New At-Home Device Helps Regrow Receding Gums in 12 Min/Day
Better Living
Open

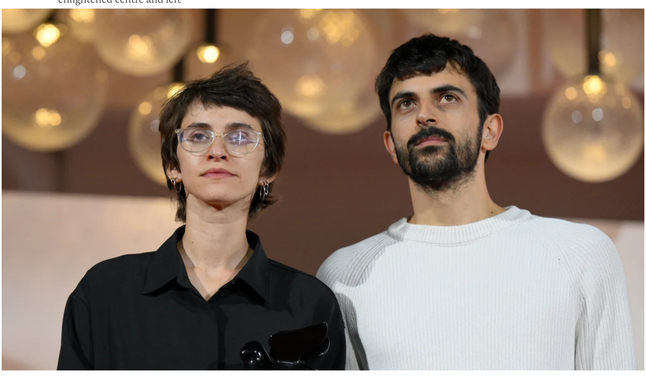
Opinion | Israeli Elections

As elections loom, Naza controversy strikes at the heart of Israel's crisis

Antony Loewenstein

25 September 2026 09:37 BST | **Last update:** 2 hours 44 mins ago

The film exposes dark truths about mainstream Israeli society, from the far right to the supposedly enlightened centre and left



Naza co-directors Yuval Abraham and Rachel Szor at the Venice Film Festival on 12 September 2026 (Tiziana Fabi/AFP)

How threatening is an Israeli film about war crimes and AI-enabled mass killing in Gaza?

Release it during an Israeli election campaign, and watch almost the entire political establishment fall over themselves to defame, shame and threaten the filmmakers, while defending Israel's campaign in Gaza as noble, justified and praiseworthy.

The newly released documentary, Naza, by Israeli filmmakers Yuval Abraham and Rachel Szor, details the elaborate ways in which Israeli military planners have unleashed hell on Palestinians in Gaza since 7 October 2023, with no care for the potential of civilian harm or death. In fact, the aim was a bloodbath.

The reality of this devastation has been copiously documented by Palestinian journalists in Gaza, who are being killed in unprecedented numbers by the Israeli army.

The film builds on the work done by Abraham in recent years, revealing in great detail the systems that Israel has developed to find new targets in its genocidal revenge campaign.

New MEE newsletter: Jerusalem Dispatch
Sign up to get the latest insights and analysis on Israel-Palestine, alongside Turkey Unpacked and other MEE newsletters
Your email
Subscribe

These tools will inevitably be sold by Israel to other nations keen to replicate its actions in Gaza, backed by Silicon Valley companies such as Palantir, Amazon and Google, who have become vital backers of Israel's war machine.

A key Israeli goal after 7 October wasn't to pinpoint and target Hamas "terrorists" in Gaza, but rather to engage in a campaign of mass killing and destruction. By this definition, Israel's war aims have been achieved.

No criticism tolerated

My own Israeli sources have confirmed that the Israeli government, military and intelligence felt humiliated after the 7 October Hamas attack, and committed to wreaking carnage on all Palestinians in Gaza.

Rendering normal life impossible in the besieged territory was the goal. Israel still talks about forcibly removing all Palestinians from Gaza.

But Naza exposed dark truths about mainstream Israeli society, from the far right to the supposedly enlightened centre and left, where no criticism of the Israeli military is tolerated. Indeed, the genocidal fervour in Israel cannot be blamed solely on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Although virtually none of Naza's critics have seen it, and while it's wholly legitimate to question aspects of the film, I have lost count of the number of pro-Israel and pro-Palestine influencers aiming to slam Abraham and Szor for vastly different reasons.

But by appearing amid a heated Israeli election campaign, the first since the 7 October onslaught, the Naza debate has turned into something else: a proxy for Israeli society and how it handles dissent and criticism. On the evidence, it's failing miserably.

> The main Zionist contenders [in the election] compete for the crown of most deranged when speaking about, and not to, occupied Palestinians

This shouldn't be surprising. It's wholly acceptable in Israel to demonise and exclude Arab political parties. Failing to declare loyalty to Zionism is enough to get Arab parties banished.

Netanyahu's Likud party, whose ideology is little different from the Jewish supremacism espoused by extremist minister Itamar Ben Gvir's own party, recently announced that it was aiming to exclude all Arab parties from contesting elections, because "there is no place in the Knesset for those who harm [Israeli] soldiers". On Wednesday, Israel's Central Elections Committee voted to disqualify several Arab parties, although the move could be quashed in the High Court.

Netanyahu applied the same logic after the release of Naza, saying he hoped to pass legislation that could revoke the citizenship of anyone who defames Israel's army. It's a chilling possibility, more akin to a theocracy or dictatorship – and a likely outcome if Netanyahu wins the 27 October election.

Obedience and silence

Yet the profound problems in Israel haven't been caused solely by Netanyahu. He's the symptom of a much bigger malaise; an insularity that rewards obedience and silence.

Israel's identity is tied up with the notion of loyalty to a particular idea of Judaism that has no interest in welcoming those with differing beliefs. Publicly questioning the ethics of the Israeli army, or accusing the state of genocide, is enough to guarantee shunning and death threats.

While much of the world rightly accuses the Israeli military of war crimes and ethnic cleansing in Gaza and the occupied West Bank, I personally witnessed the mainstream Israeli response during a recent visit there: it is either outright denial, or pride. Denial is easier to understand, though no less acceptable.

Having written about Israel and Palestine for nearly 25 years, I've never seen a time when Israeli crimes were so brazenly promoted, shared and applauded by mainstream Israeli audiences – not hidden or deemed shameful.

From applauding Israeli soldiers who rape Palestinian prisoners, to pro-war propagandists baying for Palestinian blood, death and displacement, the sickness within Israeli society is amplified by a state that has rarely felt any accountability for its actions.

The forthcoming Israeli elections will likely change none of this. The main Zionist contenders compete for the crown of most deranged when speaking about, and not to, occupied Palestinians. Nobody is calling for an end to ethnic cleansing. It's often the opposite that's demanded: more killing and barbarism.

Netanyahu's potential departure from the scene would be welcome, but liberal Zionists in the West hoping for an image reset will be sorely disappointed. This is Israel. The world can't unsee the last three years of its depravity across the Middle East.

NAZA review: Portrait of Israel as a nation stuck in a moral abyss

Read More »

Very few Israelis or Palestinians now support the two-state solution, hopefully hastening its departure from the scene. Many Americans now oppose Israeli actions, and many American Jews blame Israeli atrocities for a rise in antisemitism.

In my view, the few Israeli Jews who vigorously oppose Israeli crimes should be applauded and protected, from columnist Gideon Levy to Abraham and Szor – but they would all acknowledge that the priority is a cessation and reversal of Israeli activities in the occupied West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Iran and beyond.

Elections are vital in any functioning democracy. But what if most voters demand even more bloodshed and colonisation, in the name of Jewish safety?

The views expressed in this article belong to the author and do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of Middle East Eye.

Antony Loewenstein is an independent journalist, best-selling author, filmmaker and co-founder of Declassified Australia. He's written for the Guardian, the New York Times, the New York Review of Books and many others. His latest book is The Palestine Laboratory: How Israel Exports the Technology of Occupation Around the World. His other books include Pills, Powder and Smoke, Disaster Capitalism and My Israel Question. His documentary films include Disaster Capitalism and the Al Jazeera English films West Africa's Opioid Crisis and Under the Cover of Covid. He was based in East Jerusalem from 2016 to 2020.

Middle East Eye delivers independent and unrivalled coverage and analysis of the Middle East, North Africa and beyond. To learn more about republishing this content and the associated fees, please fill out this form. More about MEE can be found here.

Your Shoulder Pain May Never Go Away Unless You Do This One...
Shoulder Cure

Recommended
"On Yom Kippur, Israel's forgiveness is for the killer of an unarmed Palestinian
Lubna Masarwa
Israeli election committee bans Arab parties from standing in next month's vote
'Kahanist' figure poised to enter Israeli parliament on Ben Gvir's party list

Your Shoulder Pain May Never Go Away Unless You Do This One...
Shoulder Cure

Read more

Israeli Elections
"Netanyahu won't stop until all Arab political parties are gone
Abed Abou Shhadeh

Israel's genocide in Gaza
"How Israel's far right has become a fig leaf for mainstream violence
Mohamad Elmasry

Israel's genocide in Gaza
"In a genocidal society, Israel's crisis runs deeper than the courts
Abed Abou Shhadeh

Copyright © 2014 - 2026. Middle East Eye. All rights reserved. Only England and Wales jurisdiction apply in all legal matters.

Middle East Eye ISSN 2634-2456