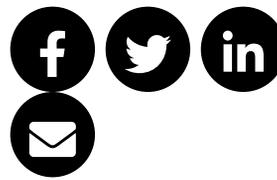


Middle East

Violence, destruction and death in Israel play right into Netanyahu's hands

Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu — on trial over charges of corruption — will once again use the conflict to rally people against what he calls 'a vile enemy'



PALESTINIANS INSPECT THE RUBBLE OF THE DESTROYED AL-SHOROUC TOWER AFTER AN ISRAELI STRIKE IN GAZA CITY
(IMAGE: EPA/MOHAMMED SABER)

Another flare-up between Israel and the Palestinians is the inevitable result of Israeli political dysfunction and Palestinian perseverance.

Israel hasn't had a stable government for years after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [successfully dragged his country](#) through four elections without a clear result. Despite standing trial on [corruption charges](#), his Likud Party still received the highest number of seats in the March election — but not enough to lead a majority in the Knesset.

The current [dangerous escalation between Israel and Hamas](#), with dozens of Palestinians and Israeli citizens killed and a [breakdown in Jewish and Arab cities](#), plays directly into Netanyahu's hands. He's a nationalist leader who can rally his people under slogans of [standing "united in the face of a vile enemy"](#).

Sober Israelis realise there is no military solution to this crisis. Sadly these voices are almost impossible to hear now and most Western nations back Israel in its regular battles with

Palestinians. At the United Nations, Australia is an outlier in its dealings with Israel, [unwilling to ever condemn its actions](#). Arab dictatorships that [made peace](#) with Israel in the dying days of the Trump administration have little to show for it other than large [defence contracts](#).

The Palestinian people are occupied and angry, led by the [corrupt](#) and [repressive](#) US and Israeli-supported Palestinian Authority (PA) – whose leader Mahmoud Abbas just [postponed a much-needed election](#) – and Hamas in Gaza which rules with an iron fist over its 2 million residents.

Ultimate control still rests with the occupying power, Israel, but I'm yet to meet a Palestinian in Jerusalem, West Bank or Gaza who doesn't crave new, younger leaders with fresh ideas to end Israel's occupation. As a result, there's a growing, leaderless movement developing among Palestinians inside Israel and Palestine.



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The wider context for the latest outbreak is the radicalisation of the Israeli public over the past two decades, a widespread belief in [Jewish supremacy](#). The sight of [state-backed](#), Israeli fanatics celebrating the destruction of Palestinian culture in the heart of Jerusalem this week was

striking. On Jerusalem Day, a public holiday in Israel to commemorate the city's reunification (and occupation) after the 1967 Six Day War, far-right activists [danced with joy](#) at the sight of a fire blazing in the [al-Aqsa mosque compound](#).

The mood in Israel is angry. Jerusalem's deputy mayor recently mocked a Palestinian activist and said it was a "[pity](#)" he wasn't shot in the head. Netanyahu has [formed a coalition](#) with fascists to stay in power, a goal that is looking increasingly unlikely – although his possible replacements are [little better](#). The problem [isn't just](#) Netanyahu – despite many in the West believing that replacing him is the solution.

In a [recent story in *The New York Times*](#) on forced evictions of Palestinians from the East Jerusalem area of Sheikh Jarrah, Fleur Hassan-Nahoum, a deputy mayor of Jerusalem, happily acknowledged that the aim of legally discriminating against Palestinians was due to Israel being "a Jewish country. There's only one. And of course, there are laws that some people may consider as favouring Jews – it's a Jewish state. It is here to protect the Jewish people."

I lived in Sheikh Jarrah from 2016 to 2020, just down the road from where the latest evictions may take place, and I constantly saw Israeli police harass Palestinians for the simple act of walking down the street. Back in 2009, during an [earlier round](#) of evictions, I saw Palestinians

forced to sit on couches outside their own homes in Sheikh Jarrah after [being kicked](#) out by state-backed Jewish settlers.

On one level, the public discourse is shifting. Human Rights Watch recently declared that [Israeli policies constitute crimes of apartheid](#) and called for the International Criminal Court to investigate. It said nations should impose sanctions, travel bans and asset freezes on the responsible officials. The ICC is continuing with a [separate investigation into alleged war crimes](#) committed by Israel and Hamas in the occupied territories.

Only in the past few years have [US politicians openly called for a reduction in US aid](#) to the Jewish state if that money supports the abuse of Palestinians. US President [Joe Biden has dismissed this idea as “bizarre”](#). Why Israel needs aid at all is a question that all-too-rarely comes up.

The recent decision by the [Australian military to dump Israeli defence contractor Elbit](#) due to security concerns was a rare case of Canberra publicly distancing itself from an Israeli company. Nonetheless, elements within the Australian Labor Party are mobilising to challenge the bipartisan consensus over Israel/Palestine and [pushing](#) for a settlement boycott.

It's far from enough, and many Greens MPs are far more [outspoken](#), but it's a new development.

Antony Loewenstein is an independent journalist, author and filmmaker who was based in East Jerusalem from 2016 to 2020. His next book, out in 2022, is on how Israel's occupation has gone global.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Antony Loewenstein is a Jerusalem-based freelance journalist, photographer, filmmaker, and author. His most recent book is *Pills, Powder and Smoke: Inside the Bloody War on Drugs*.

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klewso  6 hours ago

“You just have to provoke them enough – in the way you know will cause the retaliation you want – to get the reaction you need.”

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Luckyduck ⌚ 2 hours ago

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Evict people from their own homes in East Jersulam and the resulting skirmish is still the Palestinians fault. When will this atrocity end?

+ 2 - Reply



joanna mendelssohn ⌚ 4 hours ago



It's curious how the Israeli establishment hasn't learnt either from the long history of both Jews and guerrilla warfare on occupied territories. This is also the lesson that the USA & Russia failed to learn.

There is no long term victory in a guerrilla war. They retreat, they survive. They fight underground. They fight for generations. There is no surrender.

The only solution is one based on equity, That probably means sending the ideological "settlers" back to New York unless they're prepared to treat the Palestinians as equal human beings.

+ 5 - Reply



Drew ⌚ 22 minutes ago

Reply to [joanna mendelssohn](#)



Think many normal Israelis have had enough and emigrated....

+ 0 - Reply



Luckyduck ⌚ 2 hours ago

For the first time that I have seen there is some questioning among the Democrats about blind support for Israel. Rep. Presley has family in Palestine and is a leading voice. I read that the Democrats received 77% of the Jewish vote.



+ 1 - ↩ Reply



Boris Melbourne ⌚ 2 hours ago

Great article. factual and is in contrast to what Aussies hear and see in the Israeli lobby biased MSM. A shame Crikey doesn't have the reach of the Murdoch trash and Costello's Nine and papers, and Kerry's seven and west Aussie. Israel govt is bad news and everyone knows it. The tipping point may come from their own aggressive indiscriminate behaviour



+ 3 - ↩ Reply



Drew ⌚ 23 minutes ago

That Netanyahu regime.... right wing
nativist authoritarian that provokes
fights, even dog whistled Soros at one
point, clings onto coalition govt. at all
costs and avoidance on corruption issues;
nothing like a war to deflect attention.

Friend of Netanyahu's, Finkelstein a GOP
pollster/campaign advisor (now deceased,
and not unlike Crosby Textor for the LNP),
became key electoral advisor to
Hungary's PM Orban, promoting thinly
veiled anti-semitism targeting Soros/CEU
and Islamophobia via refugees (also
blamed on Soros).

However, bad news for Israel has not just
been the move to the crazy right over
years, backgrounded by much
immigration over past generations of
conservative US 'born agains', and dodgy
Soviets, but now emigration of younger,
moderate and secular Israelis (to US, EU
etc.).... seems to defeat the purpose.

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