

For the right to self-determination of Palestinians, for the withdrawal of imperialist forces from the Middle East

The war in Gaza continues, with its procession of horrors, but also with significant solidarity mobilizations and significant resistance in Palestine. In an interview published by [International Viewpoint](#), Gilbert Achcar addresses this situation and the avenues for building resistance against Israel and its accomplices, the far right and imperialism.

Interview with Gilbert Achcar by Antoine Larrache, Inprecor.

What phase of the Israeli intervention are we in now?

Things are relatively clear in light of the military reports of the occupying forces. The most intensive bombing phase has been completed for the north and is being completed for the southern part. In the northern half and centre, the occupying forces have moved to the next phase, that of a so-called low-intensity war. In reality they are organizing a complete grid of the areas they have occupied in order to destroy the network of tunnels and search for fighters from Hamas and other organizations who are always in ambush and can emerge at any time, as long as the tunnels exist.

Israeli forces are increasingly under international pressure, particularly American, to move to this so-called low-intensity phase of combat. But this name is misleading because in reality low intensity is limited to bombing. The number of missiles and bombings by planes and drones will decrease since there is not much left to destroy in Gaza. They will move on

to one-off interventions against groups of fighters who emerge here and there.

What followed on from 7 October was an absolutely devastating bombing campaign that took on genocidal proportions: the wholesale destruction of a vast urban area inevitably resulted in the extermination of an incredible number of civilians. More than one per cent of Gaza's population was killed. For France, this would correspond to the frightening figure of 680,000 deaths!

Added to this is the expulsion of 90 per cent of the population from their places of residence. A good part of the Israeli right – which is an extreme right in a country where the Zionist left has been crushed – would like to expel them from the territory of Gaza to Egypt or elsewhere. Israel wants to ensure total military control of the territory, but that is an illusion: they will never succeed unless they kick everyone out. As long as there is a population in Gaza, there will be resistance to the occupation.

The drop in intensity of bombings on Gaza also allows Israel to raise its tone against Lebanon and Hezbollah. Zionist leaders are banking on the fact that part of Lebanon can be detached from Hezbollah for sectarian and political reasons. The threats are increasing day by day, with strong pressure for Hezbollah to withdraw to the north, to a distance from the border that Israel would deem acceptable. Otherwise, Israel threatens to inflict the fate of Gaza on part of Lebanon, in other words to raze the regions where Hezbollah is in a position of strength in the southern suburbs of the capital, in the south of the country, and also in the east, in the Bekaa.

What is the state of military resistance in Palestine?

In Gaza, resistance can continue in devastated areas as long as there are tunnels. A sort of underground city was built for

the fighters. It's like a metro network, but the Gazan population cannot take refuge there, unlike what we saw in Europe during the Second World War or as we see today in Kiev, Ukraine. The tunnels dug by Hamas are for the exclusive use of fighters.

Rockets continue to be launched from Gaza into Israeli towns, with Hamas and other groups trying to show that they are still active. Eradicating Hamas and all forms of resistance in Gaza is an impossible goal.

This is what leads the Israeli far right to say that we must empty the territory of its population, annex it, create Greater Israel from the Jordan to the sea and empty all this territory of Palestinians. The Israeli far right, including Likud, aspires to this. Netanyahu displays a more ambiguous official position due to his position as prime minister, but he keeps winking at this extremist perspective.

In the West Bank, the difference with Gaza is that the Palestinian Authority – which is in charge of the Palestinian populated areas in the West Bank – is exactly in the position of Vichy in relation to the German occupation. Mahmoud Abbas is the Petain of the Palestinians. There are organizations in the West Bank advocating armed struggle, such as Hamas and others, but what has attracted the most attention over the past year is the emergence of new groups of young people who are not affiliated – neither with Fatah, nor with Hamas, nor with any of the traditional organizations. In some refugee camps or towns, such as Jenin and Nablus, they have formed armed groups and carried out occasional operations against the occupying troops, which has led to massive reprisals.

Since 7 October, the occupying troops have been engaged in a mop-up campaign in the West Bank, a remake of the “Battle of Algiers”, with the added use of aviation for the first time since 2001. Added to this is the action of Zionist settlers who harass and kill. As we speak, there have been around 300 deaths in the West Bank. This is not comparable to the

absolutely terrible massacre perpetrated in Gaza, but the Israeli far right wants to repeat it in the West Bank at the first opportunity. That said, contrary to what Hamas hoped, there was no widespread conflagration with an uprising of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and inside the State of Israel in response to the Islamic movement's call. The reason is that the population of the West Bank is very aware of the disproportionate balance of military power. Unlike the Hamas soldiers in Gaza, where there has been no direct occupation force since 2005, the population of the West Bank comes into contact with the occupation forces on a daily basis and is directly confronted with the far right and the settlers. It knows that they are just waiting for an opportunity to repeat what was done in 1948, that is to say, to terrorize people and force them to flee from the territory. This explains why the West Bank has only moderately demonstrated its solidarity with Gaza.

What is the state of mobilizations in Israel?

The 7 October attack was a very strong shock, as was 11 September 2001 in the United States. Then there was its repeated use in the media. This shock continues to be exploited, with an endless series of testimonies in order to maintain a vengeful mobilization of the population. It was this type of campaign in the United States that allowed the Bush team to launch into the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. For now in Israel, this is also working, and the vast majority of Jewish-Israeli opinion supports the war.

A small anti-war minority denounces the genocide. We must salute its courage, because it faces complete rejection by its social environment. But what is striking is the virtual absence of mobilization by the Palestinian citizens of Israel, unlike in 2021, when there was a strong mobilization in solidarity with the start of the Intifada in the West Bank. This led to violent reactions from the Zionist far right in the country. In view of the hatred which has seized the

Jewish-Israeli population after 7 October, if Palestinian citizens had tried to reproduce such a mobilization, the consequences would have been terrible.

This population suffers a very intimidating climate, with bullying, repression and censorship, which falls on them, worsening their status as second-class citizens. They are now pariahs in the eyes of much of Israeli society.

Why do you think there is not more action in Arab countries?

I belong to a generation that experienced the defeat of 1967 and its aftermath, then the 1970s which experienced very strong mobilizations. This time there were some big demonstrations in Arab countries, but no more than in Indonesia or Pakistan for example. In Jordan and Morocco, there were big demonstrations, but these countries did not even end their diplomatic relations with the State of Israel.

The relative weakness of the mobilizations can only be explained by the weight of the accumulated defeats. The Palestinian cause was weakened, in particular due to the divisions and the action of the Vichy-style Palestinian Authority, which allowed a certain number of Arab states to establish diplomatic relations with Israel.

But there are also the defeats of the two revolutionary shock waves that the region has experienced so far, in 2011 and 2019. When we observe the region today, the conclusion is sad: there is almost nothing left of the conquests of these two waves.

The last two countries where there were still gains from the popular movement are Tunisia and Sudan. Tunisia went from the dictatorship of Ben Ali to that of Kaïs Saïed, with perhaps an aspect of "farce" coming after the tragedy. In Sudan, the resistance committees had some success until last year, when the two factions of the old regime began a ruthless civil war in April. The international media does not talk much about it,

especially in the West, despite the tens of thousands of deaths and the millions of displaced people, the sexual violence and everything else: the darker people's skin colour, the less they talk about it. It is an immense tragedy, for which the resistance committees were not prepared. They do not have armed wings that would allow them to play a role in a situation of this type.

We can concretely see the impact of the defeats since the "Arab Spring": Syria, Yemen, Libya, and now Sudan, are in situations of civil war; in Egypt, Sissi established a dictatorship more brutal than that of Mubarak which the population had got rid of in 2011, and in Algeria the military restored order by seizing the opportunity offered by Covid, then it was Tunisia's turn...

All of this does not create a climate conducive to broad mobilizations which, in Cairo or other capitals, would attack Israel's diplomatic representations and force governments to break their ties with the Zionist state.

Is it relevant to conclude that if the Zionist extreme right's project is realized, Israel's influence will increase in the region?

The Israeli far right knows that the governments of the region pay very little attention to the Palestinian question, that a large part of them have already established official relations with Israel, and that they get along well between reactionary governments. Israel therefore does not feel the need to make concessions on this front. They know that the Saudi government is hypocritical, that it is on the path to establishing relations with them as the Emirates did. There is security and military cooperation between them against their common enemy, Iran.

The Israeli far right attracted into its fold, with the effect of October 7, a part of what was considered as centre-

right. Today it is banking on the fact that the American administration, which made the mistake of providing unconditional support to Israel for its enterprise against Gaza, has put itself in a position from which it can no longer retreat. Indeed, the United States has entered an electoral period, the Democrats are therefore in competition with the Republicans, and Trump will not fail to seize on the slightest disagreement that could arise between Israel and Washington to attack the Biden administration. The latter is in a weak position, it has put itself in a position from which it is no longer able to exert strong pressure on Israel's genocidal enterprise. There is a lot of hypocrisy in Blinken's speeches urging Israel to show greater "humanitarian" concern: he is taking people for idiots, in the full knowledge that the genocidal destruction and massacres in Gaza were only possible thanks to American support.

This war is the first joint Israeli-American war, the first war where the United States has been fully, from the beginning, a party to the operation, its stated goals, its weaponry and its financing.

In addition, the Israeli far right and Netanyahu are banking on a return of Trump to the American presidency, which would greatly facilitate their realization of a greater Israel.

This is why they constantly announce that the war will continue throughout the year 2024. This is inseparable from the fact that this year 2024 is an election year in the United States. They will exploit this opportunity to continue their military momentum. The threat is therefore very serious for Lebanon and the West Bank, the two potential targets of a future large-scale Zionist military campaign. The ongoing "low-intensity" "counter-insurgency" war in the West Bank may intensify and, in Lebanon, the limited exchange of bombings on both sides of the border risks turning into a large-scale operation .

In light of the experience of historical mobilizations on war,

whether Vietnam, Iraq or the first Intifada, what are the most effective slogans to counter the Israeli offensive? Many people are wondering how to act, since we seem to be facing an indestructible enemy.

The 7 October effect was exploited to the fullest by relying on what I called, after 11 September, “narcissistic compassion”, this compassion which is only exercised towards those who resemble you. In France, the parallel was immediately drawn between the rave party of October 7 and the Bataclan, so that people would identify with Israelis and put Hamas in the same category as the Islamic State.

Despite this, we have seen in Western countries a rise in the mobilization in solidarity with Gaza, which is however largely that of communities of immigrant origin from the Arab region or regions in sympathy with the Palestinian cause. Despite the absolute disproportion in the presentation of events in the media – for which a Palestinian death is much less important than an Israeli death – people realize the scale of the genocide underway. But, with the October 7 effect, the indignation is of a lesser magnitude than it should be in the face of a genocidal war of this type, which is taking place before the eyes of the whole world.

However, indignation is gaining ground and has begun to reverse the wave of October 7 in which voices of solidarity with Palestine were stifled by a campaign labeling the slightest expression of this solidarity as anti-Semitism, Nazism, etc.. We must now build for the long term, building on indignation at the genocide. What is happening in Gaza shows the reality of the State of Israel, governed by the far right for many years, an increasingly radical far right which took action by seizing the opportunity, using 7 October as the administration of George W. Bush had seized the opportunity of using 11 September to carry out actions that its members had been planning for a long time.

In terms of type of action, the BDS campaign is proven and effective. It must be continued and amplified. On the political level, we must emphasize the complicity of Western governments – to varying degrees. We can understand the historical reasons for the attitude of the German ruling class, but the lessons they learned from the catastrophe of Nazism are very bad if they lead them to support a state which, although claiming to be Jewish, behaves more and more like the Nazis.

In France, Macron must have felt he had gone too far when he offered to participate in Israel's war on Gaza, and France has now distinguished itself from other European governments by supporting the call for a ceasefire. The procedure initiated by South Africa before the International Court of Justice on the question of genocide is also a point of support for pressure on governments.

We must also oppose arms deliveries to Israel, particularly in the United States, and highlight the hypocrisy and "double standards" of Western governments on the issue of Ukraine and that of Palestine. Their humanitarian and legal discourse on Ukraine collapsed like a pack of cards, especially when viewed from the Global South. Certainly, few people had any illusions, but now the double talk is quite blatant. This includes the qualification of genocide: it was quickly used for Ukraine even though what Russia has done there so far is of much less destructive and murderous intensity than what Israel has done in Gaza in three months.

A range of political themes makes it possible today to rebuild a truly consistent internationalist and anti-imperialist consciousness. The twinning of Ukraine and Gaza allows us to show that we are against any invasion, whether Russian, Israeli or American, and that as internationalists we are consistent in defending universal values such as peace, the rights of peoples, self-determination, etc.

Today there is room for numerous political education battles,

confronted with the media, the reigning hypocrisy, and all the supporters of Israel or Moscow. This war of narratives is facilitated by the evidence of far-right sympathy for Netanyahu and Putin. This also helps to show how anti-Semitism and Zionism complement each other. We must reverse the accusation equating anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism by showing that, although it is true that certain anti-Semitic speeches disguise themselves as anti-Zionism, this is far from establishing permanent equality between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. However, it is necessary to emphasize the convergence between anti-Semitism and Zionism: the anti-Semitic extreme right of Europe and the United States, which wishes to get rid of the Jews, supports Zionism because it also advocates the fact that Jews must go to Israel rather than live in Europe or North America.

Regarding the slogans for solidarity with Gaza, today we must articulate the various questions that we have raised and which are first of all of a defensive nature: that is to say the need to stop the massacre, which is the top priority, therefore the call for an immediate ceasefire. But this is not enough, because stopping the fighting in the face of armed occupation of the entire territory obviously poses a problem. We must therefore also demand the immediate, and above all unconditional, withdrawal of the occupying troops. We must also demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Israel from all territories occupied since 1967.

It is a slogan which conforms to an optic that the vast majority of people can understand since international law considers these territories as occupied and therefore requires the end of their occupation and of any colonization put in place by the occupier. Likewise, international law recognizes to Palestinian refugees a right of return or compensation.

From there on, it is up to the Palestinians to decide what they want: the debate within the solidarity movement on one state or two states is often inappropriate in my opinion,

because it is not in Paris, in London or New York that must be decided what is needed for the Palestinians . The solidarity movement must fight for the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people in all its components. It is up to the Palestinians to decide what they want. For the moment, there is a Palestinian consensus on the demands for Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967, for the dismantling of settlements in the West Bank, for the destruction of the separation wall, for the right of return of refugees and for real equality for the Palestinian citizens of Israel. These are all democratic demands, which are understandable to everyone, and must be at the centre of the solidarity campaign with the Palestinian people.

Beyond that, in the realm of utopia, there is food for thought and debate, of course, but that is not what mass campaigns are built on, particularly in the emergency of a genocide. in progress.

19 January 2024 Republished from International Viewpoint 3 March

2024:

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article8436>

Gilbert Achcar will be the keynote speaker at: **Building Internationalism from Below in a Multi-Polar World**. A day conference organised by the [Republican Socialist Platform](#) on 11am to 4pm, Saturday 23rd March 2024, Renfield Centre, 260 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4JP



*Gilbert Achcar grew up in Lebanon. He is currently Professor of Development Studies and International Relations at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. A regular and historical contributor to the press of the [Fourth International](#), his books include The Clash of Barbarisms. The Making of the New World Disorder (2006), The Arabs and the Shoah. The Arab-Israeli War of Narrations (2012), The People Wants. A Radical Exploration of the Arab Uprising (2022). His most recent book – The New Cold War. United States, Russia and China, from Kosovo to Ukraine was published in 2023. He is a member of [Anti*Capitalist Resistance in England & Cymru-Wales](#).*

Main Photo: Protesters for a ceasefire in Gaza fill Glasgow's Buchanan Street while the statue of former Scottish Labour leader Donald Dewar looks on (Mike Picken for ecosocialist.scot)

The zionist destruction machine threatens Lebanon after Gaza

In this article, republished from the [Anti*Capitalist Resistance](#) website, [Gilbert Achcar](#) analyses the current situation in Israel's war on Gaza, predicting that Israel plans to shift to a "low intensity" campaign while preparing for a possible future massive attack on Lebanon. **This article was written before Israel's assassination of a senior Hamas leader in Beirut on 3 January 2024.**

Two weeks ago, we estimated, in light of the evidence available at the time, that Israel's occupation forces would stop their intensive campaign of heavy bombardment at the beginning of this new year, and shift to a "low-intensity war" whose goal would be to tighten control over most of the territory of the Gaza Strip fallen under its sway, eradicate all remaining resistance within it and destroy the network of tunnels that remain under its soil (see "[Whither Israel's War on Gaza?](#)", 20/12/2023). On Monday, the first day of this new year, the official spokesman for the occupation army announced the withdrawal of five brigades from Gaza, composed mostly of reserve soldiers, in what was interpreted by observers as a first step towards the shift to a "low-intensity war" as promised by Israel's rulers to their external supporters, the United States above all.

The truth is that, for both human and economic reasons, the Zionist state cannot carry on for long waging a war with the same intensity as the one it has fought since "Al-Aqsa Flood". This is because Israel is a relatively small country, with a

Jewish population of only a little more than seven million, of whom a million and a half are men of military service age (in addition to a million and a half women who have not been involved in the war yet). It cannot continue to mobilize approximately half a million reservists for a long period, as this constitutes a heavy human burden on its society and an even heavier burden on its economy.

Until the end of last year, that is, in less than three months, the war has cost approximately 20 billion dollars, according to what a former deputy governor of the Israeli Central Bank told the *Washington Post*, i.e. a cost approaching a quarter of a billion dollars per day, which is huge for the country's economy. The Zionist government estimates that the entire war, which Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu confirmed last Saturday would last at least a year, will cost it about 50 billion dollars (that is, approximately one tenth of Israel's GDP). What makes Netanyahu and his allies of the Zionist far right all the more determined to continue the war at a lower intensity throughout this new year is their bet on Donald Trump's victory in the US presidential election next autumn. They believe that Trump would give them a green light to complete the "Second Nakba" by permanently seizing the Gaza Strip and annexing it. As they rely on American funding to mitigate the impact of the war on their economy, they must reduce its costs so that they can carry it on during the next several months as they intend.

At the same time, however, the Zionist government is planning a second intensive bombing campaign that would start once the intensity of its bombing of Gaza is reduced. During the very first days of Israel's new offensive, Zionist "Defence" Minister, former Major General Yoav Gallant, a member of the Likud Party and a rival of Netanyahu, was reported to want Israel to attack Hezbollah in Lebanon in conjunction with its onslaught on Hamas in Gaza. Gallant is known to be an advocate of the Dahiya doctrine, applied for the first-time during

Israel's onslaught on Lebanon in 2006. This military strategy consists in responding to anyone who threatens Israel's security in such a sweeping and destructive way that it would constitute a powerful deterrent. As head of the Southern Command between 2005 and 2010, Gallant oversaw the application of that doctrine in the deadly three-week onslaught on Gaza that started at the end of 2008.

Last summer, the Zionist "Defence" Minister threatened to return Lebanon to the "stone age". This was after he inspected the Shebaa Farms area on the Lebanese border and saw a tent set up by Hezbollah there. He said at the time: "I warn Hezbollah and Nasrallah not to make mistakes. You have made mistakes in the past and paid a very high price. If, God forbid, escalation or confrontation happens here, we will return Lebanon to the Stone Age." He continued, repeating: "I warn Hezbollah and its leader: Do not make a mistake. We will not hesitate to use all our power and destroy every meter belonging to Hezbollah and Lebanon if we have to." He then added, "When it comes to Israel's security, we are all united." These last words were in response to the assertion by Hezbollah's leader that Israel has been weakened due to its political crisis.

Thus, the likelihood of a new massive aggression launched by the Zionist state against Lebanon has become very high indeed. The Israeli government is putting Hezbollah in a corner by demanding that it withdraw its military presence to north of the Litani River, some 10 km north of Lebanon's border, as compliance would cause the party to lose face while refusal to comply would make it bear responsibility for causing a new devastating aggression against Lebanon, the areas where the party is deployed in particular. Hezbollah's limited intervention in the wake of "Al-Aqsa Flood" has thus backfired, as the party missed the opportunity to force Israel to engage in an intensive war on two fronts whereas Israel is today threatening to launch an intensive bombardment of

Lebanon, singling it out after completing its intensive bombardment of Gaza.

Translated from the Arabic original published in Al-Quds al-Arabi <https://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=3282616> on 2 January 2024. This article was written before Israel's assassination of a senior Hamas leader in Beirut.

Source >> Gilbert Achcar blog [The Zionist destruction machine threatens Lebanon after Gaza | Gilbert Achcar / جليبر الأشقر \(gilbert-achcar.net\)](https://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=3282616)

On Hamas's October Counter-Offensive

Gilbert Achcar

The counter-offensive launched by Hamas against Israel on 7 October 2023, a day after the 50th anniversary of another Arab surprise attack on Israel—the October 1973 War, is a much more spectacular feat than the latter. Whereas fifty years ago, the two Arab states of Egypt and Syria launched a conventional war to attempt to recover the territories that Israel had seized from them six years earlier in the June 1967 War, the new counter-offensive launched by Hamas evokes the boldness of the biblical David in his fight against the giant Goliath. Combining rudimentary air, sea, and land means—the equivalent of David's sling—Hamas's fighters executed an amazing and highly daring offensive all along the border zone between the Gaza strip and the Israeli state.

In the same way as Israel's arrogant self-confidence in the face of its Arab neighbours was shattered in 1973, the

security and impunity that it has been taking for granted in dealing with the Palestinian people and combatting Palestinian guerrillas have been severely and irreversibly impaired. From that angle, Hamas's October counter-offensive is to the Israeli population and state a powerful reminder of their vulnerability and of the fact that there can be no security without peace and no peace without justice.

Whatever one may think of Hamas's decision to launch such a massive operation against the Israeli state, thus inevitably unleashing the Israeli government's massive murderous retaliation and inciting it to attempt to wipe off Hamas and its allies from the Gaza Strip at a huge cost for civilians, the fact remains that this counter-offensive has already and undoubtedly dealt a heavy blow to the unbearable haughtiness of the Israeli racist far-right government and their belief that Israel could ever reach a "normal" state of coexistence with its regional environment while persecuting the Palestinian people and inflicting upon them a protracted Nakba of territorial dispossession, ethnic cleansing and apartheid.

No less unbearable is the precipitation with which Western governments (and a Ukrainian government that ought to know better about the legitimate fight against foreign occupation) have expressed their solidarity with Israel, very much in contrast with their muted reactions to Israel's brutal onslaughts on the Palestinian population. The Israeli flag was projected on Berlin's Brandenburg Gate on the evening of 7 October in a contemptible display of fawning over the state of Israel, the usual hallmark of German misoriented redemption-seeking for Nazi crimes against European Jews by endorsing Israel's crimes against the Palestinians. This becomes even worse at a time when Israel's government is composed of the whole gamut of Jewish far-right forces, including people whom a prominent Israeli Holocaust historian did not hesitate to aptly [describe in Haaretz as neo-Nazis](#)!

No less contemptible are the attempts at "analysing" Hamas's

offensive as an Iranian plot to derail the ongoing US-fostered rapprochement between the Saudi kingdom and the Israeli state. Even if it were true that Tehran wishes to derail that rapprochement instead of using it to enhance its own claim of monopoly over anti-Zionism, a very disputable hypothesis indeed, this denial of Palestinian agency by way of conspiracy theory is the exact equivalent of every oppressive government's reaction to popular revolt. It postulates that there are no sufficient grounds for the oppressed people to revolt against their oppression and that any such move is necessarily inspired by the invisible hand of some foreign government.

Anyone familiar with what the Palestinian people has been enduring for decades, and aware of the kind of open air prison that the Gaza Strip has become, ever since it was occupied in 1967 and then evacuated by Israeli troops in 2005—an open air prison that is periodically the target of a murderous Israeli “turkey shoot”—can easily understand that the only reason why such quasi-desperate act of bravery as Hamas's latest operation does not actually happen more frequently is the huge military disproportion between the Palestinian David and the Israeli Goliath. Gaza's latest counter-offensive brings indeed to mind the 1943 [Warsaw Ghetto Uprising](#).

There can be no doubt that this new chapter will end with a terrible cost for the Palestinians in general, the Gazans in particular, and Hamas specifically—much higher than the cost endured by the Israelis, as has unfailingly been the case in every round of fighting between Israel and the Palestinians. And whereas it is not difficult to understand the “enough-is-enough” logic behind Hamas's counter-offensive, it is much more doubtful that it will help advance the Palestinian cause beyond the blow to Israel's self-confidence mentioned above. This would have been achieved at a hugely disproportionate cost for the Palestinians.

The very idea that such an operation, however spectacular it

was, could achieve “victory” can only stem from the religious type of magical thinking that is characteristic of a fundamentalist movement like Hamas. The distribution by its information service of a video showing the movement’s leadership praying to thank God on the morning of 7 October is a good illustration of this thinking. Unfortunately, no magic can alter the fact of Israel’s massive military superiority: the result of Israel’s new ongoing war against Gaza is certainly going to be devastating.

The 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington dealt the United States’ arrogance a spectacular blow. Eventually, they tremendously enhanced George W. Bush’s popularity and enabled him to launch 18 months later the occupation of Iraq that he ambitioned. Likewise, Hamas’s October counter-offensive has already succeeded in reunifying a previously deeply divided Israeli society and polity, and it will allow Benjamin Netanyahu to implement his wildest plans to inflict massive terror on the Palestinians to precipitate their forced displacement.

On the other hand, if Hamas’s leadership had been betting on Lebanon’s Hezbollah—and Iran behind it—to join the war at a level that would really put Israel in jeopardy, this bet would be very risky indeed. For not only it is far from certain that Hezbollah would take the high risk of massively entering a new war with Israel, but such a situation, if it were to happen, would inevitably bring Israel to resort unrestrainedly to its massive destructive power (which includes nuclear weapons), thus bringing about a catastrophe of historic magnitude.

Against an oppressor that is far superior in military means, the only truly efficient way of struggle for the Palestinian people is by choosing the terrain on which they can circumvent that superiority. The peak in Palestinian’s struggle effectiveness was reached in the year 1988 during the First Intifada, in which the Palestinians deliberately avoided the use of violent means. This led to a deep moral crisis in

Israel's society and polity, including its armed forces, and was a key factor in leading the Israeli Rabin-Peres leadership to negotiate the 1993 Oslo Accords with Yasir Arafat—however flawed these accords were, due to the Palestinian leader's indulging in wishful thinking.

The Palestinian struggle must rely primarily on mass political action against Israel's oppression, occupation, and settler-colonial expansion. The new underground armed resistance organised by young Palestinians in Jenin or Nablus can be an efficient adjuvant to the people's mass movement, provided it is predicated on the latter's priority and conceived in such a way as to incentivise it. The regional support that the Palestinian people should rely upon is not that of tyrannical governments like that of Iran, but that of the peoples fighting against these oppressive regimes. Herein lies the true potential prospect for Palestinian liberation, which needs to be combined with the emancipation of Israeli society itself from the logic of Zionism that has inexorably produced its polity's ever-expanding drift to the far right.

Republished from:
<https://gilbert-achcar.net/on-hamas-october-offensive>

About Gilbert Achcar

Gilbert Achcar grew up in Lebanon. He is currently Professor of Development Studies and International Relations at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. His most recent books are *The New Cold War: The US, Russia and China – From Kosovo to Ukraine* (2023), *Morbid Symptoms: Relapse in the Arab Uprising* (2016) and *The People Want: A Radical Exploration of the Arab Uprising* (2013). Other books include *The Clash of Barbarisms* (2nd expanded edition 2006); dialogues with Noam Chomsky on the Middle East in *Perilous Power: The Middle East and U.S. Foreign Policy* (2nd edition 2008); and *The Arabs and the Holocaust: The Arab-Israeli War of Narratives* (2010). He is a member of Anti*Capitalist

Resistance in England & Wales.