

The war will only end when Israelis understand this simple truth

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Most Israelis now support a Gaza ceasefire. But they still fail to realize that where there is oppression there will always be resistance.

Demonstrators call for the release of Israeli hostages held in Gaza, outside Hakiryia Base in Tel Aviv, January 18, 2025. (Jamal Awad/Flash90)

There was hardly a dry eye left at the emotional reunion of Romi Gonen, Doron Steinbrecher, and Emily Damari with their loved ones after they returned home from more than 15 months of captivity in Gaza. An entire nation seemed to hold its breath until they were seen stepping out of the Red Cross into Israeli custody, at which point the floodgates burst open — one of the few collective moments of joy in well over a year.

Our Palestinian neighbors also experienced a bittersweet moment of joy last Sunday amid widespread death and destruction: they, too, [celebrated the return of released prisoners](#) who had survived [Israel's torture camps](#). One needed only look at the face of Palestinian parliamentarian Khalida Jarrar, released from prolonged administrative detention and so broken that she was [almost unrecognizable](#), to imagine what they endured during their imprisonment. “There is no life in prison,” 23-year old Janin Amro, one of the freed Palestinian prisoners, told +972's Oren Ziv. “It was essentially a cemetery.”

In Israel, the only force that could match the intensity of public joy over the hostages' release was the outrage at Palestinians' joy for their freed prisoners, who are categorically labeled as “terrorists” despite most having never been convicted of a crime. It's a tautological mindset in which a Palestinian becomes a terrorist simply by virtue of being detained by Israel.

Consequently, their people are forbidden from celebrating their release, to the extent that the profoundly [human tweet](#) by the Palestinian Knesset member Ayman Odeh — which expressed joy over the release of both the hostages and prisoners, while adding that “we must free both peoples from the burden of occupation. We were all born free” — provoked an eruption of racist backlash. Now, efforts are already underway to have him [expelled from the Knesset](#).

In a madness-driven and vengeful Israel, Palestinian detainees are not seen as human beings, with parents, sisters, brothers, or friends who are overcome with anxiety over their fate. Only we Israelis are allowed to rejoice.

Palestinian prisoners who were released in a hostage deal between Israel and Hamas arrive to the West Bank town of Beitunia, January 20, 2025. (Flash90)

While far too few on both sides celebrated the release of their loved ones, countless others — and thousands more Palestinians than Israelis — continue to oscillate between despair and hope, waiting for the next exchange of captives so that their loved ones can be freed from hell, anxiously

wondering if such a moment will actually materialize.

It's an excruciatingly frustrating and mind-numbing ordeal when Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is at the wheel — a professional conman who speaks of deals to the hostage families' side while winking at the warmongers, promising both exactly what they want to hear. Meanwhile, two exhausted, battered, and shell-shocked peoples stand in the middle, unable to grasp what tomorrow might bring.

Equality down to the last note

The big question remains if and when the war will end. And the truth is, the answer has nothing to do with Netanyahu.

The war will not end with a ceasefire, the return of all the hostages, or even a [full military withdrawal from Gaza](#). The war will end only when Israeli society realizes that it is not only immoral but also impossible to secure our existence through the oppression and subjugation of another people — and that the people we imprison, bomb, starve, and rob of their freedom and land are entitled to the exact same rights as we are, down to the last note.

It is astounding that after so many years of bloody conflict, the Israeli public still refuses to internalize this simple fact: as long as there is oppression, there will be resistance.

Palestinians returning to Jabalia amid the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, in northern Gaza, January 19, 2025. (Omar El Qataa)

The Israeli expectation that after the genocide that has [completely destroyed Gaza](#), the Palestinian people will accept their permanent subjugation, is not only deadly but outright suicidal. Decades of occupation, oppression, and apartheid have taught us not only about Israel's unchecked quest for supremacy but also about Palestinians' unwavering refusal to acquiesce to this regime — and rightly so. We wouldn't accept it either.

We cannot undo the horrors inflicted on Gaza, the death, and the suffering of so many people, but we have the power to end the war — and not just the war in Gaza, but also the disgrace unfolding right now in the West Bank. There, settlers armed with Kahane's racist ideology and backed by the region's most powerful military are [exacting their revenge](#) for the recent deal, while soldiers carry out arbitrary arrests, invasions, blockades, shootings, and demolitions.

So, what will we do now? Convince ourselves yet again that if we only tighten our grip around their throats, Palestinians will relinquish their aspirations for the most basic rights? And when the volcano erupts and a new hellish abyss opens, will we once more stand before it, shocked and bewildered? Will we again claim the right to obliterate entire populations in retaliation, as punishment, to ensure they never dare to dream of rights again — and then repeat the cycle endlessly? How long can this go on?

Surveys show that an overwhelming majority of Israelis want the war to end. This is an encouraging statistic, but we must be clear: this war will end only when Israeli society understands that living by the sword is not our permanent fate but a choice — and that we can choose a different path of equality, dignity, and justice. Not a moment sooner.

Orly Noy

P.S.

- +972. January 24, 2025:

<https://www.972mag.com/israelis-end-war/>

- Orly Noy's articles in +972 magazine:

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- **Our team has been devastated by the horrific events of this latest war. The world is reeling from Israel's unprecedented onslaught on Gaza, inflicting mass devastation and death upon besieged Palestinians, as well as the atrocious attack and kidnappings by Hamas in Israel on October 7. Our hearts are with all the people and communities facing this violence.**

We are in an extraordinarily dangerous era in Israel-Palestine. The bloodshed has reached extreme levels of brutality and threatens to engulf the entire region. Emboldened settlers in the West Bank, backed by the army, are seizing the opportunity to intensify their attacks on Palestinians. The most far-right government in Israel's history is ramping up its policing of dissent, using the cover of war to silence Palestinian citizens and left-wing Jews who object to its policies.

This escalation has a very clear context, one that +972 has spent the past 14 years covering: Israeli society's growing racism and militarism, entrenched occupation and apartheid, and a normalized siege on Gaza.

We are well positioned to cover this perilous moment - but we need your help to do it. This terrible period will challenge the humanity of all of those working for a better future in this land. Palestinians and Israelis are already organizing and strategizing to put up the fight of their lives.

Can we count on your [support](#)? +972 Magazine is a leading media voice of this movement, a desperately needed platform where Palestinian and Israeli journalists, activists, and thinkers can report on and analyze what is happening, guided by humanism, equality, and justice. Join us.

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