn sheet. They’re all complicit because they’re on the payroll.’^[76]

Shaykh Shaqur Rahman told the Tawhid Mosque in Leyton on 1 December ‘They (the Israeli authorities) put on a film, where they showed atrocities committed against Jewish people, or people who look Jewish. And only Allah knows what was true from that and what was made up and false.’^[77] Shaykh Ali Hammuda told the Quwwatul Islam Masjid & Education Centre in East London on 13 October: ‘It (has) now degenerated to the level of full-fledged lying fabrication concocting of stories that simply never happened, the latest of them being of course, this claim that a huge massacre took place at a rave where 260 people were killed, as they were dancing and singing, or claims of mass rape.’^[78]

2. 'AGENDA JOURNALISM', ALT-MEDIA AND 7 OCTOBER

It is pro-Palestinian journalists on alternative media outlets who are now in the forefront of challenging Israel's claims that there was widespread sexual violence. The main challengers are the US based outlets *The Grayzone*, *Mondoweiss*, *The Intercept*, and *YES! Magazine*.

The Electronic Intifada has a determination to disprove the claims that is even more zealous than its partners – even to the extent of at first attacking their comrades on *The Intercept* for 'spreading deadly lies'[79] because its foray into the subject asserted unequivocally that Hamas and others had committed 'unspeakable sexual violence against Israeli civilians.'[80] *The Intercept* did not repeat that claim and went on to heavily criticise a *New York Times* investigation headlined "Screams Without Words": How Hamas Weaponized Sexual Violence on Oct.7' This claimed to have uncovered a pattern of rape, mutilation and extreme brutality against Israeli women.[81] *The Intercept* blamed the *Times* for having 'galvanized the Israeli war effort at a time when even some of Israel's allies were expressing concern over its large-scale killing of civilians in Gaza.' It also downgraded its previous assertion that sexual violence was a 'Hamas-led crime(s)' to merely the possibility that 'individual acts ... may have occurred on October 7' and moreover by 'civilians' since 'several hundred poured into Israel from Gaza that day.' [82] *The Electronic Intifada* commended *The Intercept* for at least having 'come late to this story.'[83]

To an extent, each of these alternative media (alt-media) outlets have fed off each other, but it is *The Electronic Intifada* whose appetite has been the most voracious with roughly double the output of their colleagues on this subject.[84] All of it has been aimed at showing Israeli and mainstream media allegations that Hamas engaged in systematic sexual violence are baseless, and that the mainstream media have been dupes for swallowing Zionist propaganda. Indeed, the co-founder of *The Electronic Intifada*, Ali Abunimah who is himself Palestinian,[85] insists that not only was there no mass rape, but 'there is no credible evidence of even a single rape on October 7.'[86] Or, as his London based associate editor Asa Winstanley puts it 'The biggest media hoax since the "Labour anti-Semitism" fabrication is now currently unfolding in real time.'[87]

Like many alt-media journalists, Winstanley and his *Electronic Intifada* colleagues do not come across as journalists in the conventional sense who strive – or certainly should strive – to report facts and arguments regardless of whether they undermine any personal or political preference. Winstanley himself makes no secret of his agenda. 'All Zionists are racist: every single one' he says. 'There are no good Zionists.'[88] The new foreign secretary David Lammy is 'an evil genocidal scumbag.' Winstanley is also something of a fanboy of Hamas's military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades revelling in IDF deaths with breathless posts like 'stunning new Qassam

Brigades video'[89] and 'The latest Qassam Brigades video is probably best one so far' showing an RPG immolating an IDF 'enemy' tank and its crew.[90] He marked 7 October with such trilling posts as: 'Astonishing achievement for the resistance'[91] and 'The era of Israeli deterrence is never coming back. We've entered the era of Palestinian deterrence.'[92]

'Screams Without Words'

The principal target of the alt-media assault on the mainstream media has been *The New York Times*' expose 'Screams Without Words' which challenged the noble warrior mantle with which Palestinians have adorned their armed 'Resistance' movements for decades. And nothing gets some pro-Palestinian activists 'frothing' quite like *The New York Times* (as one Israeli columnist observed).[93] The idea that Qur'anicly trained 'fighters' would ever succumb to anything as base as battlefield rape is particularly damaging to the 'Resistance' movement's carefully cultivated image. *The Times* has fomented an 'atrocious propaganda hoax' declaims Ali Abunimah.[94] He has repeatedly accused *Times*' journalists of 'fraudulent reporting about so called mass rape.'[95]

Like his *Electronic Intifada* colleague Winstanley, Abunimah was exhilarated at news of Hamas fighters smashing their way into southern Israel on 7 October, posting a double hearted emoji to express his joy.[96] As to the fate of terrified Israeli youngsters fleeing Hamas' fusillades of automatic fire at the music festival, compassion was absent:

'Settlers fleeing from the usurped lands they occupy' he posted.[97]

Mondoweiss has similarly marked 7 October as a day to 'celebrate'[98] and that 'we must raise the banner of "searing bullets and blood-stained knives."'[99] *The Grayzone's* editor in chief Max Blumenthal has likened his thrill at the sight of paragliders approaching the still unsuspecting festival-goers to a drug-induced high. 'Twf, [that feeling when] the molly (ecstasy) is hitting and you're dancing on colonized land' he posted.[100] Blumenthal has acquired a reputation as a Putin and Assad apologist, and generally indulging anti-western conspiracy theories.[101].

Nevertheless, the journalism of Blumenthal and other alt-media outlets challenging the Israeli government's claim that Hamas and others committed widespread sexual violence as a weapon of war on 7 October, has been influential. In March, *Al Jazeera* (English) – part of the Qatari state-owned global TV network – also investigated the allegations in a documentary called *October 7*. [102] The programme clearly acknowledged that 'Hamas fighters committed human rights abuses' but also said 'allegations of widespread and systematic rape' were 'false.' [103] Its producer Richard Sanders revealed that he'd 'relied heavily' for this assessment on the work of alt-media. 'It's important to name them,' he said, 'because to a degree I piggybacked on them when we were doing our own very important research as well in parallel to them, but you know, they were doing invaluable stuff. We're talking *Mondoweiss*, we're talking

GreyZone, we're talking *Electronic Intifada*, we're talking *The Intercept* and we're talking *YES! Magazine*, to some extent, *Haaretz* newspaper in Israel as well. You know, to actually grasp the truth of what happened, particularly on the sexual violence issue, you had to read those outlets – you couldn't possibly rely on traditional media.'^[104]

The alt-media see their repudiation of the Israeli government narrative on sexual violence as a case study in the failings of the mainstream media. They single out the *New York Times*, *The Guardian*, the *BBC* and *CNN* for accepting the narrative too readily.

But the real case study here is the care with which alt-media journalism has selected facts about allegations of sexual violence that bolster its animus against Zionism at the expense of facts that don't. Some outlets have bent the truth out of shape whilst posturing as journalism's holy grail. And this really matters because as a consequence of social media platforms, agenda journalism is growing in influence at the expense of mainstream journalism where, whatever its deficiencies, stricter ethical codes exist to instil greater rigour and intellectual honesty.

There's been a dramatic decline in mainstream's reach for news: for BBC One, it's down 18 per cent since 2010^[105] mainly because almost half (47 per cent) the adult population now get their news from social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Tik-Tok.^[106]

This trend is overwhelmingly (71 per cent) driven by 16–24-year-olds,^[107] an attachment not expected to change as they get older^[108] and replace the generation who do still turn exclusively to trusted mainstream media outlets.

At the same time there's been a steep decline in trust of the mainstream broadcast media^[109] – in the BBC's case, a fall of about 20 percentage points since 2018.^[110] And here's the danger. It is into this febrile world that agenda journalism has got a footing. There is a correlation between increasing trust in alt-media and decreasing trust in mainstream media.^[111]

In March, *The Electronic Intifada* said 'Israel's long running propaganda campaign alleging a strategy of "mass rape" by Palestinians on 7 October was unravelling at high speed...'^[112] If anything, recent evidential disclosures indicate the opposite – that sexual violence was more than one or two isolated incidents and was quite widely spread. But to be clear: I don't know whether the prevalence of sexual violence will ultimately qualify as 'systematic' or 'widespread' or a 'pattern' when the facts become known to their fullest extent. Conflict related sexual violence is notorious for leaving few evidential traces not least since victims are often murdered after being raped. One thing I do know, however, is that none of the hard sceptics in alt-media can possibly know that either. The difference between us is that they assert with certainty that they *do* know and discount the evidence that suggests they are wrong.

3. UN WOMEN: #METOO_UNLESS-UR A JEW

The attack on 7 October followed a familiar pattern. Typically, Israel gets a brief grace period when a major assault is launched. In view of how heinous 7 October was, Israel might reasonably have expected the grace period not to fade as swiftly as it did. There was particular disappointment with the organisation UN Women which casts itself as the ‘global champion for gender equality.’^[113] To Israelis, it appeared unresponsive to their claims that women had been victims of sexual abuse. In fact UN Women did make a brief reference to sexual violence on 25 October condemning ‘every act unequivocally’ but beyond that, it did not address the allegations head on until 1 December^[114] – 55 days after 7 October – and even then, only after the silence of women’s organisations had been repeatedly remarked upon.^[115] The focus of the organisation’s statements was overwhelmingly on the plight of Gazan women and children.^[116] Perhaps Hilary Clinton had UN Women in mind when she condemned the ‘inhumanity’ of those who ‘claim to stand for justice are closing their eyes and their hearts to the victims of Hamas.’^[117] ‘#MeToo Unless-UR a Jew’ (with the ‘UR a Jew’ part faded out) was the anguished slogan of an Israeli government campaign^[118] to highlight what it saw as a reversal of the universal approach to sexual violence where the victim is given the benefit of the doubt, at least initially. In his *New York Times* column ‘The New Rape Denialism’ Bret Stephens observed, how swiftly the Left ‘pivots from “believe women” to “believe Hamas” when the identity of the victim

changes.’^[119] What, then, are the facts to date about the scale of sexual violence on 7 October?

Hamas prisoners admit to rape

Israel’s internal security service, Shin Bet, has released several clips of interrogations of Hamas prisoners in which they admit being instructed to target civilians, including children, women, and the elderly.^[120] A handful have included admissions of rape, some appearing to readily acknowledge this as if rape was an acceptable spoil of war. The mainstream media has generally avoided relying evidentially on these interrogations in case coercion was used. There have been credible allegations of brutal treatment of Palestinian detainees^[121] including deaths in detention, among them two Palestinian doctors.^[122] Israel physicians say they have participated in five autopsies of Palestinians who died in the Israeli Prison Service, two with ‘sever signs of violence and assault’, and whose ‘specific cause of death was medical neglect.’^[123]

Still, we are told that Shin Bet interrogators are ‘trained to keep their composure’, insisting they rely on psychological pressure and professional interrogation tactics, not torture, to obtain confessions.^[124] The use of ‘moderate physical pressure’ on suspects under interrogation was outlawed by Israel’s supreme court in 1999 by a 9–0 majority^[125] except in the event of an imminent terrorist attack, known as a ‘ticking time bomb’ scenario.^[126]

However, in two of the released clips, one prisoner appears with blood on his shirt, and another seems to be in considerable pain. ‘They were arrested during combat in a very violent way,’ explains an ex-head of division in Shin Bet, authorised to speak about this. ‘It wasn’t a polite arrest. What do you expect?’^[127]

Most of the exchanges between the fluent Arabic speaking interrogators and prisoners appear to be free flowing and readers can judge this for themselves.^[128] For example, a very young looking member of the Qassam Brigades readily admits that he and another member of Hamas raped a woman he said was about 30. Then it was the turn of his father who killed her ‘after he finished raping her.’^[129] His father, identified as a member of Hamas’ Internal Security Force (ISF) also casually admits to his interrogator: ‘I saw her in the living room with some guys, I took her to the next room, and I had sex with her.

Q: What did you do to her – explain it to me with details?

A: I took off her little leather pants

Q: Did she want to sleep with you?

A: No, she was screaming

Q: Did she only scream? Did she do anything else?

A: No, she was just screaming.

Q: What did she say?

A: It wasn’t screaming (words), she was crying-screaming

Q: OK, and what did you do? Did you point your gun at her?

A: Yes, I had my gun with me

Q: OK, also when she got naked?

A: Yes

Q: And then what?

A: Then I did what I did.

Q: What did you do?

A: I raped her.

Q: What did she wear under the clothes?

A: Nothing, just a t-shirt and short leather pants

Q: That’s it?

A: Yes, leather pants.

Q: I wasn’t there. Elaborate more.

A: I lay on top of her, kissed her, inserted myself into her and then I came. It took about fifteen minutes.’

Prior to raping the woman, he said that ‘while walking I saw five guys, girls and boys who tried to run away so we shot them.’

Q: On all five?

A: Yes.’^[130]

As to whether rape was part of the 7 October mission, a 22-year-old member of Hamas says this

Q: Teenage girls? What did you do to them?

A: Killed them (answers as if he’s asked a stupid question)

Q: What have they done with the heads?

A: Cut them off (signals with a swipe at his throat)

Q: Who?

A: Hamas. After they killed them, they cut off their heads, placed them on the ground.

Q: What were their plans for the abducted women?

A: I'm telling you: to whore them, rape them ... hurt them and ... interrogate them, whatever they feel like doing. They raped them, attacked them.[\[131\]](#)

Initial false atrocity claims

Whether or not these admissions were the product of physical or psychological duress prior to interrogation, those challenging the Israeli government's allegation of widespread rape would argue there's an even more compelling reason for dismissing it. In the immediate aftermath of 7 October, a series of other horrific atrocity claims were made by a handful of soldiers and first responders which are now recognised to have been untrue, mainly because none of the circumstances tally with the official list of the civilian dead issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[\[132\]](#)

On 10 October at Kibbutz Kfar Aza, 'at least' 40 babies were reported on Israel's iNews 24 to have been 'taken out on gurneys' [\[133\]](#) viewers having been told 90 minutes earlier that some babies had had their 'heads cut off.' [\[134\]](#) This rapidly morphed into headlines like 'at least 40 babies killed, beheaded...' [\[135\]](#) Although most outlets emphasised such reports were 'unverified' [\[136\]](#) they reportedly attracted 44 million impressions, 300,000 likes and over 100,000 reposts within a day. [\[137\]](#) The official Israeli record shows the only baby to have been killed on 7 October was 10-month-old Mila Cohen and she was shot. However, an IDF colonel said his soldiers had found eight babies that had been

burned to death which cannot be true. [\[138\]](#) Nor does the official death list tally with another Colonel's claim that babies had been hung up on a washing line at an unnamed kibbutz. [\[139\]](#) In the smouldering ruins of Kibbutz Be'eri, Yossi Landau, the southern region head of ZAKA, an ultra-Orthodox Jewish organisation whose members retrieve bodies after terror attacks, said a foetus had been sliced from a woman's stomach [\[140\]](#) – a claim also untrue and repeated in good faith by Israeli First Lady Michal Herzog. [\[141\]](#) Landau also said two piles each of 10 children had been found, hands tied behind their backs, burned to death but again there is no such match in the official death list. [\[142\]](#) This must make highly questionable Landau's further claim that a father's eye had been gouged out before his family as they sat round the breakfast table, the mother's breast cut off, their daughter's foot amputated, and their son's fingers cut off before being executed. [\[143\]](#) Another first responder Eli Beer, chief executive of volunteer-based emergency medical service United Hatzalah said a baby had been found in an oven – again untrue, [\[144\]](#) as was the repeated claim by a special forces paramedic to have found teenagers naked, one with semen on them in Kibbutz Be'eri. The Kibbutz later confirmed there was no truth in the claim. [\[145\]](#)

Benjamin Netanyahu's office at first confirmed some of these reports [\[146\]](#) with Netanyahu himself claiming Hamas took 'dozens of children bound them up, burned them and executed them.' [\[147\]](#) The IDF said they couldn't confirm the 40 beheaded

babies' story,^[148] but declined to rule it out either.^[149] They did not confirm the other claims, although some government spokespeople retweeted them as soon as they surfaced.^[150] Some of the claims were also repeated by US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken^[151] and by US President Biden on the assumption they'd been reported in good faith. Biden seems to have had

one of his senior moments by repeating the 'cutting babies' heads off' allegation in November,^[152] a month after the White House had acknowledged he hadn't actually seen photographic evidence of this,^[153] only to have what seemed like a further memory lapse the following month by claiming to have seen 'some of the photographs' which included 'beheading infants.'^[154]

4. THE ALT-MEDIA CLAIM OF AN 'ATROCITY PROPAGANDA HOAX'

The Electronic Intifada: Ali Abunimah and Nora Barrows-Friedman

To Ali Abunimah of *Electronic Intifada*, all those 'really inflammatory lies'^[155] were part of an Israeli conspiracy to prepare the ground for the extermination of Palestinians just as Hitler prepared Jews for extermination by first dehumanising them.^[156] And by 'fabricating claims that Hamas committed mass rapes on 7 October, Israel had 'provided a pretext' for the war on Gaza.^[157] He refers to this as the 'atrocious propaganda hoax.'^[158]

The *Electronic Intifada's* associate editor Nora Barrows-Friedman concurs. She's an anti-Zionist Jew who self describes as a 'cool mom' and 'grumpy commie, undersized, but with the heart of a champion.'^[159] In one of her regular livestreams with Abunimah she ventures that the 'false claims of Palestinian men not being able to control themselves around white women or Israeli women ... is, is, is ... part and parcel of white supremacist ideology, it's meant to incite consent,

manufactured consent for whatever comes next, whether it's lynchings or whether it's the genocide of people in Gaza.' Abunimah responds: 'Yeah, I mean, you're right, Nora'^[160]. This 'sophisticated piece of war propaganda' is all about 'demonis(ing) Palestinians as monsters, to try to erode support for them and to distract from or justify Israel's genocide in Gaza.'^[161]

Mondoweiss and YES! Magazine

Mondoweiss also thinks Israel has been 'manufacturing consent for a genocide' by relying on 'lazy Orientalist caricatures of Arab men as savage sexual predators' which is 'both cunning and destructive' because it suggests that as Arabs, Palestinians are 'inherently and irredeemably, an evil race, and their total annihilation, therefore, is justifiable.'^[162] 'The real story' expostulates *YES! Magazine's* Arun Gupta 'is Israel is fabricating atrocity propaganda ... as a cover for genocide.'^[163] This is why the sexual violence story 'has to be debunked' he says. ^[164]

A moment's thought explodes this magnificent conspiracy theory. It's true that Israeli government sources *capitalised* on the claims about baby butchering, at least until they realised they were false. The claims did not, however, have their *origin* in the Israeli government's PR machine, but first and foremost in a handful of named IDF officers and ZAKA and United Hatzalah first responders, some of whom have subsequently acknowledged the claims were mistaken, [165] (for example, misinterpreting a badly burned or decomposed body for that of a child.) [166]

What the claim of an 'Atrocity Hoax' ignores

Furthermore, the claims that Israeli women were raped on 7 October surfaced – not from official government sources but within 48 hours of the Hamas-led attack from an eyewitness on the ground in southern Israel [167] and from the arrival of a woman in a hospital in Rehovot who had been sexually assaulted. [168] Rape is a common feature of war, so it doesn't take a leap of imagination to believe that amongst the thousands of armed Palestinians and Gazan civilians who came through the border fence behind them [169] were those who raped Israeli women.

The 'atrocity hoax' conspiracy also ignores the fact that it didn't need Hamas to rape women, behead babies, or burn them alive, to persuade the Israeli government, or for that matter most Israelis that on 7 October Hamas and other Palestinians did indeed behave with sadistic animalistic savagery.

Young people fleeing the music festival were not just gunned down deliberately;

when they were cornered in cramped bomb shelters where they'd sought refuge, they were deliberately killed and mutilated by grenades tossed into the shelters; Hamas then tried to finish off any survivors by shooting into the shelters; [170] many children saw their parents and siblings killed, their deaths filmed and published for propaganda purposes [171]; children were murdered in front of their parents; [172] the limbs of helpless kibbutzniks were bound before being shot or burned [173] – one woman was 'set on fire with gasoline from the waist down' [174]; breasts were sliced from women; [175] heads were decapitated from the bodies of men and women, including – according to the UN – a 12-year-old girl after she was shot in the head; [176] some victims had their fingers cut off while alive; [177] children were found with severed body parts; [178] many were burned alive in their homes, after sending messages that they were being burned alive; [179] an adult and child appear to have been bound together with wire and burned; [180] corpses were booby trapped with explosives; [181] 13 civilians were cut down at a bus stop, eight of them over 65, [182] and of course, 252 hostages, including the elderly and children were seized hostage.

The terror in the bomb shelters evoked horrific images of the Holocaust. 'Now I know how it was with the Jews' in World War 2 one survivor told UN investigators. Another said: 'I was sure that they were going to take me out and shoot us all in a row like in the Holocaust. I told myself – it will be ok, it will be quick. I will be dead soon.' [183] The ordeal was especially hard

for the few who survived by hiding for hours under piles of bodies, fearing Hamas would return to finish them off. 'We prayed to die,' said another survivor. 'Nobody wanted to remain alive in that place. We just wanted it to end quickly.'[\[184\]](#)

7 October did indeed 'bring to mind the worst of ISIS' as Anthony Blinken put it.[\[185\]](#) A 45-minute compilation of clips from Hamas bodycam and CCTV released by the Israeli government demonstrates this.[\[186\]](#) It was shared with members of the media but not with the general public to minimise the trauma to relatives of the dead. Yet this compilation was not the worst of it. When I was in Israel earlier this year, I asked Lahav 433, the police unit investigating 7 October atrocities, if I could see corroborative evidence for some of the most heinous allegations against Hamas and others. The police showed me clips and photographs that were too horrific even for the Israeli government's restricted 45-minute film. They included the beheading of a soldier (by Hamas), attempted beheadings of two women in Kibbutz Nir Oz at 7.29am (by a gunman in military fatigues)[\[187\]](#) and a woman who had both her breasts cut off. So much for Dr. Azzam Tamimi's asinine assurance to fellow Muslims that 'these are Quranic young men, they memorise the Quran they study the Sharia, they know the *Fukara* (poor and needy), they know it's not permissible for them to attack non-combatant civilians, women, children, priests, etc. They know all of this.'[\[188\]](#) The sight of hundreds of Palestinians delirious with joy and shouting 'God is Great' as Hamas

paraded hostages like trophies through the streets of Gaza, propagandising their humiliation by publishing it online didn't exactly diminish the fear amongst Israelis that some Palestinians were no longer part of the family of humanity. How else to interpret the half-naked broken body of 22-year-old Shani Louk[\[189\]](#) being spat on by the mob? Or, hostage Yarden Roman-Gat, 36 surrounded by Gazan men, taunting her as a 'Jewish female dog'[\[190\]](#) Or the crowd that greeted Moran Yani as her abductors brought her into Gaza. 'It was like a bull being entered into a huge arena,' she said. 'Everybody's happy – the children, the women, the men. It was tons of people.'[\[191\]](#)

The false claims about beheaded babies were soon exposed by much of the mainstream media including the Israeli media, a reminder that however frayed Israel's democratic credentials may have become under Benjamin Netanyahu, the central pillar of any democracy – a free press – remains alive and well.

The alt-media, meanwhile, has attempted to finesse away the more murderous aspects of Hamas's 7 October massacre. *The Electronic Intifada* quoted without challenge Hamas's official statement claiming that the "Zionist propaganda machine" had falsely accused Hamas of 'the targeting of revelers at the concert.'[\[192\]](#) The *Grayzone's* Max Blumenthal accused President Biden of falsely claiming he 'saw pictures of tying a mother and a daughter in a rope, pouring kerosene on them, burning them and watching as they died.'[\[193\]](#) This is unfair. The official

White House transcript shows Biden utters the letter 's' as he was about to say he'd seen the pictures but managed to stop himself just in time: 'What's happening in Gaza and Israel is heartbreaking ... I was there nine days after, s- -pictures of tying a mother and a daughter with a rope, pouring kerosene on them, burning them and watching as they died.'^[194] Blumenthal was also wrong when he then said 'No such photos exist. Yet another sickening lie to justify Israel's genocide.' A picture of striking similarity does exist and was shown to the media by Dr. Chen Kugel, Director of Israel's National Centre of Forensic Medicine.^[195] The image of a CT scan displays charred remains of two spinal cords and two rib cages belonging to an adult and a child who were bound together with iron wire and burned. An independent evaluation of the CT scan by a forensic pathologist confirmed the presence of the comingled human remains with metallic elements surrounding them and multiple fractures visible to the bones.^[196] Dr Kugel was not able to say if the bodies were burned prior to death but it is entirely possible since in some bodies no metal fragments were found inside the charred remains indicating they were not shot prior to burning.

Pramila Patten's UN review of the evidence

The Grayzone, *Mondoweiss*, *Electronic Intifada* and *YES! Magazine* have all been dismissive of the two UN reports detailing examples of sexual violence on 7 October. The 23-page report by a UN expert mission that found there were 'reasonable grounds to be believe' that sexual violence had occurred in 'multiple

locations across Gaza periphery, including rape and gang-rape in at least three locations'^[197] with the victims 'then killed or killed while being raped.'^[198]

The UN mission also found that photos and videos revealed 'a few corpses with conspicuously spread legs' which could 'not be adequately explained by, for instance, "postmortem pugilistic posturing" due to burn damage.' They also 'revealed a minimum of twenty corpses with partially or fully exposed intimate body parts such as breasts and genitalia, resulting from the absence, displacement, or tearing of clothing. Also, at least ten distinct corpses displayed indications of bound wrists and/or tied legs.'^[199] And the UN mission finds as a fact that in multiple locations, there was a 'recurring pattern of female victims found undressed, bound and shot ... in some cases tied to structures including trees and poles, along Road 232'^[200] along which Nova music festival-goers tried to escape.

The UN team spent 17 days in Israel conducting an initial assessment of the evidence the Israeli authorities had gathered on sexual violence. It was headed by the Secretary General's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC), Pramila Patten a practising barrister who is a member of the English bar.^[201] Her expert team included a principal human rights officer, a police expert in criminal investigation, a judicial affairs officer, two sexual and gender-based violence investigators skilled in the safe and ethical interviewing of survivors/victims and witnesses of sexual violence crimes, a forensic pathologist and a digital and open-

source information analyst.[202]

The Electronic Intifada's Ali Abunimah says Patten's report contained 'no new evidence'[203] and *The Grayzone's* Wyatt Reed says she came back 'mostly empty handed'.[204] The former says her finding about multiple incidents of rape then murder, are based on merely 'circumstantial information' and the latter that 'the lowest evidentiary threshold (was) used by the researchers.'

Neither is true. There were details of incidents which hitherto had not been in the public domain, for example the revelation of a rape outside a bunker. Furthermore, Patten made it clear her finding of 'multiple incidents of rape, including gang rape' was based on 'reasonable grounds to believe', a higher threshold than 'circumstantial evidence'. As she explained: 'Our conclusions were based on our own assessment of the credibility and reliability of the witnesses we met, verifying the sources, cross referencing the relevant material and information and assessing whether in all the circumstances there was sufficient credible and reliable information to make a finding in fact.'[205]

Abunimah and his UK based *Electronic Intifada* colleague Asa Winstanley smell a conspiracy, however. Patten's report 'seems almost as if it was timed to save ... the Israeli government and its US government accomplices' they say, just as 'Israel's long running propaganda campaign alleging a strategy of 'mass rape' by Palestinians on 7 October' had begun to unravel 'at high speed'.[206] It was 'important that we understand why the report cannot

be trusted' says *Mondoweiss* 'as it has given new life to the cycle of mass rape propaganda that is being used to justify Israel's genocide in Gaza.'[207]

To adjudge this UN expert team's findings both dubious and political motivated is a curiously precipitate judgment for non-expert journalists, bearing in mind that they had not had access to the evidence made available to Patten's mission, namely 5000 photographs, 50 hours of footage of the attacks provided by various Israeli state agencies, independent private sources and the UN's own independent online review of open sources, 'to identify potential instances and indications of CRSV (conflict related sexual violence)'.[208]

The locations where Patten's UN mission says there were 'at least three' incidents of rape and gang rape are:

1. **The Nova music festival site and its surroundings** where victims were 'subjected to rape and/or gang rape and then killed or killed while being raped.' It says 'credible sources described finding murdered individuals, mostly women, whose bodies were naked from their waist down – and some totally naked – tied with their hands behind their backs, many of whom were shot in the head.'
2. **Road 232** which ran past the festival site where again the UN mission finds credible information that two women were raped 'by armed elements' and where the 'mission team also found a pattern of bound naked or partially naked bodies

from the waist down, in some cases tied to structures including trees and poles, along Road 232’.

3. **Kibbutz Re’im** where the ‘mission team further verified an incident of the rape of a woman outside of a bomb shelter.’ [209]

In addition to all three locations listed by Patten, the UN inquiry by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (IICOI) says sexual violence was also committed at Kibbutzim Nir Oz and Kfar Aza [210]

Unlike those who have satisfied themselves there is no truth in the allegation that members of Hamas committed sexual violence on any scale [211] independently of Patten’s UN mission, the UN’s Commission of Inquiry also says the evidence indicates that sexual violence was ‘not isolated but perpetrated in similar ways in several locations and by multiple Palestinian perpetrators.’ [212] Patten says its ‘true prevalence may take months or years to emerge’ and in fact ‘may never be fully known, given that sexual violence remains a chronically underreported crime in every conflict-affected setting, due *inter alia* to trauma, stigma and fear faced by survivors.’ [213] That and the fact that documenting war crimes requires a meticulous attention to detail, explains why it takes so long.

Moreover, although Patten’s report reaches no finding on the scale of sexual violence, it says it might well turn out to be even greater than her preliminary findings: ‘As in other conflict-affected contexts, there remains a significant likelihood that the findings of the

mission team, in terms of verified violations, only partially reflect the crimes actually committed.’ That is why Patten recommends that her review of the Israeli evidence her team has verified, is upgraded to a ‘fully-fledged investigation by competent bodies with adequate time and capacity.’ [214]

The UN Human Rights Council

However, although Israel invited Patten to review the evidence and welcomed her ‘definitive recognition that Hamas committed sexual crimes,’ [215] the Netanyahu government does not agree that the competent authority to conduct this investigation is the UN body she recommends, namely the UN Commission of Inquiry.

I am told Patten made that recommendation knowing it would be refused because as a senior UN representative she had no choice, since the Independent International Commission of Inquiry is the delegated body appointed by the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to conduct such investigations. ‘Pramila knew her recommendation would not be accepted by Israel,’ a source in a position to know told me.

Few institutions inflame Israel more than the UNHRC. Israel has a fundamental problem of trust with its ability to investigate dispassionately its conflict with the Palestinians and this would be the view of any Israeli government, not just Netanyahu’s.

First, the UNHRC’s 47 member states has uniquely mandated the Israel-Palestine conflict to be the subject of discussion at every one of the Council’s thrice yearly meetings.

Many of the member states are themselves notorious human rights abusers. Currently chairing the UNHRC's Social Forum is His Excellency Ali Bahreini, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran.^[216] Yet neither Iran, nor Russia nor North Korea – nor indeed any other country – is subject to the level of scrutiny faced by Israel as a standing item on the UNHRC's permanent agenda, known as 'Item 7'.^[217]

Second, the Commission of Inquiry's 2021 mandate to investigate the 'root causes' of the conflict and 'systematic discrimination' appears to be very broad with no end date.^[218]

Third, Navi Pillay, the 82-year-old jurist appointed by the UNHRC to chair the commission has been accused of overt bias against Israel, likening it to the apartheid regime in her native South Africa, describing Israel's treatment of Palestinians as 'inhuman', treating international law with 'perpetual disdain' and supporting sanctions against Israel.^[219] Nor have her two 'expert' co-chairs inspired confidence amongst Israelis for their dispassion: Christopher Sidoti, an Australian lawyer, who has said 'accusations of antisemitism are thrown around like rice at a wedding...'; and Miloon Kothari, a human rights activist, who has speculated that the 'Jewish lobby' is behind criticism of the investigation because 'a lot of money is being thrown into trying to discredit us.'^[220]

Fourth, since 7 October, the UN's principal official charged with promoting and protecting human rights^[221] – the High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker

Turk – has made a series of statements which the Israeli government regards as one-sided on the war in Gaza since they are overwhelmingly hostile and make scant reference to the 7 October pogrom.^[222]

And finally, whilst Navi Pillay's commission has found that Hamas committed war crimes, its finding against Israel's response to 7 October is even harsher: it accuses Israel not just of war crimes, but also of the more serious charge of crimes against humanity.^[223] Of course, sexual violence committed as part of an attack against a civilian population does itself amount to a crime against humanity,^[224] so no Israeli government is going to legitimise Navi Pillay's commission when it appears to be so one sided, even though its initial findings on sexual violence do chime closely with Patten's. 'Israeli victims will never get justice from this Commission of Inquiry' says Israel's permanent mission to the U.N. in Geneva.^[225]

Ali Abunimah casts Israel's refusal to allow Pillay to conduct this full-scale investigation as an admission that it would expose allegations of widespread rape as part of Israel's 'atrocities hoax'. He says that Israel, which 'should welcome such an investigation, has done everything possible to obstruct one.'^[226] Yet Abunimah knows full well why Israel has opposed Patten's recommendation, even if he disagrees with the reasons. And he should perhaps be careful what he wishes for should Israel agree to an independent investigation under the auspices of a different body, for example Pramila Patten herself who will presumably arrive at the same conclusion that even Pillay's commission has come to

who in one key respect has gone even further than Patten.

Although Patten is satisfied that multiple incidents of sexual violence that include rape and gang rape occurred, she avoided attributing which of the armed groups were responsible in each incident because, she said, specific ‘attribution ... would require a comprehensive investigation by competent bodies.’^[227] In its ‘Detailed Findings’ the Pillay commission, however, has concluded in terms that ‘sexual abuse’ was committed by ‘members of the military wing of Hamas and Palestinian armed groups.’^[228]

Mondoweiss misleadingly reports Patten having told the press that she had ‘definitively not’ found ‘a pattern of sexual violence that was a strategy of Hamas.’^[229] Again that is untrue. What Patten actually said was that her team had not investigated the question of attribution given the impossibility of identifying ‘multiple perpetrators’ in ‘multiple locations and the high casualties.’^[230]

In any case, attribution seems rather academic since the UN Pillay commission has revealed that Hamas proposed, instigated and co-ordinated the 7 October attack. Training for its own Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and six other armed Palestinian groups including Palestine Islamic Jihad^[231] was under the auspices of the Palestinian Joint Operations Room led by the Qassam Brigades’ Commander, Mohammed Deif. He also exhorted all armed groups, including Arab citizens of in Israel to join in: ‘kill, burn, destroy and shut down roads ... The day has come when anyone who has a gun should

take it out. Now is the time. If you do not have a gun, take up your cleaver, axe, Molotov cocktail, truck, tractor or car.’^[232]

Pillay also echoes Patten in terms of the spread of sexual abuse. Her commission ‘identified a pattern of sexual violence^[233] ... perpetrated against women and men in several Kibbutzim, including Kfar Aza, Re’im and Nir Oz^[234] ... as well as the desecration of women’s bodies, sexual violence and other gender-based crimes ... deliberately carried out with brutal violence.’^[235] These were ‘not isolated incidents but perpetrated in similar ways in several locations and by multiple Palestinian perpetrators.’^[236]

However, the *Electronic Intifada’s* Ali Abunimah has carefully selected passages from the Pillay commission’s report that he avers confirms his view there were few if any rapes. He says Pillay has in ‘no way’ confirmed ‘sexual assaults or rapes’ took place, and that to the extent there was ‘sexual or gender-based violence’ it was merely ‘photos of individuals being partially or fully undressed.’^[237]

It is true that the Pillay commission says it was ‘not able to reach a definitive conclusion with regards to rape’ but that was not attributed to an absence of evidence but to Israel’s refusal to co-operate with her inquiry for the reasons I have explained, and which Abunimah very well knows. And he omits to say that the Pillay commission acknowledged that Patten – with whom Israel did cooperate – ‘found credible circumstantial information indicative of some forms of sexual violence, including genital mutilation, sexualized torture, or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.’^[238]

5. THE ALT-MEDIA, THE 'HANNIBAL DIRECTIVE' AND 7 OCTOBER

Both Abunimah and Blumenthal engage in similar cherry-picking on the question of how many of the approximately 1200[239] Israelis who died on 7 October were killed by IDF 'friendly fire.' Abunimah says the Pillay commission has 'of course, corroborate(d) what we've been reporting all along, that Israel killed many, if not most of its own people on October 7 with tank fire, helicopters and other types of weapons.'^[240] Presumably the subtext here is that if the IDF are trigger happy even when their own citizens are at risk, imagine what they do to Palestinians. Pillay's Commission has not corroborated either 'most' or even 'many' Israelis were killed by friendly fire on 7 October.

It does appear from credible Israeli press reports that the IDF's own soldiers were exposed to friendly fire as a consequence of a last-resort procedure known as the 'Hannibal Directive' being deployed in at least three army bases (Erez, Re'im and Nahal Oz) – which had been taken over by the invaders – to prevent soldiers being taken captive. Some soldiers may have been killed as a result. Whether Hannibal was directed at terrorists knowing they had civilian abductees with them is less clear ^[241] but even if it was, there is no evidence that 'most' or even 'many' Israelis were killed as a consequence.

Pillay's commission corroborates nothing of that sort. It simply verifies the deaths of 'up to 14' (Israeli civilians), as a possible consequence of the Hannibal Directive being applied outside of army bases: one from helicopter gunfire, and some or all of 13 hostages from tank fire at the home of Pessi Cohen in Kibbutz

Be'eri where Hamas was holding them. A recent report of the IDF's investigation into this incident says three 'light' tanks shells were fired at the pathway to the house to pressurise Hamas to surrender; a fourth shell was fired at the roof. None were aimed at harming the hostages who the IDF say were 'likely murdered by the terrorists' having threatened to fight to the death. The commission also notes a statement by a IDF tank crew confirming they had applied the Hannibal Directive by shooting at a vehicle suspected of transporting abducted IDF soldiers.^[242]

The *Grayzone's* Max Blumenthal has also contrived to show the Apache gunships killed many Israelis by not discriminating between Israelis and terrorists having 'let loose a fury of cannon and missile fire onto Israeli areas below.'^[243] His post made a virtue of relying on three Israeli media reports who'd spoken to helicopter pilots who'd flown sorties on 7 October. So selective were Blumenthal's choice of quotes, that he reversed their meaning, leading *Haaretz* to accuse him of a 'masterclass in manipulation ... crossing every journalistic boundary'^[244] The strikethrough in the text below is an example from one of the three Israeli media reports, [Ynetnews.com](https://www.ynetnews.com) Blumenthal quoted.^[245] By removing those words, the impression Blumenthal gave was that despite the 'tremendous difficulty' in distinguishing friend from foe, the Apache pilots carried on regardless, firing at a 'high rate'; whereas the full text makes it clear that it was precisely because of this difficulty, that the pilots just

targeted the flow of people coming from Gaza into Israel because they were obviously foe:

‘After the pilots realized that there was tremendous difficulty in distinguishing within the occupied outposts and settlements who was a terrorist and who was a soldier or civilian, a decision was made that the first mission of the combat helicopters and the armed Zik drones was to stop the flow of terrorists and the murderous mob that poured into Israeli territory through the gaps in the fence. 28 combat helicopters fired over the course of a day. They fired all the ammunition in their belly, in rearming rounds. These are hundreds of 30 mm cannon shells (the effect of a spray grenade for each shell) as well as the Hellfire missiles. The rate of fire against the thousands of terrorists was tremendous at first, and only at a certain point did the pilots begin to slow down the attacks and carefully select the targets.’

This unscrupulous form of agenda journalism has not stopped the alt-media sceptics from lecturing the mainstream media about ‘journalistic malpractice’ (*The Grayzone*^[246]) or the importance of journalism ‘based on facts’ (*Electronic Intifada*^[247]). Indeed, Abunimah tells us he has gone through what he refers to as Israel’s ‘so called evidence’ with ‘a fine toothcomb.’^[248]

He urges mainstream newspaper readers not to be ‘misdirect(ed) from our careful, factual reporting’^[249] which he has showcased in the series of livestreams on YouTube with his associate editor Nora Barrows-Friedman.

The New York Times: ‘peddling Israeli propaganda’?

Abunimah and Barrows-Friedman operate

out of the United States and their exchanges affect a chatty but confident informality that ape the US network breakfast shows though they are, of course, most carefully scripted. But carefully researched? Not so much.

For example, Barrows-Friedman says that ‘*The New York Times* just keeps peddling Israeli propaganda to manufacture consent for this ongoing genocide. It is atrocious and really the highest level of journalistic malpractice.’^[250]

The editorial board of *The New York Times* conspiring to ‘manufacture consent’ for ‘genocide’? Really?

The paper’s editorial board has ‘peddled’ the precise opposite:

- i. ‘This board has called many times for an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel, and we have called for mercy and reason in the current conflict’ (25 November 2023) ^[251]
- ii. ‘This war, on its current course, is leading to the wholesale killing of Palestinians. Allowing this conflict to continue unchecked is no longer acceptable.’ (24 February 2024)^[252]
- iii. ‘The suffering of civilians in Gaza — tens of thousands dead, many of them children; hundreds of thousands homeless, many at risk of starvation — has become more than a growing number of Americans can abide. Confronted with that suffering, the United States cannot remain beholden to an Israeli leader fixated on his own survival and the approval of the zealots he harbors.’ (13 April 2024) ^[253]

6. THE ELUSIVE EVIDENCE

The *Electronic Intifada*'s live stream exchanges betray a searing, zealous desperation to prove Israeli allegations of sexual violence to be entirely false. 'There should be tons of witnesses and tons of evidence including forensics and video' asserts Abunimah. 'But there just isn't'[\[254\]](#) yet the mainstream media 'provide excuse after excuse for why there is no forensic evidence, no photographs of crime scenes...' [\[255\]](#) *Mondoweiss* agrees [\[256\]](#) and *YES! Magazine* also says there is a 'striking lack of eyewitness evidence.'[\[257\]](#)

It's true that there no surviving forensic evidence of rape, no film or photographs of rape, and also that no surviving victims of rape have yet come forward in Israel. It is not, however, true that no surviving victims *exist* or that there are few eyewitnesses. There are also credible explanations for the absence of both forensic and photographic evidence of rape for perfectly obvious reasons.

'No Forensic Evidence'

Overwhelmed by the chaos of the day, with hundreds of bodies strewn across roads, Kibbutzim, the Nova festival site and surrounding fields, the priority for the Israeli authorities was to save anyone left alive, and to collect and identify the dead and bury them as soon as possible in accordance with Jewish religious law. Collecting the dead was entrusted mainly to volunteer paramedics and search and rescue personnel who were not trained to collect forensic evidence. So, none was collected or preserved. These are

the reasons Navi Pillay's UN commission also attributes to why evidence of sexual crimes, was not collected and preserved.[\[258\]](#)

At Israeli hospitals, women who survived the Hamas massacre were not even asked if they'd been sexually assaulted because that was not included in the protocol of hospitals responding to terrorist attacks[\[259\]](#) Everything else – including proving that widespread rapes had taken place – was secondary, says Orit Sulitzeanu executive director of the Association of Rape Crisis Centres in Israel. Israel had no experience of dealing with rape in wartime: 'No one could imagine what happened, actually happened.'[\[260\]](#)

Pramila Patten's UN mission also accepts this as a credible explanation for the absence of forensic evidence and points out that this is not uncommon in conflicts. She also says it is 'essential' that this absence is not 'unwittingly' taken as 'necessary to make findings regarding sexual violence.'[\[261\]](#)

'No film or photographs of rape'

The Intercept quotes approvingly their fellow sceptic, the *Guardian* columnist Owen Jones noting there was no evidence of sexual violence in the footage Israel had restricted to showing the media, whereas 'you would expect it to be the worst material they have.'[\[262\]](#) Only someone who hadn't considered there's a level of sadism beyond which even hardened members of the media might find too difficult to stomach, would

expect that. There was, as I have said, much worse which I have seen. The more knowing question is whether Jones might really have expected Hamas and others to have filmed themselves gang raping women? Hamas proudly disseminating headcam footage of murdering Jews, is one thing; filming and disseminating footage of rape quite another. 'I am sure based on our culture, based on our beliefs' that rape is 'impossible to happen' Hamas Politburo member Dr Bassam Naim told *Al Jazeera*.^[263] Given this supposed anathema to Hamas's Quranically trained soldiers, why would they allow themselves to be caught out by filming such '*haram*' conduct risking the opprobrium of their pious peers?

'No victims and accusers'

Abunimah also claims 'most glaringly of all, no living victims and accusers' have surfaced.^[264]

In fact, a female army officer Lt Tamar Bar Shimon, who survived the attack at Erez Crossing military base is reported to have testified that a gunman demanded she remove her uniform but was stopped by another gunman. They then left the room where she was hiding.^[265]

But is the failure so far of other sexually abused victims to surface – especially those who survived rape – really so surprising?

In the first place, says Patten, 'in most of these incidents victims first subjected to rape were then killed, or killed while being raped, and at least two incidents relate to the rape of women's corpses.'^[266]

However, the Israeli authorities say a number did survive. Patten says that while the actual number remains unknown, a small number of those undergoing treatment were reportedly experiencing severe mental distress and trauma.^[267] *Mondoweiss* is unpersuaded. They are 'therefore conveniently unable to talk' it cynically observes.^[268]

They are, though, talking to therapists, it seems. I have been told by those in a position to know that several therapists are handling ten survivors of rape of various ages, some of whom were gang raped. Some, I am told, were raped in ^[269] locations beyond the three (Nova music festival, Route 232 and Kibbutz Re'im) where Patten says she believes rape and gang rape occurred. Given, as Patten says, that most rape victims were then killed, if there are indeed ten survivors of rape, this begs an obvious question: that the total number of raped women may be well into double figures. I am told that the details being given by some of these survivors 'clearly match the testimonies given by eyewitnesses.'

None of this will likely cut much ice with *The Electronic Intifada*. 'Even to this day' says Abunimah 'there isn't a single living victim who has come forward and no victim at all has been positively identified'.^[270] His associate editor Asa Winstanley agrees: 'In other words, although the common refrain when it comes to allegations of rape is to 'believe women', in this case, there are still no women to believe.'^[271] Abunimah thinks that since no victims have come forward publicly, this 'raises doubts as to whether they even exist.'^[272]

Winstanley and Abunimah seem to have forgotten the time-honoured health warning not to assume that absence of evidence is evidence of absence – in this case, an absence of alternative credible explanations as to why no sexual violence victims have yet surfaced.

First, as Patten's UN mission explains, there's the 'general level of trauma coupled with sensitivities around sexual violence.'^[273] It is well recognised that the acute trauma of sexual violence often leads to reporting delays sometimes lasting years due to the victim's anxiety about how they will be judged, and even a feeling they are in some way to blame.^[274] So damaged are some victims of sexual violence in conflicts, that they have never come forward.

Second, the UN also points out that many who attended the Nova music festival were 'scattered across Israel, and some have moved to or returned to third countries.'^[275] According to the French press, one surviving rape victim is now in France. 'Esther' – the pseudonymous name the French daily *Le Parisien* have given her – reports that a relative with her at the festival (reportedly her Godmother) was also raped,^[276] although her allegation has not been independently verified.

The Case of Gal Abdush

The only dead victim alleged to have been raped who has so far been named is a mother of two young boys, Gal Abdush. In their report 'Screams Without Words' *The New York Times* disclosed that the Israeli police believe a video of her body in a black

dress, lying on her back indicated she had been raped. Her dress was pulled up to her waist, her legs were spread, and her vagina exposed,^[277] one of at least twenty corpses with partially or fully exposed intimate body parts like breasts and genitalia to be found.^[278]

Mondoweiss^[279] challenged the report's veracity following which Ali Abunimah triumphantly dismissed it as the story 'that totally fell apart,'^[280] since when the fate of this 34-year-old mother has become the focus of an unseemly public fight over who has got it right: the *Times* or the alt-media sceptics.

Based on the evidence of Gal Abdush's last moments disclosed by her family,^[281] the sceptics insist it's impossible for her to have been raped. At 7am on Saturday 7 October her husband Nagi phoned his brother Nassim to say she had just been shot in the heart^[282] in front of him but he had not mentioned anything about her having been sexually assaulted.^[283] Nagi's last call was 44 minutes later in which he asked the family to 'look after the children.' He too was murdered sometime after that.^[284]

'Screams Without Proof' more like, says *The Grayzone*, parodying the *Times*' headline.^[285] The *Electronic Intifada* said the Abdush story was part of the paper's 'emotionally manipulative fraud' to distract from 'Israel's genocide in Gaza' and shows that the 'mass rape story is falling apart.'^[286] Yet it's not clear that the Abdush story has fallen apart. There are still too many unresolved issues about the case.

Patten's UN mission references 'accounts of individuals who witnessed at least two incidents of rape of corpses of women.'^[287] That hideous possibility cannot be ruled out in Gal Abdush's case. Her body was not found for at least 17 hours. A car mechanic called Eden Wessely came across the body whilst she was out looking for a missing friend.^[288] Footage shot by Wessely shows Gal's limbs had been partly mutilated with extensive burns to her body and face. In what appears to be a reference to her case, the UN Pillay commission's 'detailed findings' on the 7 October attack, reveals that in the opinion of a forensic pathologist, she had burns covering 'at least 45 percent of her total body surface, with a fourth-degree burn on the left side of the head.'^[289]

Her family are reported to have said the burns came from a grenade attack.^[290] The forensic pathologist says her burns were 'most likely due to a fire ignited by the perpetrators using an accelerant' and that her body 'showed signs of having been moved from its original position.'^[291] This begs the question: before setting fire to her body, was it then that the perpetrators lifted her skirt exposing her genitals and perhaps worse?

The Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* has independently reported that two Israeli forensic pathologists have concluded the position of Gal Abdush's body is consistent with sexual assault and that the Police have told *Haaretz* it remains their view that Wessely's video indicates she 'underwent sexual violence.' For their part, the *New York Times* say they stand by their story.^[292]

The murder of Gal Abdush was at one of seven locations where *The New York Times*' investigation 'Screams Without Words' running to 3380 words said Israeli women and girls appear to have been sexually assaulted or mutilated. Like *The Intercept*, all the other alt-media outlets leapt on the report as an example of the mainstream media breathing new life into the Israeli war effort with dubious or even fake stories just as the pressure on Israel from its allies to be more restrained in Gaza was growing.^[293] *The Intercept* spent 6600 words critiquing not just the Gal Abdush story, but other examples of sexual abuse given by the *Times*.

The *Times* did not get everything right. They quoted an Israeli air force combat paramedic's claim to have found two teenage girls who'd been raped and shot in Kibbutz Be'eri despite four weeks earlier *Mondoweiss* having shown this to be inherently unlikely^[294] and raising legitimate doubts about the paramedic's credibility.^[295] Only after the Kibbutz also denied the girls had been raped did the *Times* correct the story.^[296] The paper also cited Yossi Landau, the southern regional head of ZAKA, despite the fact that *Haaretz* had already shown his claim to have seen a foetus sliced from a woman's stomach to be untrue.^[297] The *Intercept* also revealed that one of the co-authors of the *Times* story, Anat Schwartz, had 'liked' a social media post advocating turning Gaza into a 'slaughterhouse.'^[298]

However, it would appear that *The New York Times* got more right than they got wrong. Their original story claimed to have found

seven locations where sexual violence took place. Independently of the newspaper, between them, both Pramila Patten and Navi Pillay's UN inquiries have subsequently identified at least five locations where rape, gang rape and sexual violence occurred and indicated that it may well have occurred in several other locations. And although Landau has been shown by alt media and most convincingly by *AlJazeera* to be a source whose word cannot be trusted,[299] it would be rash to conclude that no ZAKA witness could therefore be relied on. For example, Itzik Itah, a ZAKA search and rescue volunteer says he found a man 'all

burned with his fingers chopped off.' [300] At least two bodies – an IDF Lieutenant and an 80 year old man – were found with fingers severed.[301] Itah also says ZAKA found a couple undressed and bound together in a home in Kibbutz Be'eri. Patten's UN mission says they received 'credible information about bodies found naked and/or tied' in Be'eri, in one case 'gagged.' [302] Of course, this doesn't *prove* they were victims of sexual violence, but as the UN mission says 'notably the pattern of female victims found undressed and bound' in Be'eri 'may be indicative of some forms of sexual violence.' [303]

7. THE ABUSE OF THE HOSTAGES

Amongst the 252 hostages abducted on 7 October, were 90 women and girls. Ten of the 36 children abducted were taken with parents or other family members. *The Grayzone* has been keen to emphasise that some released hostages have said they were treated humanely by Palestinians who took them captive.[304] *The Electronic Intifada* has also given short shrift to allegations that amongst the 252 hostages there has been sexual abuse.[305] The evidence is against them. The UN Pillay commission finds that 'many abductions were carried out with physical, mental and sexual violence.' [306] Pramila Patten's UN mission has also, found 'clear and convincing information that hostages have been sexually abused 'including rape' and 'sexualized torture and sexualized cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.' [307] She has explained that 'clear and convincing' means

evidence that is 'above reasonable grounds to believe.' [308] Her report also said it had 'reasonable grounds' to believe that hostages are still being sexually abused.' [309]

Ever desperate, as it seems, to undermine such evidence, Asa Winstanley and Ali Abunimah of *The Electronic Intifada* say the UN mission has failed to explain what this 'convincing information' is or where it comes from. [310] Yet the sourcing is surely obvious: hostages who have been released like 17 year old Agam Goldstein Almog (whose father Nadav and older sister were murdered in front of her and her mother during their abduction). She has said publicly 'many girls experienced severe sexual abuse, they are injured – very, very serious and complex injuries that are not being treated. I can't even imagine what their situation is, what hope they hold on to.' [311]

Medics who have treated some of the freed hostages say it is clear there has been sexual abuse. Dr. Itai Pessach, Assistant Professor of Paediatrics at Tel Aviv University,^[312] says at least 10 male and female hostages were sexually assaulted or abused.^[313] Some 120 hostages are still unaccounted for although only about half are now thought to have survived,^[314] of which at least nine are believed to be women.^[315] If and when any survivors are released, Dr Pessach says he is 'scared of what we're going to meet. We're ready for the unthinkable possibility of pregnancies and for needing to provide help in very very difficult decisions that they and their loved ones will face when they come back.'^[316]

Empathy for the hostages amongst some in the alt-media seems in short supply, however. With his livestream partner Barrows-Friedman nodding in agreement, Abunimah harks back to his preoccupation about allegations of rape being 'based on exploiting people's belief ... inculcated into them, drummed into them by decades of propaganda that Arab men, Muslim men, third world men, black men ... are inherently wild and dangerous, and after our women, and this is exactly what this story is relying on.'^[317]

Like Pramila Patten, the International Criminal Court prosecutor Karim Khan KC seems satisfied the allegations of sexual violence in captivity are credible. There are 'reasonable grounds to believe' that hostages have been 'kept in inhumane conditions' he says, having 'reached that conclusion based on medical records, contemporaneous video and documentary evidence, and interviews with victims and survivors.'^[318] Not that you'd

sense that from Abunimah and Barrows-Friedman's dismissal of the ordeal of 21-year-old hostage, Mia Schem a French-Israeli who was abducted by 'Palestinian resistance' (as Barrows-Friedman puts it) during the music festival and released last November.

BARROWS-FRIEDMAN: ... (*looking incredulous*) ... God, she was saying something like, there was a guard that was watching over her, basically raped her, her with his eyes (*looking even more incredulous*), and that this was her Holocaust. She also describes the ... you know, the evilness of the children that she met who wouldn't share their candy with her just you know, like, but but basically crying, saying that she was almost, you know, basically raped...

ABUNIMAH: ... but without being raped...!

BARROWS-FRIEDMAN: ... without being raped! (*nodding head forcefully*)

ABUNIMAH: Yeah. Yeah, let's just be clear about that.

BARROWS-FRIEDMAN: Yeah

ABUNIMAH: At no point does she claim that anyone laid a finger on her in that sense.

BARROWS-FRIEDMAN: Right.^[319]

Again, that's untrue. As festival goers were dying around her, Mia Schem sped away in her car with a friend but was shot in the arm by a Hamas gunman who came alongside her and fired into the car. Her arm became 'totally detached. I lost a ton of blood' she told Israel's Channel 13.^[320] 'I picked up my arm from the floor, held it and stayed on the floor.' Other cars

were being shot at, ‘cars swaying to the right, to the left, tyres screeching, men and women screaming.’ She played dead while Hamas seized her friend. But the car was burning so she had to get out. A gunman then seized her – ‘he starts touching me ... touching my upper body ... he realises my arm is detached from my body. I guess it startles him, so he pauses for a second ... and calls out to a car’ to which she was pulled into by her hair. She had no idea she was being taken to Gaza. Barely conscious, ‘I just thought to myself I don’t want to die and may God save me.’ In Gaza her arm was roughly put into a splint, and she was taken to the home of one of her abductors in the car where, she said, he sat watch by her bedside:

‘(I was) closed in a dark room, not allowed to talk, not allowed to be seen, to be heard, hidden. There is a terrorist looking at you 24/7, looking, raping you with his eyes ... there is a fear of being raped, there is a fear of dying ... I was frightened. His wife was outside the room with the children. That was the only reason he didn't rape me.’

Straining to counter evidence that members of the ‘Resistance’ had behaved in a ‘wild and dangerous’ way lusting after Israeli women, Abunimah continued: ‘you could have 1000 women who come out of Gaza ... and say, nobody touched me; that doesn't take away from the one who ... could provide a credible account or if there was evidence. But nobody is coming out and saying that...’[\[321\]](#)

That’s also turned out to be untrue. Amit Soussana is a 40-year-old lawyer and the first free hostage to speak about how she was forced to have sex with her captor called Muhammad.

She told *The New York Times* she was held alone in a child’s bedroom, chained by her left ankle. A few days after she was captured, she says Muhammad probed her about her sex life. He would also sit beside her, lift her shirt and touch her.[\[322\]](#)

She says Muhammad seemed obsessed with when her period was due. She feared he would make a move when it was over, so she pretended it was going on for much longer than it did. When she could no longer keep up the pretence, Muhammad unlocked her chain, left her to wash in the bathroom, then returned and ‘shoved the gun at my forehead.’ He forced her to remove her towel by hitting her, then dragged her back to the bedroom where he forced her to ‘commit a sexual act on him’ at gunpoint.[\[323\]](#)

At the outset of this conflict the pro-Hamas UK activist Dr. Anas Altikriti who regards 7 October as an ‘incredible victory and triumph for the people of Gaza’[\[324\]](#) assured everyone that hostages would be ‘looked after, cared for even more than the actual citizens of Gaza’ because they provide a ‘negotiating card’ for ‘the resistance.’[\[325\]](#) Perhaps Altikriti watches too much Hamas propaganda on its Telegram channel. ‘Look at the mercy in our hearts’ said one Hamas terrorist to camera in Holit with two siblings aged 4 and four months. ‘We did not kill them.’ Instead, Hamas had just killed their mother – in front of them. The clip showed that her killer wore a green band distinctive of al-Qassam Brigades.[\[326\]](#)

So far at least 62 hostages are reported by Israel to have died in captivity.[\[327\]](#) So little of what Hamas or its supporters say can be taken at

face value, except perhaps their threat to repeat 7 October: were they to get the chance, Hamas would repeat it ‘again and again’ says Ghazi Hamad, a member of Hamas’s Politburo. ‘The Al Aqsa Flood is just the first time, and there will be a second, a third, a fourth, because we have the determination, the resolve and the capabilities to fight. Will we have to pay a price? Yes, and we are ready to pay it. We are called a nation of martyrs, and we are proud to sacrifice martyrs.’[\[328\]](#)

Abunimah appears to have great difficulty in accepting almost any statement from Israelis at face value, irrespective of whether they are government representatives or victims. He scoffs that Soussana never referred to being sexually abused when she gave a brief press conference in January, as if that undermines her story. [\[329\]](#) Abunimah makes the basic error of not knowing what he doesn’t know. I understand Soussana’s account is consistent with what she told two doctors and a social worker when she was freed on 30 November, and that she also made it clear then that she did not wish to be labelled as a victim of sexual violence. I also understand Soussana gave evidence to Pramila Patten and only decided to go public later because she became concerned that ‘denialism is getting stronger and stronger.’[\[330\]](#) Yet it’s not clear that anything short of film of the ‘sexual act’ Muhammad forced Soussana to perform on him would fully convince Abunimah it happened. ‘Soussana does not claim that there are any, any witnesses to what she says she experienced in Gaza’ he says.[\[331\]](#) Given what Muhammad forced her at gun point to do to him, this depth of scepticism feels like desperate stuff.

Another freed hostage Moran Stella Yanai, a 40-year-old jewellery designer was held captive with an 18-year-old girl who had only her pyjamas for clothes.[\[332\]](#) Freed last November, Yanai says that while she was not raped, other captives whispered their first-hand accounts of rape to her.[\[333\]](#) She says she speaks some Arabic and recalls their captors discussing who would take the women as their wives, and how, every time they moved house, they were told they had to be ‘examined’ to ‘see that you’re not hiding something on you.’[\[334\]](#) She finds it difficult to talk about that except to say that the ‘sexual degradation I went through is beyond words.’[\[335\]](#) She also says the conditions in which she was held ‘were so difficult and so hard. The hygiene is so horrible – you can die from any disease.’ Some of the hostages had untreated bullet wounds and ‘body parts they don’t have any more.’ Two of her captors used to ‘point to their heart and say “we don’t have emotion.” They have so much hatred in their hearts.’[\[336\]](#)

None of these horror stories from released hostages appear to have elicited much sympathy from the icy Barrows–Friedman and Abunimah. ‘Even to this day, there isn’t a single living victim who has come forward and no victim at all has been positively identified’ says Abunimah. ‘We only have the very dubious and non-credible eyewitness accounts that we looked at in earlier live streams...’ to which Barrows–Friedman replies ‘Incredible...’[\[337\]](#)

Except that some of those eyewitness accounts do appear to have been credible to Pramila Patten’s UN mission who, unlike Abunimah and Barrows–Friedman (sitting in the United States) has spoken to them face to face in Israel.

8. THE WITNESSES

Patten says that amongst the 34 confidential interviews her expert team conducted were ‘survivors and witnesses.’^[338] She doesn’t name them and says some (believed to be mostly ZAKA) retracted statements previously made.^[339] However, her finding that ‘multiple incidents of rape, including gang rape, occurred in and around the Nova festival site’ was based partly on what she describes as ‘credible statements by eyewitnesses.’ She also states that ‘credible information was obtained regarding multiple incidents whereby victims were subjected to rape and then killed’ and that ‘other credible sources at the Nova music festival site described seeing multiple murdered individuals, mostly women, whose bodies were found naked from the waist down, some totally naked, with some gunshots in the head and/or tied including with their hands bound behind their backs and tied to structures such as trees or poles.’^[340]

A steady stream of witnesses underpinning Patten’s findings has been emerging but neither the *Electronic Intifada*, nor *The Grayzone*, *Mondoweiss* or *YES! Magazine* appears to consider any of them credible – even though they have never spoken to them. Abunimah refers to them as ‘very dubious and non-credible’ ^[341] ... ‘supposed eye witnesses.’ ^[342] ‘We’re looking at one of the biggest media scandals of our time’ says *The Grayzone*’s Max Blumenthal. ‘One journalist after another at august enlightened liberal publications has been led into publishing one fabrication after another by a government

that had curated witnesses to present a story in order to justify genocide.’^[343] *Mondoweiss* has said that ‘the small number of existing witnesses ... have already been largely discredited’^[344] – so small, it’s even been suggested by the producer of the Al Jazeera documentary *October 7*, there are ‘effectively only two witnesses.’^[345]

To my knowledge, there are at least nine named witnesses who have testified to what they saw and heard from their different hideouts. Six say they saw rape with their own eyes, and three claim to have heard women being attacked in a way that sounded very much like sexual assault. I have been told there are at least a further six eyewitnesses^[346] to rape who have come forward to an Israeli mental health organisation called SafeHeart^[347] who are providing counselling and treatment through clinical psychologists, psychiatrists and clinical social workers to hundreds of 7 October survivors. I understand that none of these six additional eyewitnesses have so far gone public with their evidence. That makes a total of at least 15 witnesses to rape so far – not ‘effectively only two.’

Rami Shmuel

There are many more who in the immediate aftermath of 7 October say they witnessed evidence consistent with widespread sexual violence – like Rami Shmuel who, as organiser of a music festival at the site on 5 and 6 October, had – fatefully as it turned out – successfully applied to extend it to

7 October. He was not present on the 7th but returned on the 8th and every day after that for nine days, and says he participated in the search for survivors and bodies. He says he spent six further days gathering their scattered belongings like sunglasses, phones, IDs, shoes and bags to return to the families.^[348] In the course of this marathon search, Shmuel says he came across the bodies of ‘three young ladies lying on the dirt, they were naked from the waist down, their legs were spread open ... I can only imagine ... because (of) the way we saw them, the way we found them, it’s like they didn’t just rape them and abuse them, sexually, they humiliated them. The way they killed them, executed them, murdered them, it’s something that monsters only do.’^[349] However, *Mondoweiss* considers the fact that Schmuels Facebook account^[350] of his first day’s search on 8 October makes no reference to seeing half naked bodies undermines his credibility.^[351] Again, this is thin gruel.

*Ruth Halperin-Kaddari
and the Female Sergeant*

Ruth Halperin-Kaddari, an Israeli law professor at Bar-Ilan University says she has heard direct the testimony of a female sergeant at the Nahal Oz army base one kilometre from the Gaza border. A former vice chair of the UN Committee on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Halperin-Kaddari accompanied Pramila Patten and her team on their visit to the base. The sergeant described how from her hideout, she heard a soldier being raped and when she emerged saw her naked body.^[352] The sergeant ‘took us through every minute

of what went on that day’ Halperin Kaddari told me. ‘She described how she heard the girl screaming, and the terrorist’s heavy breathing. It was clear what was going on because she also understood Arabic. She took us to the exact place where she was hiding and told us how one of her soldiers was pointing a gun at her because they were afraid the terrorists would find them and try to take her alive. And they decided that couldn’t happen because she knew too much about the technical systems at the base. She was prepared to be shot, an incredibly brave woman.’ I understand Patten’s team found the sergeant’s story credible but was unable to verify ‘at this point.’^[353]

‘Sabaya’

However, sex with the youngest female soldiers on mandatory military service at Nahal Oz was on the minds of some of their Hamas captors judging by their lascivious comments to their captives. Footage recovered from Hamas bodycams shows the soldiers with hands bound behind their backs, and visible injuries to the face, arms knees and ankles and feet. Pointing to the heavily bloodstained women, some in underpants, one member of Hamas is filmed saying: ‘Here are the girls’.^[354] He then uses the Arabic word ‘*Sabaya* ... these are the Zionists’, to which another member of Hamas responds in English ‘so beautiful’. The IDF translation says ‘*Sabaya*’ in this context connotes sex, specifically ‘women’ young enough to ‘get pregnant.’^[355] An *Al Jazeera* journalist Laila Al-Arian insists that translation simply plays ‘on racist and orientalist tropes about

Arabs and Muslims.’ The word ‘*Sabaya*’, she says, doesn’t have sexual connotations’, it just means ‘female captive’ and no-one should believe the IDF because it has ‘been repeatedly caught lying to media.’[356] However, the word ‘*Sabaya*’ was revived by ISIS to give the slave owner privileges as applied to the captors of Yezidi women. These privileges included allowing sex, consensual or otherwise, in other words what we would call rape.[357] As observed by Aymenn J. Al-Tamimi of Swansea University, where he has specialised in historical narratives used by ISIS propaganda, had the Hamas gunman not intended a sexual undertone, he could just as easily have used a standard Arabic word for female war captives, *asirat*. [358]

What the edited clip didn’t show was the 15 sprawled bodies some on top of each other, of their murdered colleagues some half-dressed. No massacre has ever been so intimately captured on 7 October, but for me, the pictures of this death pile caught one of the most poignant images of the day: girls barely out of their teens unarmed and so patently *hors de combat* catapulted into a nightmare for which no one had prepared them, yet still their killers had not the heart to show them mercy.

Most female soldiers at the outpost were either killed or abducted.[359] A male witness has told the UN Pillay commission that he found the bodies of two female soldiers which had been isolated from the others with their pyjamas pulled down to their knees. They had been shot.[360] A video published by Hamas shows them standing over the body of one of the women who appears to be

undressed, as he screams ‘God is great.’[361] Four female bodies showed signs of physical abuse and sexual violence, according to the commission.[362]

The seven bloodied and battered survivors must have been terrified they were about to share the same fate. When one of the soldiers, 19-year-old Liri Albag asks if any of the gunmen speaks English, she is told: ‘I want you be quiet.’ Another yells: ‘Our brothers died because of you, we will shoot you all.’[363] A voice reportedly can be heard saying ‘why don’t you speak Arabic, you cows.’[364]

Music Festival Witnesses

The three (civilian) music festival witnesses who from their separate hideouts say they didn’t see, but heard what sounded like women being sexually assaulted are:

Ron Freger: ‘I was lying in a pit (and) I heard (a girl) yelling: “They’re raping me, they’re raping me!”’ Several minutes later, he says he heard gunshots close by and she fell silent. ‘The feeling in that moment is one of complete powerlessness. I’m lying in this hole, and I have no ability to do anything. I have no weapon, I have nothing, I’m surrounded by other people who are hiding with me and we’re completely powerless.’[365]

Gad Liberson: ‘I heard gunfire, bursts over our heads, and girls speaking in English: “Help”, “No”, “Please” ... The girls were crying. It sounded like they were being raped. They take them to the pickup trucks, they cry, they scream. They shoot them. I heard men’s voices screaming, and when I heard

shots, they immediately stopped screaming. I heard the girls for a long time.'[\[366\]](#)

Tali Binner: She says she was hiding with friends in a trailer and heard a girl that 'started to yell for a long time – it was like “please ... don't ... no, no, stop, stop. Stop! No, no.” It was like she was asking someone to stop. What can they stop? Someone is abusing her someone touching her, someone is doing something ... when you hear this chaos for like 20 minutes or 15 minutes, you understand that something much worse is happening right over there. And it's not – it doesn't stop. That was the time when I started to be afraid. I'm going to be raped. I thought about the fact that I have piercing in an intimate place like, and I was thinking about: how can I take it off as fast as possible? Because they probably will rip it off.'[\[367\]](#)

That's the kind of detail, I suggest, from a credible witness, someone literally so terrified that what she was hearing, would soon happen to her. Tali Binner gave this account to a documentary in April. But like all the other witnesses, Abunimah doesn't seem to buy this one either. 'I could find no previous interview or statement from Tali Binner making any allegation that she was a witness to any kind of sexual assault' he says. [\[368\]](#) So what? She did give an interview to Israel's Channel 13 on 11 November, but because she didn't then share a deeply traumatising experience with the Israeli public, Abunimah appears to see this as evidence of her making it up in April.

Binner continued: 'And then I'm starting to calculate why it is worse to get kidnapped

or to be raped or to get shot. What's worse, what's better?' She said she heard girls yelling from both sides of the trailer 'like surrounded me. There were so many noises of women different women, not only one. I also heard a couple – she didn't say words, like, she was just screaming. And he begged for someone to leave her. I remembered that he said “Leave her, leave her alone.” The guy was crying I heard him and for a long time.' The screaming ended when Tali Binner says she heard shots.[\[369\]](#)

Then there is the evidence of two witnesses who have graphically described two more incidents of gang rape: a 26-year-old accountant whose first name the Israeli police have given as 'Sapir'[\[370\]](#) and a young ex special forces soldier, Raz Cohen, now a security consultant. The police have released details of Sapir's interview and both she and Cohen spoke to *The New York Times*.

'Sapir'

First Sapir. Having escaped from the festival with a bullet wound in her back, she managed to get four miles away before feeling faint. She then hid under foliage from a tree. She testifies that some 15 metres away she saw heavily armed men, mostly in military fatigues, pulling up in trucks cars and motorcycles, passing 'between them assault rifles, grenades, small missiles — and badly wounded women.' She told the *Times* she then witnessed five of them being raped. The first victim, a woman with copper coloured hair, was made to bend over by being pulled by her hair while another man penetrated her. She then watched another woman 'shredded into

pieces' with one man slicing off her breast while another raped her. Her breast was then tossed to others to play with. Her face was also sliced, then the woman fell out of view. Sapir also claims to have seen three other women raped and 'terrorists carrying the severed heads of three more women.'^[371] Abunimah ridicules Sapir's evidence – another instalment in a 'genocidal propaganda campaign, not based on any credible evidence.'^[372] Both he and *YES! Magazine's* Arun Gupta regards her claim about severed heads to be 'utterly outlandish.'^[373]

Speak Up, a feminist initiative founded in Egypt in July 2020 against sexual harassment and violence, condemned *The New York Times'* report as 'disgraceful.' Which sits oddly with Speak Up's 'vision' seeking a 'society free from gender-based violence, where every individual is empowered to voice their experiences' – unless that individual trying to voice her experience, is Israeli, or so it seems. Weighing into the *Times*, Speak Up said the acts described by Sapir would 'typically leave substantial physical evidence yet the narrative does not mention any supporting forensic or physical proof to validate these events, not even the bodies.' Here again the *Times* was accused of 'weaponizing sexual violence against woman for occupation propaganda.'^[374]

Like Abunimah, Aaron Maté of *The Grayzone* also dismissed Sapir as 'a transparent fraud ... where is the evidence of a severed breast and severed heads? Who really believes this insanity?'^[375] It seems that the answer is that Lahav 433 does, the Israeli police unit sometimes dubbed the Israeli FBI. Chief

Superintendent David Katz head of Lahav 433's Cyber Unit told me that Sapir 'took us to the specific spot where she was hiding from terrorists, she fingered the specific spot where the terrorists raped the Israeli women, and in this spot, we found the clothes of these women...'^[376] A bag was also found. *The New York Times* later reported that 'Israeli officials' had found three severed heads farther away.^[377] This has also been confirmed to me by a source close to the investigation. Pramila Patten also says that 'both attempted and actual decapitation' of bodies was revealed by 'photos and videos' her UN team reviewed and that there was generally 'widespread mutilation of bodies.'^[378]

Katz also told me: 'The evidence shows without any doubt that there was a sadistic abuse of dead bodies, cutting breasts from women, chopping organs from dead bodies, decapitating heads of dead bodies.' When I asked to see corroboration, I was shown a photograph of a woman, both of whose breasts had been severed. Abunimah complains that 'none of these details' (about severed heads and clothes being found) were in *The New York Times* original story.^[379] The Police say that's because they deliberately released only a part of Sapir's evidence. 'We needed to show the world, which unbelievably didn't believe us about sexual violence, and on the other hand, we needed to protect the investigation' said Chief Superintendent Mirit Ben Mayor, head of communications for the Israeli police.^[380]

Nevertheless, Abunimah argues that Sapir's evidence is further undermined by contradictory evidence from 22-year-old

Yura Karol with whom Sapir was hiding under foliage. On 28 December, *The New York Times* quoted Karol as telling them that he ‘barely lifted his head to look at the road but he also described seeing a woman raped and killed.’^[381] The previous month *Haaretz* referred briefly to what sounds like the same incident but without any names: ‘Another witness who has recounted the incident to police was the man who was hiding behind the eyewitness and didn’t see the rape. He said she told him at the time what she saw.’^[382] Abunimah complains that what Karol told *The New York Times* is ‘completely different to what he was previously reported as saying.’^[383] On its face Abunimah has a point, unless the *Haaretz* reporter Josh Breiner was paraphrasing a headline summary of what he was *told* Karol had *told* the police which seems possible. Double hearsay is not the most reliable basis for comparing disputed testimonies. Breiner declined to respond to my request for clarification, presumably because of source sensitivity. So, without knowing precisely the verbatim that Karol had given the police in the first place, and what precisely Breiner was told Karol had said and by whom, it’s not possible to be sure that Karol did, in fact, give two conflicting accounts. When the *Times* put the apparent contradiction to Karol, he stood by the account he had given them on 28 December. ^[384] The bottom line is that however ‘outlandish’ Messrs Abunimah and Gupta might find Sapir’s evidence, my understanding is that Patten and her team who actually interviewed Sapir assessed her as a credible witness.^[385] To the best of my knowledge they have not, observing events

as they do, from the United States.

An unnamed witness and her boyfriend are reported to have said they saw a rape similar to the one Sapir and Karol say they witnessed, albeit in a different location. Hiding in a shelter, the women witness told Lahav 433, the police unit investigating 7 October, that she saw men dressed in olive-toned fatigues ‘forcing’ their victim to ‘bend forward and then someone raped her. She was alive, and then she fell silent. She was raped and then killed.’^[386]

Raz Cohen

Turning to the witness Raz Cohen, *The Intercept* says Cohen has told ‘varying, sometimes contradictory, versions of what he witnessed’;^[387] Arun Gupta of *YES! magazine* asserts: ‘Cohen’s story changes repeatedly.’^[388] *The Electronic Intifada*’s Nora Barrows-Friedman dismisses him as ‘another supposed witness’ to rape. Abunimah says that ‘we and other outlets have pointed out how Cohen’s accounts have kept changing over time, including how in his initial statements about October 7, Cohen made no mention of a rape.’ He flat out accuses Cohen of ‘evasions and lies.’ ^[389]

It is not true that Cohen kept changing his story or that he made no mention of rape in his first interview, so let me address the latter first.

That interview was conducted by Israel’s i24 News on 9 October.^[390] It is true that in the clip that i24News broadcast of Cohen’s interview with reporter Ariel Oseran, he made no mention of rape. However, Oseran

has said Cohen cut the interview short because he needed to get to hospital and that off camera, Cohen *did* say he'd witnessed rape. Later that night Oseran told viewers that Cohen had 'shared with me some horrifying atrocities that he witnessed': armed men with knives 'undressing Israeli women' and he 'could hear them raping them' and 'laughing constantly.'^[391] The 'fine toothcomb'^[392] with which Abunimah boasted he had combed through what he's described as 'the so-called evidence' of Israeli sources, seems to have missed this one.

Undeterred, Abunimah and *The Grayzone's* editor Max Blumenthal argue that Cohen's subsequent 'stories' have 'changed over time' in four ways by: a) telling *The New York Times* on 28 December that he 'personally witnessed a white van filled with Hamas militants ... gather over a woman, and gang rape her', whereas in previous interviews he hadn't identified the perpetrators as Hamas;^[393] b) in some interviews not mentioning rape at all; c) in interviews where he did mention rape, saying he'd only heard *sounds* of rape, while in others, saying he'd actually *witnessed* rape;^[394] d) in some interviews referring to seeing *one woman raped*, while in others referring to *rapes* (plural). 'Those claims are inconsistent with each other' insists Abunimah.^[395] They are, unless you interrogate each claim carefully when it becomes clear there is no real inconsistency at all.

I count Cohen having given 11 interviews and written one brief article about how he survived 7 October. Taking each of the Abunimah – Blumenthal claims in turn:

Inconsistency over naming Hamas

In neither Cohen's interview with the *New York Times* nor any other interview does he name Hamas as the perpetrators, as Blumenthal inaccurately claims. The reverse. From Cohen's first interview on 9 October, he referred to them as 'regular Gazans, these were not members of any special unit, military unit by Hamas.'^[396] In his interview with the *New York Times*, he is quoted as saying the perpetrators were wearing 'civilian clothes.' Cohen has been consistent about this.

Not mentioning rape in some interviews

In eight of Cohen's eleven interviews he mentions rape,^[397] and in a ninth refers to 'The terrorists captured women and hurt them in any (every) way possible way and when they finished carrying out their plan, they started slaughtering them in front of their friends...'^[398] which to me, sounds like a reference to sexual abuse. In only two interviews does Cohen not mention rape, presumably because these focus solely on his survival, although in one (Tik-Tok) he does say he saw people 'slaughtered with knives' and hearing 'screams';^[399] the other (Canada CBC) is very brief.^[400] His article was written for a site inviting survivors to explain how they eluded the gunmen.^[401]

Hearing or seeing rape

Abunimah and Blumenthal point to Cohen having told *The New York Times* on

28 December that he witnessed ‘five men with knives dragging a naked woman who was screaming ... one penetrates her ... then one of them raises a knife ... and they just slaughter her’ [402] whereas the i24News journalist Ariel Oseran reported Cohen on 9 October saying he ‘chose not to look but he could hear them laughing constantly.’[403] Yet Cohen has also described the same event in another TV interview in April 2024 explaining that he did both: he turned his eyes away only when the woman was being stabbed because ‘I didn’t want to look. And when I looked again, she was already dead.’[404] In other words, according to Cohen, he both saw and heard. Again, no substantive inconsistency.

One woman or women (plural) raped

Abunimah and Blumenthal also consider significant the fact that in an interview with the American Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) Cohen said ‘people from Gaza raped girls (*i.e. plural*), after they raped them, they killed them, they murdered them with knives’[405] whereas in other interviews he refers to seeing only one girl raped.

Barrows-Friedman smiles as if this is another ‘Gotcha!’ moment. ‘Yeah’ replies Abunimah ‘so as you can see there, (Cohen) seems to be talking about a number of rapes. But in *The New York Times*, it’s only one.’ ‘Yeah’ says Barrow Friedman.[406] This really does clutch at straws. It’s actually in five interviews[407] that Cohen consistently refers to seeing one woman raped because in those interviews, he is specifically asked

to go into detail about what he actually witnessed. For example, in his interview with CNN, he spends 4 minutes talking about the horrific ordeal endured by the rape victim.[408] The principal focus of the other four interviews in which Cohen briefly refers to ‘girls’ or ‘women’ being raped, is on how he escaped and survived by hiding in the bush for hours. His references to knowing ‘girls/women’ were raped is presumably an assumption that girls were raped because he himself had witnessed a girl being raped.[409] Or maybe it’s a grammar slip – English isn’t his first language! Either way, it does not feel to me to be significant and hardly persuasive that he is inventing the whole story.

You have to listen to all of Cohen’s interviews to get a sense of his credibility, which to me feels real. The anguish he felt at his impotence at saving the woman is palpable: ‘I peek through the leaves, through the branches, they started pulling her from every direction and they stripped her. It was rape. And then I look but I don’t want to look ... and it was impossible to help her, it would have been suicide. I don’t know ... after all if they have weapons, what can we do? Throw leaves and branches at them? There was nothing we could do. I wish, I wish, I wish we had weapons there.’[410] Asked on CNN: ‘What do you say to the people who deny that these things happened?’ Cohen’s response is definitive: ‘It’s a fact. I don’t lie. What I saw – it’s what happened. If someone say (*sic*) it’s not happened, he’s a liar. Because until this moment that I stand here and talk with you I’m always think (*sic*) about what

I saw in this moment in the bush.’^[411] Had Cohen been motivated by causing maximum damage to Hamas, he could have invented the fact that the rapists were in military fatigues. But his story remained constant across his interviews: the rapists, mostly armed with knives were ‘five guys, five civilians from Gaza, normal civilians, not soldiers from Nukhba’s soldiers.’^[412]

Shoam Gueta

Hiding in the streambed with Cohen was 24-year-old fashion designer Shoam Gueta. He told *The New York Times* he saw at least four men step out of the van and attack the woman, who ended up ‘between their legs.’ He said they were ‘talking, giggling and shouting,’ and that one of them stabbed her with a knife repeatedly, ‘literally butchering her.’^[413] *The Electronic Intifada* are on Gueta’s case too. ‘Obviously this is very convincing’ Barrows-Friedman tells Abunimah sarcastically. ‘I mean, don’t you find it convincing?’ she asks with a snigger.^[414]

Naturally, Abunimah does not. He recalls that on 8 October Gueta had told NBC he ‘watched as a woman was cut with a knife.’^[415] He complains that ‘there’s no mention ... of any rape’ to NBC, and nor did *The New York Times* ‘quote Gueta specifically saying the woman was raped.’^[416] Yet what other meaning could realistically be attributed to Gueta’s horrifying picture of a woman ‘who ended up between’ the ‘legs’ of her male captors? The fact that Gueta then describes one of those captors as ‘literally butchering’

her with a knife is entirely consistent with what he told both NBC and *The New York Times* and also with Cohen’s account.

Yoni Saadon

On 2 December another music festival survivor 39-year-old Yoni Saadon said he too witnessed a gang rape. He told the *Sunday Times* much respected war correspondent Christina Lamb who has vastly more experience of reporting sexual violence in conflict zones than any of these alt-media armchair journalists: ‘I saw this beautiful woman with the face of an angel and eight or ten of the fighters beating and raping her. She was screaming, “Stop it – already I’m going to die anyway from what you are doing, just kill me!” When they finished, they were laughing, and the last one shot her in the head.’ Saadon said he also saw a second rape: ‘They had caught a young woman near a car, and she was fighting back, not allowing them to strip her. They threw her to the ground and one of the terrorists took a shovel and beheaded her and her head rolled along the ground. I see that head too.’^[417]

The Grayzone’s Max Blumenthal dismisses Saadon’s story outright solely on the tenuous basis that Saadon had not come forward prior to 2 December: ‘This is a fabrication designed to justify genocide, and one likely inspired by other lurid fables.’^[418] Abunimah concurs: ‘This simply appeared now out of the blue two months after the event, when Israel found its narrative in trouble.’^[419]

Male Rape

What about the evidence of male rape? When I was in Israel in January, I spoke to a music festival survivor who said she witnessed a young man being raped by a member of Hamas in uniform. Veterinarian nurse Michal Ohana got shrapnel in her abdomen from an RPG blast. Hiding under a tank for several hours she says the male rape victim was screaming and then he was shot, one of about ten people who were gunned down before her eyes. She was terrified that she too would be raped or taken hostage. Whilst waiting to be rescued, clips of hostages arriving in Gaza were coming through to her phone. She told me she still has nightmares today.^[420]

Pramila Patten's UN mission found circumstantial evidence that men were subject to sexual violence: 'multiple bodies of women and a few men were found totally or partially naked or with their clothes torn, including some bound and/or attached to structures, which – though circumstantial – may be indicative of some forms of sexual violence.'^[421]

To Roshan Salih, Editor of the Islamist news outlet, *Five Pillars*, which is popular in the UK, Patten's report is a 'complete fraud.' It just 'makes no sense to me that religiously-observant Muslims would go on a rape rampage when committing such acts is clearly *haram*.'^[422] To *The Grayzone's* Wyatt Reed, Patten's report is 'the product of an Israeli public relations campaign'^[423]; to the *Electronic Intifada*, it 'launders Israel's fraudulent "mass rape"

propaganda ... Patten is not the unbiased UN official ... that she claims to be.'^[424] *YES! Magazine's* Arun Gupta asserts wildly that Patten was 'just ... browbeaten into basically presenting the Israeli side without any real investigation whatsoever.'^[425] To *Mondoweiss*, Patten has even been a 'willing accomplice in Israel's genocide in Gaza.'^[426] Seriously?

None of these criticisms even remotely bear scrutiny. Patten was damning in her criticism of some claims made by ZAKA first responders: 'Inaccurate, unreliable conclusions, forensic conclusions were drawn by untrained volunteer first responders ... (for example, interpreting anal dilation as anal penetration when caused by extensive burning) ... it is a fact that we found many instances of unreliable, inaccurate forensic interpretations by untrained people.'^[427] She discounted initial Israeli claims of 'hundreds if not thousands' of sexual violence cases: 'I have not found anything like that' she told a press conference.^[428] She also discounted Israeli claims that documents recovered from dead members of Hamas showed written phrases in Hebrew like 'Open your legs' or 'Take off your pants.'^[429] She made her mission to Israel conditional on visiting the West Bank to hear allegations of sexual violence against Palestinian women detainees by Israeli personnel – specifically of invasive body searches, threats of rape and prolonged forced nudity following a UN expert working group's conclusion that such allegations were 'credible.'^[430] Physicians for Human Rights Israel say

Israeli prisons have become ‘an apparatus for retribution and revenge.’ [431] When Israel rejected Patten’s call to investigate them, she hit back forcefully at ‘some political actors [she meant the Netanyahu government] refusing to open inquiries into those alleged incidents, instead rejecting them outright via social media.’ [432] Some genocidal ‘willing accomplice’!

With the exception of *The Intercept* (whose journalism is generally of a higher standard),

the approach of other alt-media outlets to pretty well every Israeli witness is that you can’t trust a word they say. They seem driven to strain every sinew in their determination to undermine every new piece of evidence that’s emerged suggesting sexually violent abuse by Hamas and other Palestinians on 7 October. Closing minds like this isn’t proper journalism. It’s agenda journalism. It lacks curiosity, the driving force of decent journalism.

9. GENITAL MUTILATION

The Electronic Intifada is also dismissive that Hamas and other armed Palestinian groups targeted genitals for mutilation. Abunimah quotes approvingly [433] from a *Haaretz* report that five forensic pathologists at the Shura base (where all the bodies were brought for identification) found ‘no signs on any of those bodies’ of ‘sexual relations having taken place or of mutilation of genitalia’ – only to omit the next paragraph which explained that because there were only five pathologists, 75 per cent of the bodies were ‘buried without having undergone a professional examination.’ [434] As the UN Pillay commission of inquiry noted ‘there appears to have been little or no thorough forensic examination of bodies undertaken by the Israeli authorities.’ [435]

However, Nora Barrows-Friedman says Patten’s UN mission has ‘rejected the claims about ... the mutilation of genitals.’ [436]

It is worth remembering that the UN mission did *not* reject these claims. It has not ruled out the existence of a pattern of genital mutilation. Rather, it has said no ‘discernible pattern’ could be established because injuries to breasts and genitalia were found on ‘multiple corpses’ in various locations making it impossible to say if ‘breasts and genitalia’ had been deliberately targeted. [437] However, the UN had gathered *inter alia* ‘credible circumstantial information which may be indicative of ... genital mutilation’ [438] and this is one of the reasons Patten has recommended a full-fledged investigation. [439]

Published claims of mutilation to the genitals have included a video filmed by Hamas which *The New York Times* say the police showed them featuring two soldiers who were shot in their genitals. The video was apparently retrieved by the IDF. [440] Also Yinon Rivlin, a member of the music festival’s production team told the *Times* that after leaving his

ditch hideout, he found a young woman's body without pants revealing her vagina which appeared to have been sliced open 'as if someone tore her apart.'^[441]

Professor Halperin-Kaddari says she too has seen documentation recording that victims had weapons fired into their sexual organs.^[442] She told me the female Sergeant at the Nahal Oz army base who from her hiding place heard a female colleague being raped, has also testified to seeing the body of a male soldier whose penis had been mutilated. The UN Pillay commission refers to the body of a man, 'with signs of rape', his trousers pulled down and underwear ripped and a 'gun inserted into his anus.'^[443]

A report by the Association of Rape Crisis Centres in Israel (ARCCI) cites witnesses – mainly first responders – saying the genitals of both men and women were mutilated, in some cases with weapons inserted into them.^[444] Patten's UN mission does not verify any of these claims, citing in the latter case the 'limited and low-quality imagery' of photographs. If anything, this is a testament to the barrister's properly cautious approach to evidence. However, having seen one photograph of a very badly injured female torso, it's hard to imagine what other than a deliberate act of mutilation might have caused one of her injuries: the photograph shows an implement resembling a pair of scissors stuck into her groin.

The witness Shari Mendes

IDF reservist Shari Mendes says she saw evidence of what appeared to be 'systematic

genital mutilation' of the bodies when they were brought to the Shura army base in central Israel for identification. ^[445] The UN Pillay commission of inquiry was also told there were indications that 'gasoline had been used to set genitals on fire.'^[446]

However, the alt-media has had a field day with Mendes because she has given many interviews but is not a forensic scientist, or a pathologist and therefore not qualified to say what injuries constitute clear evidence of genital mutilation or rape. Her day job is an architect, and on 8 October, her role as a reservist member of the military rabbinate, was to prepare female soldiers for burial. She unwittingly damaged her credibility early on by repeating to the *Daily Mail* the ZAKA chief Yossi Landau's now notoriously bogus claim that a foetus was ripped out of its mother's stomach in Kibbutz Be'eri^[447] without sourcing it to him. So, it appeared as if Mendes herself had seen the evidence independently of Landau, although^[448] at that early stage she presumably had no reason to doubt Landau since his story was not debunked until several weeks later ^[449] and it was going round the world like wildfire.^[450]

That said, Mendes has been consistent in claiming she 'often' saw women's bodies that arrived at the Shura base with 'very bloody underwear' and this has been^[451] corroborated by an IDF reservist Captain who as a dentist was a member of the forensic team identifying bodies at the Shura base. 'We saw broken legs, broken pelvises, bloody underwear,' the officer said, also women who

were not dressed below the waist.^[452] Again, not proof of sexual violence, but certainly a circumstantial indicator that it happened. The UN Pillay commission says one of the bodies received at the Shura was of a 13-year-old girl who was naked with signs of violence to the stomach and broken legs.^[453]

Limbering up for yet another ‘Gotcha’ moment with Mendes in his sights, Ali Abunimah told his livestream host Barrows-Friedman: ‘Let’s also go back to the UN report, which says that the UN team examined 1000s of photos and video clips provided by the Israelis. The UN report says “In the medico-legal (i.e. medical and legal) assessment of available photos and videos no tangible indications of rape could be identified.”’ Abunimah evidently thinks this disposes of the matter and spits out: ‘So Shari Mendes is just a liar!’ Barrows-Friedman assents by shaking her head vigorously, as if to say, her mendacity is beyond belief.^[454]

Except it’s not another ‘Gotcha’ moment because as the UN’s Pramila Patten also explained, while ‘no *tangible* (*my emphasis*) evidence of rape could be identified’ neither does rape leave ‘*tangible* visible traces of injuries, not even loss of blood.’^[455]

In his eagerness to undermine Mendes, Abunimah omitted the UN report’s qualifying sentence that immediately follows ‘no tangible indications of rape’ making it clear that because rape ‘often does not result in visible injuries, this possibility cannot be ruled out based solely on the medico-legal assessment.’ Therefore, ‘circumstantial indicators, like the position of the corpse and

the state of clothing, should also be considered when determining the occurrence of sexual violations, in addition to witness and survivor testimony.’^[456]

Perhaps conscious that in this febrile ‘Gotcha’ climate, those challenging claims of sexual violence will exploit any word carelessly spoken, Mendes chose her words carefully when she told a session at the Israel mission to the UN last December: ‘I will neither overstate nor understate anything. I will just tell you what we’ve seen with our own eyes.’ There is no dispute Mendes was at the Shura and that she plainly did see things, and what she says she saw is horrific: ‘Victims were often shot ... many times in the head at close range (so) that their heads were almost blown off.’ Her unit also saw ‘bodies that were beheaded or had limbs cut off, mutilated. One young woman came in with no legs they had been cut off. We saw several severed heads one with a large kitchen knife still embedded in the neck.’^[457] Again, her testimony is consistent with the evidence to me from police superintendent Doron Avigdori, when I interviewed him at the Shura base. He’s the forensic science unit’s Central District Commander who oversaw the identification of bodies at the base. He told me they dealt with ‘tens’ of bodies with gunshot wounds ‘5-10cms from the head’; ‘old ladies’ with ‘deep cuts to the throat ... very deep cuts’; bodies that were ‘handcuffed ... legs and hands’; ‘bodies without a head.’^[458]

10. JUDGING THE SCALE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE ON 7 OCTOBER

Taken together, the UN reports by Pramila Patten and Navi Pillay conducted independently of each other, at the very least demonstrate that the hard sceptics have been precipitate, particularly their assertions last Spring that allegations of widespread rape were ‘unravelling.’ To the contrary, both UN reports say there appear to have been multiple incidents of sexual violence with Pillay going slightly further by saying these don’t seem to have been isolated but perpetrated in similar ways. Consistent with their findings is the revelation that there are ten surviving victims of sexual violence receiving therapy, not two or three as has been reported. The number of rape victims who were murdered is therefore likely to be higher, perhaps considerably so. And the number of witnesses is now reported to number some 15 not just a ‘few’ as has the sceptics claim. So evidentially elusive is conflict-related sexual violence, that progress in getting to the truth about 7 October is following a familiar pattern: as Patten’s UN mission explains, the true prevalence of how Israeli women and men were sexually abused may take ‘months or years to emerge’,^[459] especially since the majority of victims were murdered and buried with no forensic examination due to the sheer scale of death and the religious exigencies of swift burial. The world’s largest NGO Human Rights Watch says similar. ‘We have only a limited understanding of the overall scale of sexual and gender-based violence committed during the attacks’ its report into 7 October says.

In glaring contrast to the alt-media’s dismissive approach, both Patten and Pillay’s language is measured, written by lawyers weighing the available evidence using words as precision tools. Patten says she and her team have seen and heard credible information indicating that rape, gang rape and sexual violence happened in multiple locations. How widespread she cannot yet say. Yet she also cautions that sexual violence in ‘every conflict-affected setting’ is a ‘chronically underreported crime due *inter alia* to trauma, stigma and fear faced by survivors.’ That is why she emphasises there is a ‘significant likelihood’ that the number of verified violations found by her mission team will only ‘partially reflect the crimes actually committed.’ ^[460]

The Dinah Project

Alongside the Israeli Police investigation is a Biblically named project inspired by Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, and the first known rape victim in the Old Testament. The Dinah Project^[461] (Din means ‘Justice’ in Hebrew) launched by Professor Halperin-Kaddari and several other female lawyers and ex senior civil servants, says it is committed to getting justice for women and men who were raped and abused on 7 October. Like Patten, Halperin-Kaddari says we may ‘never know the numbers of victims’ although having been privy to much of the testimony that Patten has verified – and further evidence post Patten – she says she is persuaded the incidents of sexual violence were more than sporadic.

The Dinah Project has been assisting the investigation by gathering evidence and locating witnesses. ‘We are finding new leads all the time’ says Halperin-Kaddari and she believes that sexual violence on 7 October is ‘following the same pattern in many locations which suggests it was used as a weapon of war.’

And yet, despite not being privy to the evidence now available to the Dinah Project and to Patten, the alt-media hard sceptics have zealously set out to show there is no pattern of sexual violence by cherry picking the published evidence and seeking out

inconsistencies in key witnesses that either don’t exist or appear trivial.

Why, one wonders, are they so resistant to keeping an open mind as any scrupulous investigator would? Given that armed groups were so obviously in control of Israeli communities for hours, the refusal by the likes of *Electronic Intifada* to acknowledge that any rapes at all happened seems profoundly perverse. Having murdered and mutilated with such abandon, why does raping as the next step seem so out of the question?

CONCLUSION

The febrile politics of the Israel-Palestine conflict are now mainstream in British politics as the general election demonstrated. Four independent candidates have been returned to Parliament on a single Gaza ticket. The alternative media is likely to play an increasingly influential role in how the conflict now plays out in Britain and elsewhere. For it is their journalism on which the growing number of Hamas sympathisers and apologists here hope will resonate most closely with British Muslims, a large and growing constituency. The fact that six months into the war, a poll showed 76 per cent of British Muslims had yet to accept that

Hamas had committed murder and rape on 7 October should ring alarm bells. Muslim university graduates were slightly more in denial than non-graduates.[\[462\]](#)

Propelled by social media, the malign influence of the alternative-media is set to grow. For the sake of a tolerable level of social cohesion and democracy, there has never been a more important time for mainstream media to reassert its waning influence and for public service broadcasting to be nurtured, not starved. For all its faults, the mainstream does – at least by comparison – strive to keep public discourse broadly honest and based on evidence.

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- i. <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/11/20/opinions/sheryl-sandberg-something-we-can-all-agree-on/index.html>
- ii. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/hand-in-hand-women-demand-global-stand-against-amas-crimes/>
- iii. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/first-lady-herzog-decries-unforgivable-silence-of-rights-groups-over-amas-rapes/>

[116] **UN Women condemns the attacks on civilians in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories and is deeply alarmed by the devastating impact on civilians including women and girls.**

- i. 13 October: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/statement/2023/10/un-women-statement-on-the-situation-in-israel-and-the-occupied-palestinian-territory>
- ii. 20 October: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2023/10/press-release-un-women-report-reveals-devastating-impact-of-the-crisis-in-gaza-on-women-and-girls>
- iii. 25 October: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2023/10/voices-from-gaza-hayams-story>

To date, **more than 1,400 Israelis have been killed by the horrific attack by Hamas**, many of whom are women and children, and an estimated 200 remain as hostages, many of whom are women ... **But let me be clear: every act of violence against women and girls, including sexual violence, is unequivocally condemned**, irrespective of the nationality, identity, race, or religion of the victims.

- i. 1 November: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2023/11/voices-from-gaza-amanis-story-of-loss>
- ii. 5 November: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/statement/2023/11/we-need-an-immediate-humanitarian-ceasefire-statement-by-principals-of-the-inter-agency-standing-committee-on-the-situation-in-israel-and-the-occupied-palestinian-territory>
- iii. 13 November: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2023/11/voices-from-gaza-nourhans-story-of-survival-amid-airstrikes>
- iv. 16 November: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2023/11/in-egypt-un-women-executive-director-reiterates-calls-for-an-immediate-humanitarian-ceasefire-and-ensuring-humanitarian-access-and-assistance-for-women-and-girls-in-gaza>
- v. 22 November: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/speech/2023/11/speech-now-more-than-ever-we-must-look-for-peace>

It has been 47 days since the October 7th attack on Israel, where 1,200 people, many of them women and children, were killed. Each day that passes marks another 24 hours of unspeakable fear and uncertainty for the hostages, including the women and girls held by Hamas. I continue to call for their immediate and unconditional release.

- i. 1 December: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/statement/2023/12/un-women-statement-on-the-situation-in-israel-and-gaza>

We unequivocally condemn the brutal attacks by Hamas on Israel on 7 October. We are alarmed by the numerous accounts of gender-based atrocities and sexual violence during those attacks. This is why we have called for all accounts of gender-based violence to be duly investigated and prosecuted, with the rights of the victim at the core.

[117] <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1u/k1u8mfvmcm>

[118] <https://www.metoo-unlessurajew.com/>

[119] <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/05/opinion/hamas-sexual-violence-israel.html>

[120] <https://www.ynetnews.com/magazine/article/hjnc0ysx6>. See also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HnLq0DjErIA>

[121] https://www.phr.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/5845_Imprisoned_Paper_Eng.pdf

[122] <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/un-human-rights-office-opt-statement-killing-and-arbitrary-detention-health-workers-gaza#:~:text=Two%20Palestinian%20doctors%2C%20Dr.%20Adnan.of%20torture%20and%20ill%2Dtreatment>.

[123] <https://www.phr.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Death-in-Israeli-Prisons-28.03.24-Ver.pdf>

[124] *The Times*, 'In the interrogation room as Shin Bet extracts Hamas secrets', 30 November, 2023. <https://www.thetimes.com/article/inside-the-interrogation-room-as-shin-bet-extracts-hamass-secrets-qjpxm3hv>

[125] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/sep/07/israel#:~:text=In%20a%209%2D0%20decision.pressure%22%20on%20suspects%20under%20interrogation>

[126] <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/shin-bet-interrogation-hamas-rcna125748>

[127] *The Times*, 'In the interrogation room as Shin Bet extracts Hamas secrets', Op Cit.

[128]

- i. https://x.com/i24NEWS_EN/status/1773366274938020199
- ii. <https://x.com/YosephHaddad/status/1712838008175473095>
- iii. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/kill-behead-rape-interrogated-hamas-members-detail-atrocities-against-civilians/>
- iv. https://x.com/elly_bar/status/1793718545827893430

[129] <https://x.com/ArchRose90/status/1793710513349955881?r=ZezUJVueIWvoKJf-DEAvAA&s=19>

[130] https://x.com/elly_bar/status/1793718545827893430 and <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-air-interrogation-clips-of-terrorist-father-and-son-confessing-to-rape-on-oct-7/>

[131] <https://x.com/YosephHaddad/status/1712838008175473095>

[132] <https://www.gov.il/en/pages/swords-of-iron-civilian-casualties>

[133] https://twitter.com/Nicole_Zedek/status/1711721433968111855

[134] https://x.com/Nicole_Zedek/status/1711712435218923744

[135] <https://nbcmontana.com/news/nation-world/at-least-40-babies-killed-beheaded-in-israeli-kibbutz-outside-gaza-reports-say-israel-palestine-hamas-terrorists-terrorism-invasion-middle-east-conflict-attack>

[136] <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/internet/unverified-allegations-beheaded-babies-israel-hamas-war-inflame-social-rcna119902>

[137] <https://twitter.com/marcowenjones/status/1712030575320576034>

[138] <https://twitter.com/Israel/status/1717553687025815817> and <https://twitter.com/CBurnshtein/status/1729754389005406237>

[139] <https://twitter.com/CBurnshtein/status/1729754389005406237>

[140] <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/israel-at-war/1697121911-israeli-emergency-responder-i-saw-20-children-shot-burned-and-piled-together-in-two-piles>

[141] <https://www.newsweek.com/silence-international-bodies-over-hamas-mass-rapes-betrayal-all-women-opinion-1845783>

[142] <https://news.sky.com/story/israel-gaza-war-recovered-bodies-show-bloodthirsty-gunmen-took-time-over-torture-and-that-hamas-has-changed-12985212>

[143] <https://www.businessinsider.com/israel-hamas-gaza-militants-ate-lunch-tortured-mutilated-young-family-2023-10>

[144] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CmXLoFs2LR8>

[145] <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/25/world/middleeast/video-sexual-assault-israel-kibbutz-hamas.html>

[146] https://edition.cnn.com/middleeast/live-news/israel-hamas-war-gaza-10-11-23/h_a63b0fd57f2df717147ea8e26a2f758c

[147] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjrFI0uM3I> and https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/netanyahu-tells-biden-weve-never-seen-such-savagery-in-the-history-of-the-state/

[148] <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/amp/rcna119865> and <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/10/12/middleeast/israel-hamas-beheading-claims-intl>

- [149] <https://theintercept.com/2023/10/11/israel-amas-disinformation/> and <https://www.businessinsider.com/idf-says-wont-back-up-beheaded-babies-disrespectful-2023-10>
- [150] See a number of tweets from Eylon Levy; <https://x.com/EylonALevy/status/1711725099299053922>, <https://x.com/EylonALevy/status/1716493737201668294?lang=en> and <https://x.com/EylonALevy/status/1719670876591759506>
- [151] <https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-at-a-press-availability-39/>
- [152] <https://rollcall.com/factbase/biden/transcript/joe-biden-press-conference-apec-california-november-15-2023/> and <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2023/11/22/biden-yet-again-says-amas-beheaded-babies-has-new-evidence-emerged/>
- [153] <https://twitter.com/evanhill/status/171226092863532250?s=46>
- [154] <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2023/12/12/remarks-by-president-biden-at-a-campaign-reception-5/>
- [155] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMqRK5LpGy4>
- [156] <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/germany-smears-journalist-challenging-baerbocks-7-oct-rape-video-lie>
- [157] <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/david-cronin/eu-wants-everyone-accept-israels-mass-rape-lies>
- [158] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gfE3vasBQyE>
- [159] <https://www.instagram.com/norabf/?h=en>
- [160] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMqRK5LpGy4>
- [161] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VvGF9vYnlw>
- [162] <https://mondoweiss.net/2023/12/despite-lack-of-evidence-allegations-of-amas-mass-rape-are-fueling-israeli-genocide-in-gaza/>
- [163] <https://www.yesmagazine.org/video/israel-amas-oct7-report>
- [164] Ibid.
- [165] <https://www.timesofisrael.com/how-2-debunked-accounts-from-zaka-workers-fueled-global-skepticism-of-oct-7-rape/>
- [166] <https://www.oct7factcheck.com/oct7factcheck/Haim-Outmezgine-ZAKA-a174fe61962f410bbcab7d3aab604b01#d4de8766443e477f8660012df81cef51>
- [167] https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=334102042473315 27.00–31.00
- [168] Confidential source.
- [169] https://www.gov.il/BlobFolder/news/swords-of-iron-war-in-the-south-7-oct-2023/en/English_Swords_of_Iron_Hamas%20Invasion%20-%20Full%20Map%20-%20v5.pdf
- [170] <https://edition.cnn.com/videos/world/2023/10/10/amas-grenade-bomb-shelter-video-ovn-robertson-intl-ldn-vpx.cnn>
- [171] UN Human Rights Council 27 May. ‘Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel– Advance unedited version’, Op Cit, para 93. See also: Agam Goldstein Almog: ‘My dad...he made a quick decision and took the rail guard from my sister’s bed and stood here at the entrance with the rail guard, like this, and then they shot at the door, you can see the bullets went through here. And that was it. They came in and shot dad straight away. I saw him taking his last breath ... his arms were up ... just a second before that he’d been sitting here and I didn’t say goodbye to him, or hug him, or kiss him.’ <https://www.screamsbeforesilence.com/>

[172] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-67192885>

[173] Superintendent Doron Avigdori, Central District Commander of the Forensic Science Unit to JW Jan 2024. See also UN Human Rights Council 10 June. 'Detailed findings on attacks carried out on and after 7 October 2023 in Israel' Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem', Op Cit. para 135.

[174] Ibid para 137.

[175] Morgue photos shown to JW Jan 2024.

[176] UN Human Rights Council 10 June. 'Detailed findings on attacks carried out on and after 7 October 2023 in Israel' Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, Op Cit. para 124.

[177] Ibid para 120.

[178] Ibid para 126.

[179] Ibid paras 128 and 131.

[180] Ibid para 129.

[181] <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk/hamas-booby-trapped-dead-bodies-with-explosives-say-israeli-first-responders-lsxjcx8>

[182] UN Human Rights Council 27 May. 'Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel– Advance unedited version', Op Cit, para 20.

[183] UN Human Rights Council 10 June. 'Detailed findings on attacks carried out on and after 7 October 2023 in Israel' Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, Op Cit. para 96.

[184] Ibid.

[185] <https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-and-israeli-prime-minister-benjamin-netanyahu-after-their-meeting-2/>

[186] <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12665359/Some-audience-whispered-make-stop-leaned-against-wall-cried-Journalists-watched-Israeli-compilation-Hamas-terror-footage-including-young-girl-shot-dead-hid-desk-reveal-left-horrified.html>

[187] An edited version was subsequently released: https://x.com/Elad_Si/status/1747698876386001155

[188] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBO3GxkoKEQ>

[189] <https://nypost.com/2024/03/28/world-news/outrage-as-photo-of-hamas-terrorists-parading-shani-louks-body-wins-top-award/>

[190] UN Human Rights Council 10 June. 'Detailed findings on attacks carried out on and after 7 October 2023 in Israel' Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, Op Cit. para 159.

[191] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-68891217>

[192] <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/watch-debunking-israels-mass-rape-propaganda>

[193] <https://x.com/MaxBlumenthal/status/1792432665603223668>

[194] <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2024/05/19/remarks-by-president-biden-at-the-morehouse-college-class-of-2024-commencement-address-atlanta-ga/>

[195] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SoTltPHa6mw>

[196] UN Human Rights Council 10 June. 'Detailed findings on attacks carried out on and after 7 October 2023 in Israel' Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, Op Cit. para 129.

[197] UN Mission report, para 12: <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/report/mission-report-official-visit-of-the-office-of-the-srsg-svc-to-israel-and-the-occupied-west-bank-29-january-14-february-2024/20240304-Israel-oWB-CRSV-report.pdf>

[198] UN Mission report Op Cit. para 13.

[199] Ibid para 75.

[200] Ibid para 13.

[201] <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/CEDAW/Elections2010/PATTEN.pdf>

[202] UN Mission report Op Cit. paras 2 & 24.

[203] <https://electronicintifada.net/content/un-report-launders-israels-fraudulent-mass-rape-propaganda/45021>

[204] <https://thegrayzone.com/2024/03/07/media-concocts-un-hamas-rape-report/UN>

[205] UN Mission report Op Cit. para 26.

[206] <https://electronicintifada.net/content/un-report-launders-israels-fraudulent-mass-rape-propaganda/45021>

UN Mission report Op Cit. para 3.

[207] <https://mondoweiss.net/2024/03/heres-what-pramila-pattens-un-report-on-oct-7-sexual-violence-actually-said/>

[208] UN Mission report Op Cit. para 3.

[209] UN Mission report Op Cit. para 13.

[210] UN Human Rights Council 27 May. 'Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel– Advance unedited version', Op Cit, para 77

[211] BARROWS-FRIEDMAN: '... It's often said that rape is, you know, endemic during armed conflicts, that it's regularly used as a weapon of war. Why couldn't that be a possibility here?'

ABUNIMAH: 'Well, well, one thing to say Nora is that you know even if they find a victim at some point, and prove that this victim was attacked, that's not the same as saying that there was a pattern of rape and rape was a weapon of war, but they still haven't even credibly shown that.' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VvGF9vYnlw>

[212] UN Human Rights Council 27 May. 'Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel– Advance unedited version'. Op Cit, paras 24 & 95.

[213] UN Mission report Op Cit. para 56.

[214] Ibid 88a.

[215] <https://www.gov.il/en/pages/mfa-response-to-report-of-un-special-representative-on-sexual-violence-in-conflict-4-march-2024>

[216] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2023-001936_EN.html

[217] <https://unwatch.org/item7/>

[218] <https://unwatch.org/pillay-commission/>

[219] <https://unwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Request-for-Navi-Pillay-to-Recuse-Herself-on-Grounds-of-Bias.pdf>

[220] <https://unwatch.org/end-the-coi/>

[221] https://www.un.org/sg/sites/www.un.org.sg/files/files/OHCHR_usg_EN.pdf

[222]

- i. 10 November 2023: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2023/11/opening-remarks-un-high-commissioner-human-rights-volker-turk>
- ii. 29 February 2024: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zhoSnXevQrE>
- iii. 8 March 2024: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/03/un-human-rights-chief-deplores-new-moves-expand-israeli-settlements-occupied>
- iv. 19 March 2024: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/un-human-rights-chief-israels-extensive-restrictions-on-gaza-aid-may-be-war-crime/>
- v. 23 April 2024: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/04/un-human-rights-chief-deplores-harrowing-killings-children-and-women-rafah>
- vi. 6 May 2024: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/05/israeloccupied-palestinian-territory-rafah-threat-inhumane-says-un>

[223] UN Human Rights Council 27 May. 'Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel – Advance unedited version', Op Cit. 'V. Legal Analysis'

[224] Human Rights Watch, *'I Can't Erase All the Blood from My Mind': Palestinian Armed Groups' October 7 Assault on Israel*, 17 July 2024. Op Cit.

[225] <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/un-commission-investigate-hamas-sexual-violence-appeal-evidence-2023-11-29/>

[226] <https://www.youtube.com/live/kK7dqBeohxs>

[227] UN Mission Op Cit. para 19.

[228] UN Human Rights Council 27 May. 'Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel– Advance unedited version', Op Cit, para 94.

[229] <https://mondoweiss.net/2024/03/heres-what-pramila-pattens-un-report-on-oct-7-sexual-violence-actually-said/>

[230] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZLiYGVpO8o>

[231] Human Rights Council 10 June. 'Detailed findings on attacks carried out on and after 7 October 2023 in Israel', Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, Op Cit. para 236.

[232] <https://www.memri.org/tv/hamas-military-commander-deif-operation-aqsa-deluge-calls-palestinian-carry-out-attacks>

[233] UN Human Rights Council 10 June. 'Detailed findings on attacks carried out on and after 7 October 2023 in Israel' Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, Op Cit. para 134.

[234] Ibid para 141.

[235] Ibid para 275.

[236] <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/coi-report-a-hrc-56-26-27may24/>

[237] <https://www.youtube.com/live/kK7dqBeohxs>

[238] UN Human Rights Council 10 June – ‘Detailed findings on attacks carried out on and after 7 October 2023 in Israel’ Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem’, Op Cit. para 140.

[239] UN Human Rights Council 10 June. ‘Detailed findings on attacks carried out on and after 7 October 2023 in Israel’, Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, Op Cit. para 21.

See also: <https://laad.btl.gov.il/Web/He/TerrorVictims/Default.aspx?lastName=&firstName=&fatherName=>

[240] <https://www.youtube.com/live/kK7dqBeohxs>

[241] <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-07-07/ty-article/premium/idf-ordered-hannibal-directive-on-october-7-to-prevent-amas-taking-soldiers-captive/00000190-89a2-d776-a3b1-fd8e45520000>

[242] UN Human Rights Council 27 May - ‘Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel– Advance unedited version’, Op Cit. paras 34–37.

[243] <https://thegrayzone.com/2023/10/27/israels-military-shelled-burning-tanks-helicopters/>

[244] <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-11-27/ty-article-opinion/exposing-max-blumenthals-deceptive-claim-israel-is-responsible-for-most-october-7-victims/0000018c-102f-d65f-a7dd-f0f7b550000>

[245] <https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/b111niukzt>

[246] <https://thegrayzone.com/2024/01/10/questions-nyt-amas-rape-report/>

[247] <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/ny-times-found-no-7-october-rape-victims-reporter-admits>

[248] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VvGF9vYnlw>

[249] <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2024/01/21/amas-attack-october-7-conspiracy-israel/>

[250] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VvGF9vYnlw>

[251] <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/25/opinion/israel-gaza-peace-ceasefire.html>

[252] <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/24/opinion/gaza-ceasefire.html>

[253] <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/04/13/opinion/israel-military-aid.html>

[254] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJcZ4YBUZpY>

[255] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VvGF9vYnlw>

[256] <https://mondoweiss.net/2023/12/despite-lack-of-evidence-allegations-of-amas-mass-rape-are-fueling-israeli-genocide-in-gaza/>

[257] <https://www.yesmagazine.org/social-justice/2024/03/05/israel-amas-oct7-report-gaza>

[258] UN Human Rights Council 27 May - ‘Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel– Advance unedited version’, Op Cit. para 37: ‘The Commission found that Israeli authorities prioritised identifying victims, notifying families and allowing for burial rather than forensic investigation, leading to evidence of crimes, especially sexual crimes, not being collected and preserved. The Commission also notes the loss of potential evidence due to inadequately trained first responders.’

[259] Confidential source.

[260] <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2024/04/october-7-amas-sexual-assault/678091/>

[261] UN Mission report Op Cit. FN 12, p13: ‘On forensic pathology, there are situations in conflict globally where there is no forensic evidence of rape or other forms of sexual violence that are reported to the UN Security

Council, human rights bodies, and prosecuted in courts of law. It is therefore essential that the Organization does not unwittingly take the position that such information is necessary to make findings regarding sexual violence. In the case of the 7 October attacks, most imagery was collected for identification purposes only. There are many individuals, including the public at large in Israel and globally, who have seen authentic graphic imagery showing multiple injuries. Their concerns are genuine and often well-intended. However, many of these individuals do not have the requisite expertise to draw conclusions as to whether sexual violence is occurring or has occurred based on the images that they are seeing.’

[262] <https://theintercept.com/2024/02/07/gaza-israel-netanyahu-propaganda-lies-palestinians/>

[263] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_0atzea-mPY&rco=1

[264] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VvGF9vYnlw>

[265] https://www.gov.il/BlobFolder/news/arcici-report-october-7/ru/Russian_ARCCI%20report%20.pdf

[266] <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/press-release/israel-west-bank-mission/>

[267] UN Mission Op C it. para 48.

[268] <https://mondoweiss.net/2023/12/despite-lack-of-evidence-allegations-of-hamas-mass-rape-are-fueling-israeli-genocide-in-gaza/>

[269] Confidential source to JW, 14 June 2024.

[270] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gfE3vasBQyE>

[271] <https://electronicintifada.net/content/un-report-launders-israels-fraudulent-mass-rape-propaganda/45021>

[272] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VvGF9vYnlw>

[273] UN Mission report Op Cit. para 49.

[274] Dr Dvora Baumann, director of the Bat Ami Centre for Victims of Sexual Abuse at Hadassah hospital, points out: ‘Usually people who are sexually abused don’t report it for a long time because it is so hard to talk about and they worry they will be judged.’ <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/ten-hamas-fighters-were-raping-the-woman-she-begged-for-death-6ldlh8sp>

See also: Christina Lamb: ‘Rape is the one crime where the victim is often made to feel they have done something wrong.’ <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/rape-is-the-unspoken-weapon-in-every-conflict-ive-covered-8zc9w2w37>

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[277] ‘Screams Without Words: How Hamas Weaponized Sexual Violence on Oct. 7’, Op Cit. *New York Times*, 28 December, 2023.

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[280] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JA4oIKugdAM>

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- [285] <https://thegrayzone.com/2024/01/10/questions-nyt-hamas-rape-report/>
- [286] <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/watch-ny-times-investigation-mass-rape-hamas-falls-apart>
- [287] UN Mission report-10 June Op Cit. para 58.
- [288] <https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/bko4dj0va>
- [289] UN Human Rights Council 10 June. 'Detailed findings on attacks carried out on and after 7 October 2023 in Israel' Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem', Op Cit. para 143.
- [290] <https://mondoweiss.net/2024/01/family-of-key-case-in-new-york-times-october-7-sexual-violence-report-renounces-story-says-reporters-manipulated-them/>
- [291] UN Human Rights Council 10 June. 'Detailed findings on attacks carried out on and after 7 October 2023 in Israel' Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem', Op Cit. para 143.
- [292] 15 Witnesses, Three Confessions, a Pattern of Naked Dead Bodies. All the Evidence of Hamas Rape on October 7 Op Cit. *Haaretz*, 18 April.
- [293] <https://theintercept.com/2024/02/28/new-york-times-anat-schwartz-october-7/>
- [294] <https://mondoweiss.net/2023/12/cnn-report-claiming-sexual-violence-on-october-7-relied-on-non-credible-witnesses-some-with-undisclosed-ties-to-israeli-govt/>. The medic known as Sgt G told CNN on 18 November that he'd seen two girls, 'one on a bed, one on the floor in their own bedroom, 14, 15 years old, her pants are pulled down and she is half naked, her legs are spread out wide open and there are the remains of semen on her back, someone just brutally raped here while just shooting her in the head.'
- [295] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8SiBXuEYkaM>. Sgt G told Republic TV, India on 25 October: 'a dog was barking near a trash can, one of my teammates he saw a dog was barking near a trash can and we stopped by there and he opened the trash can and he pulled out of the garbage a baby perhaps maybe not more than a year old baby that was multiple stimes stabbed all over his body and tossed into garbage.'
- [296] Kibbutz Be'eri has dismissed as 'false' a claim a combat-medic made to The NYT and other media outlets that he found two partially clothed teenage girls – one with what appeared to be semen on her lower back. <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/25/world/middleeast/video-sexual-assault-israel-kibbutz-hamas.html>
- [297] <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-12-04/ty-article-magazine/premium/hamas-committed-documented-atrocities-but-a-few-false-stories-feed-the-deniers/0000018c-34f3-da74-afce-b5fbc24f0000>
- [298] <https://theintercept.com/2024/02/28/new-york-times-anat-schwartz-october-7/>
- [299] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_0atzea-mPY
- [300] <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/rescue-workers-recount-horrors-found-kibbutz-attacked-by-hamas-2023-10-17/>
- [301] UN Human Rights Council 10 June – 'Detailed findings on attacks carried out on and after 7 October 2023 in Israel' Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, Op Cit. paras 120, 125.
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- [303] Ibid.

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- [313] <https://www.timesofisrael.com/at-least-10-freed-hostages-were-sexually-abused-by-hamas-in-captivity-doctor-says/> and <https://apnews.com/article/sexual-assault-hamas-oct-7-attack-rape-bb06b950bb6794afb8d468cd283bc51> and <https://www.timesofisrael.com/some-of-them-didnt-see-daylight-top-doctor-says-freed-hostages-went-through-hell/>
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- [316] ‘Screams Before Silence’. <https://www.screamsbeforesilence.com/>
- [317] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VvGF9vYnlw>
- [318] <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/statement-icc-prosecutor-karim-aa-khan-kc-applications-arrest-warrants-situation-stare>
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- [327] *New York Times*: As of 9 June, 43 of the 116 ‘remaining hostages have been officially declared dead.’ <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/06/09/world/middleeast/gaza-hostage-rescues-israel.html#:~:text=An%20agreement%20between%20Israel%20and,than%2060%20are%20still%20alive>; and <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/four-israeli-hostages-died-hamas-custody-rcna155231>; The *Times of Israel* reports: ‘the bodies of 19 hostages have been recovered, including three mistakenly killed by the military.’ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/hamas-operatives-said-to-have-standing-orders-to-kill-hostages-if-idf-approaches/>; <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67053011>

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- [447] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-QTPlr4fn7I&t=497s>
- [448] Shari Mendes *Daily Mail* interview, 24 October: 'But what these barbarians did to these people is beyond words. There is evidence of mass rape of so brutal that they broke their victims' pelvis – women, grandmothers, children. I volunteered to prepare the bodies of murdered women to give them the respect they deserve. I am a mother from New Jersey. I moved to Israel 20 years ago. I'm a normal person. I never expected to be confronted by what I have seen. People whose heads have been cut off. Women standing in their night dresses woken up and shot. Faces blasted off. Heads smashed and their brains spilling out. A baby was cut out of a pregnant woman and beheaded and then the mother was beheaded.' <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12653435/Israeli-morgue-worker-says-horrors-inflicted-Hamass-victims-worse-Holocaust-including-decapitated-pregnant-woman-beheaded-unborn-child.html>

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