

Opinion

# In Israel, 20,000 Gazans Are Responsible for Their Own Deaths. I've Never Been So Ashamed

Sunday 17 December 2023, by [LEVY Gideon](#) (Date first published: 17 December 2023).

*Al-Najjar Hospital in Rafah, southern Gaza, Sunday. Credit: Said Khatib/AFP*

Journalist Ben Caspit epitomizes the Israeli center. He lives in Hod Hasharon and co-hosts a radio talk show with journalist Yinon Magal, who is on the extreme right. Caspit, supposedly, is not. He is a well-connected journalist, highly respected and successful.

Over the weekend, the executive director of the anti-occupation group Breaking the Silence wrote on X: "Don't look away. A CNN correspondent entered the [southern Gaza Strip](#) and opened a 'window on the hell' of Gaza."

This is what Caspit, a moderate and decent person in his own eyes, had to say in response: "Why should we look? They earned their hell honestly; I don't have an ounce of sympathy." Caspit, as usual, is the mouthpiece of Israel's mainstream.

Eight thousand children are to blame for their own deaths; 20,000 people are responsible for being killed; 2 million people caused their own uprooting. This is how a rich person always talks about the poor, the successful person about the less fortunate, the healthy person about the disabled, the strong about the weak, the Ashkenazi about Mizrahi Jews: They are to blame for their victimhood.

*Israeli journalist Ben Caspit. Credit: Tomer Appelbaum*

In post-[October 7](#) Israel, one can blame 10,000 children and babies for their own deaths without Israel having even a hint of responsibility and culpability. In post-October 7 Israel, one can feel blameless only because Hamas started [committing atrocities first](#).

A country lies in ruins and all its residents are in hell, and the generator of this hell bears no guilt, not even a tiny bit, not even together with Hamas' guilt. The epitome of the Israeli center doesn't even have an ounce of sympathy for the amputee children shown in the courageous, horrific report of Clarissa Ward from a [Rafah hospital](#).

Let their limbs be amputated, let the children die, let all Gazans expire, let them suffocate in hell, it's not our business. They are responsible for their disaster, only them. Caspit is on to something here – the victim is responsible for his victimhood.

Putting aside the issue of guilt and responsibility – these are all on Hamas, not at all on Israel, whose soldiers and pilots are running wild and unbridled in Gaza – we have no hand in it, the main thing is that we feel no guilt for any of it.

Putting that aside for a moment, one needs an unbelievable degree of obtuseness, cruelty, and even

barbarity to not feel at least some empathy for children dying on hospital floors, to a father crying over the body of his child, to an infant covered in the dust of his bombed house, looking in vain for someone in the world, for people living for two months in terror, in despair and with nothing left in their lives; for the hungry, the sick, the disabled and the dispossessed of the Gaza Strip.

Even empathy is prohibited in the eyes of Caspit and his ilk, lest a dangerous, forbidden thought creep in – that it is human beings who live in Gaza. This is something Israelis cannot cope with.

*A Palestinian woman gestures at the site of an Israeli strike on a house in Khan Younis, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestinian Islamist terror group Hamas, in the southern Gaza Strip, on Saturday. Credit: BASSAM MASOUD/Reuters*

This is a crossing of a dangerous line which may be followed by thoughts that are alien to Israelis, regarding how far it is permissible to go for a just cause; what is permissible, and, mainly, what is prohibited under any circumstances.

There are things that are forbidden under any circumstances. The killing of 8,000 children in two months, for example. Caspit and his folks only want to cheer the heroic army without seeing its handiwork.

Humaneness is forbidden, we are Israeli. When an earthquake happens anywhere on the globe, we'll send aid and be proud of ourselves, but [mass killing in Gaza](#) is not our business. That's the way Israel's morality works. It's meant to allow Caspit, not just Magal, to feel good about themselves about Gaza.

At an international conference held last weekend in Istanbul, I said, among other things, that never have I been so ashamed to be Israeli as I have been in viewing pictures from Gaza. These words were posted on a popular Israeli entertainment website. Over the weekend, I received hundreds (perhaps thousands by now) of abusive calls and text messages. One can often learn about a society through its sewers. Together we will win, goes the current slogan.

However, the distance between the sewage flowing my way and the ostensibly respectable words of Caspit is smaller than one imagines. There is no difference between the hatred of Arabs and their dehumanization, as expressed in the vulgar, inarticulate language of my callers, and the well-formulated words of Caspit.

Both the lower and higher Israel have lost their human image. This is reason enough to be ashamed of being Israeli.

**Gideon Levy**

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**P.S.**

• Haaretz. Dec 17, 2023 6:23 am IST:  
<https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/2023-12-17/ty-article-opinion/.premium/in-israel-20-000-gazans-are-responsible-for-their-own-deaths-ive-never-been-so-ashamed/0000018c-73e6-d798-adac-f7ef3c550000>