OPINION

Don't Buy Israel's 'Pink-Washing' Social Media Propaganda

RAINBOW BOMBS

As civilians die in Israel's brutal war on Gaza, its government is trying to win hearts and minds with images of rainbow flags and kissing LGBTQ soldiers.

Antony Loewenstein | Published Nov. 16, 2023 4:57AM EST

Photo Illustration by Luis G. Rendon/The Daily Beast/Getty

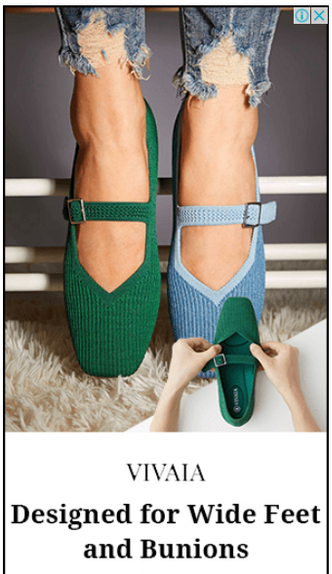
The Israeli soldier, Yoav Atzmoni, stands amongst the ruins of Gaza. He holds the rainbow pride flag with the message, "In the Name of Love," blazoned across it. The accompanying Instagram post, released in mid-November, stated that, "it was the first ever gay pride flag raised in Gaza."

He went on: "Under Hamas, being gay means death. The hidden Palestinian LGBTQ+ community can be HOPEFUL as soon they will live and love free of Hamas."

ADVERTISEMENT

The message and photo, posted on the accounts of pro-Israel influencer Noa Tishby and Jews of New York, was the definition of tone-deaf. Behind Atzmoni we see Israeli tanks, destroyed Palestinian homes, and an apocalyptic landscape after more than a month of brutal Israeli bombardment.

READ THIS LIST
Payback Scheme: Trump Tries to Get Michael Cohen's Phone
JOSE PAGLIERY
Elon Musk, Accused of Antisemitism, Loses IBM Ad Dollars
NOAH KIRSCH
The Film So Filthy and Shocking We Have to Talk About It
KEVIN FALLON
Yoga Teacher Guilty of Cyclist's Tragic Love Triangle Murder
PILAR MELENDEZ
Far-Right Board Now Feels $4M Resignation Offer Is Excessive
DECCA MULDOWNEY



View this post on Instagram

A post shared by JewsOfNY / Jewish life in New York (@jews_of_ny)

SHOP NOW

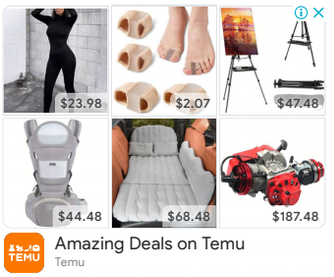
Since Oct. 7, over 11,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, the vast majority of whom are civilians, and large swathes of Gaza are now uninhabitable.

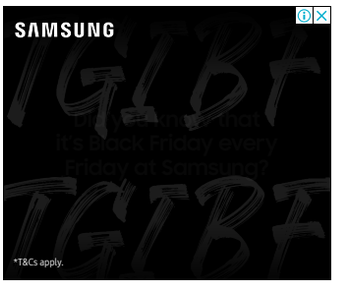
Palestinian friends in Gaza, whose homes were destroyed by Israel in the last weeks and are now refugees in their own land, are trying to find shelter, food, and clean water. They tell me that every day is a challenge just to survive. I'm thinking about my times in Gaza as a journalist in the last 15 years and the dignity and humanity that I witnessed there, much of it now snuffed out.

"Since the beginning of the war we have been living in complete darkness, cut off from the world, without electricity or the internet," one friend, Khalil, tells me. "Personal hygiene and bathing are luxuries unavailable to us. Even using the restroom in the midst of displacement is a challenge in itself. Many things we once considered basic have become distant dreams and excessive privileges."

No amount of pro-LGBT social media messaging will change this reality. The idea that Palestinians in Palestine, or any global citizen, unsure about the actions of Israel since the brutal Oct. 7 attacks by Hamas, would appreciate the apparently LGBT-friendly Israel Defence Forces is highly questionable.

Nonetheless, the Israeli government tweeted the photo of the Israeli soldier in Gaza with the rainbow flag to amplify its message in an information war that it's losing. There's been a proliferation of gay Israeli soldiers kissing in uniform on social media in the last month, shared across pro-Israel accounts, in an attempt to show the humanity and tolerance of the Israeli military—while it uses white phosphorus in Gaza and Lebanon.





A LGBT+ pro-Palestinian protester from the Free Palestine Coalition holds up a sign criticising Israeli 'pinkwashing' during a march through central London.

Mark Kerrison

While it's true that some gay Palestinians in Palestine are unable to express themselves publicly due to religious and social conservatism, the idea that an invading Israeli army is the right messenger to talk about peace, love, gay rights, and justice is fanciful.

There's a reason that the term "pink-washing" exists. It's the "deliberate strategy to conceal the continuing violations of Palestinians' human rights behind an image of modernity signified by Israeli gay life," wrote the American Jewish scholar Sarah Schulman in *The New York Times* in 2011.

This has long been the Israeli government's social media strategy. None of this suddenly started on Oct. 7, though it's massively accelerated since that day. The Israeli framing is clear: portray the Jewish state as a beacon of progressivism and hope (and ignore the fact that the country elected the most right-wing, homophobic, and racist government in its history in late 2022).

Nonviolence Is the Missing Path to Israeli-Palestinian Peace

| THIS IS THE WAY |

Ali Abu Awwad

If it's not showing Israel in a tolerant light, Israel's social media tactics involve playing into the victim card; the Jewish state is under attack and faces a crisis of survival.

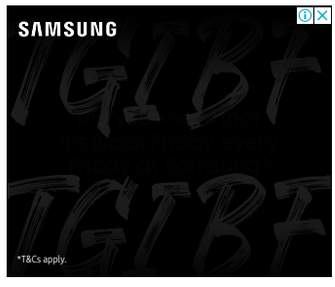
On Nov. 12, Israeli spokesman Eylon Levy tweeted a photo of Israeli President Isaac Herzog holding an Arabic copy of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, allegedly found in a child's bedroom in Gaza "in a house that doubled up as a Hamas terror base."

"Hamas are Nazis," Levy concludes. "We're the good guys. We're fighting for our survival."

There's obviously no way to prove or disprove the presence of this book by Hitler in Gaza, though it seems far-fetched, but the overall message is clear: Israel is battling for its actual existence against Nazi-like foes.

> ***"There's been a proliferation of gay Israeli soldiers kissing in uniform on social media in the last month, shared across pro-Israel accounts, in an attempt to show the humanity and tolerance of the Israeli military —while it uses white phosphorous in Gaza and Lebanon."***

This is completely untrue. The Hamas-directed massacres of Israelis on Oct. 7 were outrageous and illegal but they weren't an existential threat to Israel, a nation backed by every Western country on the planet including the U.S. Israel is

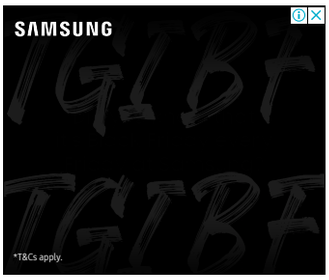


the 10th biggest arms dealer in the world, selling its surveillance tech and weapons to the majority of nations on Earth. It doesn't face a threat of annihilation from Hamas.

In my new book, *The Palestine Laboratory*, I explore in-depth the social media strategy of Israel in the 21st century and how it deeply inspired the U.S. information battle during the failed "war on terror" after Sept. 11, 2001.

Israel's social media strategy across all its platforms, amplified by other pro-Israel accounts and many in the mainstream media, is a sophisticated attempt to tie the Jewish state's actions with so-called Western values, especially those ideals that view the military solution as the only viable, rational, and moral one.

The largely unstated goal of the IDF information warfare strategy is the weaponizing of Jewish trauma in the service of perpetuating occupation of Palestinian territory in Gaza, the West Bank, or East Jerusalem. As a Jewish journalist myself, I've long rejected this attempt at misusing the horrors of the Holocaust, in which most of my family were murdered by real Nazis in the death camps, to justify Israeli outrages today.

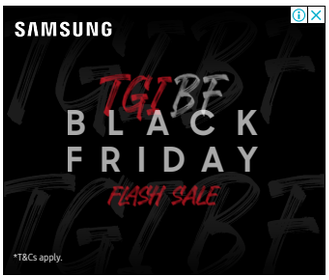


Nonviolence Is the Missing Path to Israeli-Palestinian Peace

| THIS IS THE WAY |

Ali Abu Awwad

Although many Israeli government posts are filled with inaccuracies, including in the last month with inaccurate information and false videos, there's rarely any attempt to correct them. Instead, the Israeli answer is to just bombard global readers and viewers with more and more posts, hopefully making them forget about the previous posts that were wrong.

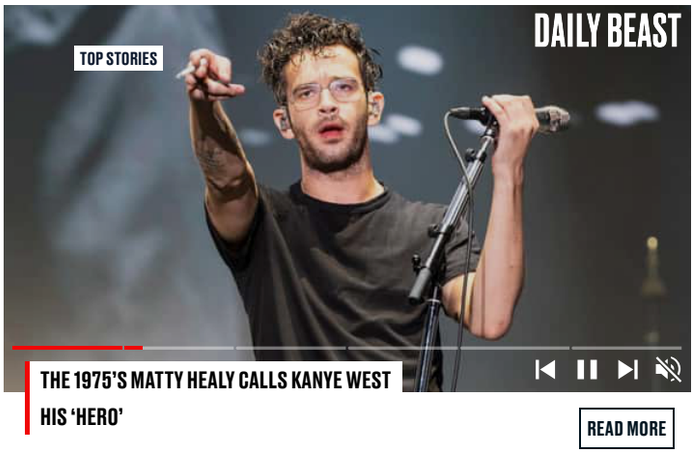


It's as if the Israeli government listened to former Donald Trump adviser Steve Bannon, who infamously said that, "the real opposition is the media. And the way to deal with them is to flood the zone with shit." In other words, give people information overload and they won't know what's right, incorrect, or partially true.

Israeli warfighting, along with its occupation of Palestine—the longest in modern times—is a valuable testing ground for new weapons, social media strategy, and repression. The current Israeli war against Gaza, where Israel is already live-testing weapons in real time on its social platforms, has become just the latest chapter in this evolution.

Antony Loewenstein
@antloewenstein

Got a tip? Send it to The Daily Beast here.



Amazing Deals on Temu
Temu

TRUMPLAND

Payback Scheme: Trump Tries to Get Michael Cohen's Phone

IT'S PERSONAL

Last month, Donald Trump's lawyers demanded that Michael Cohen turn over all his personal devices—something prosecutors say is an attempt at witness intimidation.

Jose Pagliery
Political Investigations Reporter
Published Nov. 16, 2023 11:26AM EST

Photo by Spencer Platt/Getty Images

READ THIS LIST

Elon Musk, Accused of Antisemitism, Loses IBM Ad Dollars
NOAH KIRSCH

The Film So Filthy and Shocking We Have to Talk About It
KEVIN FALLON

Yoga Teacher Guilty of Cyclist's Tragic Love Triangle Murder
PILAR MELENDEZ

Far-Right Board Now Feels $4M Resignation Offer Is Excessive
DECCA MULDOWNEY

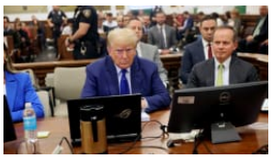
The Craziest Details in the Savage Santos Ethics Report
JUSTIN ROHRLICH

Donald Trump's obsession with seeking vengeance against his secret-spilling ex-lawyer Michael Cohen continued last month, with the former president's lawyers trying to seize Cohen's personal devices.

As the Manhattan District Attorney's ongoing case against the former president builds toward a trial next year, Trump's lawyers subpoenaed Cohen—who is a key witness to Trump's porn star hush money coverup, according to documents obtained by The Daily Beast.

On Oct. 17, Trump lawyers Susan R. Necheles and Gedalia M. Stern filed a formal demand that Cohen fork over "all documents and communications regarding the topics below that are stored on any medium under your possession or control, including but not limited to phones (including encrypted messaging applications), tablets, computers, and hard copy."

Trump's Revenge: Lawyers Go After Michael Cohen for Perjury
REVENGE OF THE WORDS
Jose Pagliery



DA Alvin Bragg Jr.'s team is now scrambling to block the request, citing a growing concern at what it calls Trump's "witness intimidation" and asking the state judge overseeing the case to intervene. His prosecutors say Trump is trying to abuse the regular document-sharing that occurs before a trial, using that exchange as an excuse to get information that'll fuel his personal vendetta against the guy who once served as his right-hand man at the Trump Organization.

In a legal memo filed on Tuesday, prosecutor Matthew Colangelo called the latest Trump subpoena "an extraordinarily broad document demand that exceeds every parameter on the allowable scope of a trial subpoena."

There's a growing concern that the former president—who has shown no restraint in attacking political enemies as he seeks a return to the White House in 2024—would misuse the text messages, photos, or any other information on Cohen's cell phone. Prosecutors explained that Cohen might be forced to turn over information that Trump "may then disseminate without restriction, posing a serious risk of witness intimidation and harassment and evading the court's existing protective order that governs the use of discovery materials in this case."

Instead of focusing on the felony case at hand, Colangelo said, Trump is actually just trying to fuel his separate legal war against his former attorney—one who has transformed into a whistleblower of sorts who's actively assisting law enforcement and congressional investigators.

Trump sued Cohen in Florida federal court in April, alleging that Cohen violated his duty as a personal attorney by dishing out client secrets. Notably, Trump dropped that lawsuit just before he was to sit down in a deposition and answer questions last month.

Trump's Attack Dog in Congress Does His Courtroom Bidding

| VEEPSTAKES! |

Jose Pagliery, Jake Lahut

But Trump could always revive that lawsuit, and that's what has prosecutors worried.

"Rather than seek specific documents tailored to the determination of defendant's guilt or innocence, the subpoena is a scattershot request for years and years of records that appears designed to ascertain the existence of evidence, fish for impeaching material, circumvent limits on discovery in this criminal case, and serve as discovery for the $500 million civil damages lawsuit defendant has promised to re-file against Cohen," prosecutors wrote.

When reached on Thursday morning, Necheles declined to comment.

Jose Pagliery
Political Investigations Reporter
@Jose_Pagliery jose.pagliery@thedailybeast.com

Got a tip? Send it to The Daily Beast here.

Loading...

COUPONS: Dick's Sporting Goods Coupons HP Coupon Codes Chewy Promo Codes Nordstrom Rack Coupons NordVPN Coupons JCPenny Coupons Nordstrom Coupons Samsung Promo Coupons Home Depot Coupons Hotwire Promo Codes eBay Coupons Ashley Furniture Promo Codes

© 2023 The Daily Beast Company LLC