

Opinion

# Jenna Price | It's time for some radical thinking in Gaza and the Israel-Palestine crisis



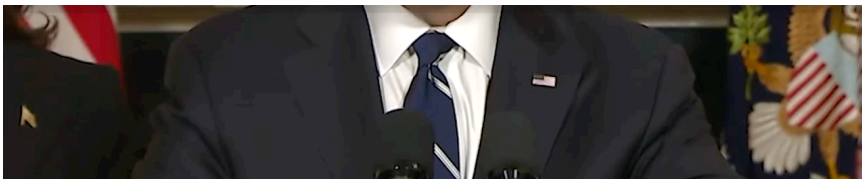
By Jenna Price  
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🎥 US President Joe Biden has delivered an address condemning the 'act of terror' from Hamas and offering support to Israel.

Hello. I'm Jewish. I've been to Israel once in my life, at the end of what is now called year 10. My parents sent me to live on a kibbutz alongside my aunt, uncle and three cousins, in the hope that I would come home and be more self-reliant.

I have not been back. I have no wish to go back. I am not an Israeli and have little in common with Israelis who keep voting in the deranged Benjamin Netanyahu as prime minister.

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You know why I'm telling you all this. The war between Netanyahu's government and Hamas, a terrorist organisation, has blown up in the most shocking way. I have done my best to avoid any footage of massacres and murders and sheer cruelty. Look, it's not me being a coward - but I read a lot and my imagination fills in the visual gaps. It does not need any encouragement.

For those of you who can view the Middle East horror in a dispassionate way, lucky you. For you, it's just another war among brown people and unlikely to affect you (OK, you might pay more for oil).

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But for Jews, this is terrifying. And for Palestinians, it is terrifying.

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Mourners comfort each other in the morgue of Al-Shifa Hospital after Israeli airstrikes killed a dozen Palestinians. Picture AAP

Now just to let you know, there are many - many - Palestinians who do not support murderous rampages by Hamas. They would no more support the wholesale slaughter of civilians than you would. And anyone who thinks otherwise assigns sentiments to brown people based on idiotic and harmful stereotypes.

But let me say this. I am Jewish, I have always believed in the right of Israel to exist as a separate entity. Now I am not so sure. Palestinians certainly have the right to feel desperately occupied, aggrieved and angry. For nearly two decades, Gaza has been under siege. The Palestinians were dispossessed of land - and then increasingly dispossessed of more land.

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Is it possible for this to be peaceful?

Now, go back a few hundred years and you'll discover both Jews and Arabs lived there. Britain colonised, mandated Palestine, split it into bits, carved off Israel after the Holocaust (in case you've forgotten, six million Jews were murdered) to provide Jews with a haven.

And that was meant to be that. There was Israel and Palestine, each with room. Of course, progressive Israeli governments have also expanded their borders (or, as we say here in Australia, stole their land).

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Israel has turned out to be no haven - and it's made worse by Netanyahu who is a warmonger (and it turns out, utterly shithouse at keeping his own people safe).

I have tried my best to avoid writing about Israel. Australia, where I live, is remarkably bad at telling the difference between Judaism and Zionism. In the eyes of many who know nothing, anyone Jewish supports the current derangements of Israel. For years, assimilated Jews have made it clear they don't support the existence of the state of Israel. I'm an assimilated Jew and I am beginning to think that we can never have peace in the region.

Nearly 20 years ago, I interviewed a then young Jewish Australian author Antony Loewenstein about his new book *My Israel Question*. It was one of those books that really said everything I felt. Loewenstein, at that point, believed in a two-state solution. Now he has a new book, *The Palestine Laboratory*, and he says a two-state solution will never work. Israel and Palestine should be merged as one democratic nation.

As I'm interviewing him, I give a nervous laugh. Is he joking?

He is not.

Loewenstein lived in Israel for many years with his partner and has reported from Israel and Palestine since 2005. And his new book is a global investigation into the tools and technology Israel

uses to monitor, surveil and subdue Palestinians. If only Israel kept that technology to itself. But no, it is exported and sold around the world. One example is Israeli company NSO's Pegasus, spyware which infected mobile phones around the world (journalists, opposition politicians, activists among others), designed to allow others to see your every move. As the *Guardian's* Charles Arthur wrote earlier this year in his review of *Pegasus: The Story of the World's Most Dangerous Spyware*: "They could download any content, surreptitiously turn on the camera or microphone, listen to any call. The infection persisted until the phone was restarted - at which point the controllers would notice, and send another infecting message."

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And it's not as if this software is just being used in Israel and Palestine. It's sold to almost everywhere where the government wants to know exactly what its opponents are doing and when.

Clearly didn't work in the case of Hamas. Doesn't Hamas fear the impact on Palestinians of its attacks on Israelis? Dana El Kurd, an assistant professor of political science at the University of Richmond, told the *New York Times*: "It speaks to the fact that these kinds of groups or movements have political objectives that they pursue and the human cost will be a secondary consideration to that."

Loewenstein thinks this will never be fixable. After the last week, I tend to agree with him. Can it possibly work?

"I'm not a Utopian. And I'm not suggesting that in a one-state solution, everyone would suddenly have group hugs every day," he says.

But surely in such a place there would no longer be these terrifying group deaths. I've spent over half a century backing in the concept of Israel as the only place where Jews can freely be themselves.

They no longer can.

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- Jenna Price is a regular columnist and a visiting fellow at the Australian National University.



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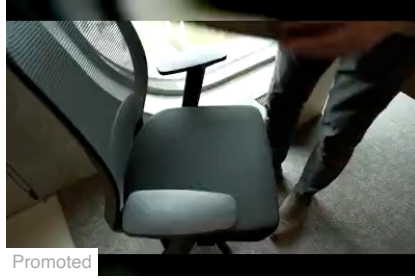
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