

Haaretz | Opinion

Opinion | 'No Innocents in Gaza': Reflecting on Israel's First Fascist War

Sunday 19 January 2025, by [LEVY Gideon](#) (Date first published: 19 January 2025).

The war that is supposed to end Sunday will go down in history as the First Kahane War. It is fundamentally different from all of Israel's previous wars.

IDF troops in Gaza, June. Credit: IDF Spokespersons' Unit

The only war that resembled it was the 1948 war, that caused the [Nakba](#), but the motivations behind that war were different. That was a war to establish a Jewish state; this is a war to establish a fascist state.

The State of [Kahane](#) has risen in Israel. Benjamin Netanyahu's criminal spinelessness made it possible. It wasn't only the neo-Nazi right-wing parties: It was, above all, the prime minister's own Likud party that brought Kahanism to power.

The profound change that has occurred in Israel is best exemplified by [the war in Gaza](#). Almost everything about it was meant to appease the fascist, racist, pro-population-transfer far right; and the spirit of Kahanism seized control of its goals and conduct. It wasn't only the scale of the army's cruelty; it was, above all, the way in which cruelty was rendered into a value in Israeli society as a whole, into an opportunity, an asset, a miracle. Cruelty as something to be proud of, to aspire to, to boast of and to flaunt.

In its previous wars, too, Israel committed heinous acts. Sometimes it tried to deny, conceal, and lie, and sometimes it even admitted and was ashamed of them. Not this time.

This time, the [IDF spokesperson](#) proudly presents the scale of the destruction and the killing, brandishing them as accomplishments in order to please the Kahanist right, which has become the mainstream.

Israel has become a state that aspires to the killing and destruction of Arabs solely for the sake of killing and destroying Arabs. It did not used to be like this, and it certainly did not take pride in it. This is a profound change, one that we will struggle to undo. It portends a pitch-black future.

Palestinian detainees sitting on the back of a truck in Gaza, in 2023. Credit: Moti Milrod

When [Meir Kahane](#) emerged, he brought with him an Israeli-made neo-Nazi party that viewed Arabs as dogs, at best. Israel recoiled from him. The Mapai ethos of "shooting and crying" still prevailed here, alongside the nonpartisanship of Likud. Menachem Begin, and also the first Netanyahu government, preserved it. The collapse began with the second Netanyahu government and reached its peak in his current one. Of all his crimes, this is the greatest and most unforgivable. In the first stage, fascism was legitimized and whitewashed.

Voices that were never before considered legitimate infiltrated politics and the media. Soon they were not only legitimate, they were the voice of the Israeli masses and also of the government and military. On radio and television, people said, "[There are no innocents in Gaza](#)" and spoke about the (happy) right and duty to kill everyone, with the same ease with which they discussed the weather.

[Senior reporters](#) revealed the opinions they once kept hidden when they realized that it was not only permissible, but also beneficial to them. From [Amit Segal](#) and [Zvi Yehezkeili](#) to Almog Boker, fascists were born. Such discourse simply didn't exist in Israel before, and has no place in any democracy. Meanwhile, anti-war voices were silenced; even compassion and humanity were forbidden. The takeover of the public conversation was completed.

During the long months of the war, Kahanism became the dominant voice of Israel and its military. There was no longer any difference between the commanders who emerged from the rotten soil of the settlements and their counterparts from "beautiful" Israel: They all did everything in the spirit of Kahane, without exceptions and without dissenters. Pleasing Bezael Smotrich and [Itamar Ben-Gvir](#) was the goal. Just give them the endless measure of blood they crave.

A hostage deal was postponed for months, [Gaza was destroyed completely](#), entire areas were cleansed of people and tens of thousands were killed, all to satisfy the spirit of Kahane and his earthly representatives in the cabinet.

It's ironic that the First Kahane War is ending now with the withdrawal from the governing coalition of [Otzma Yehudit](#), whose leader already promised to return when the genocide resumes. But the upheaval has been completed, there is no longer any need for Ben-Gvir and his ilk. Netanyahu and Likud are sufficiently Kahanist to continue to pursue Kahane's vision; there is no longer even a need to scribble "Kahane was right" on the walls.

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P.S.

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