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It's not shocking to see Israeli children celebrate the Gaza genocide

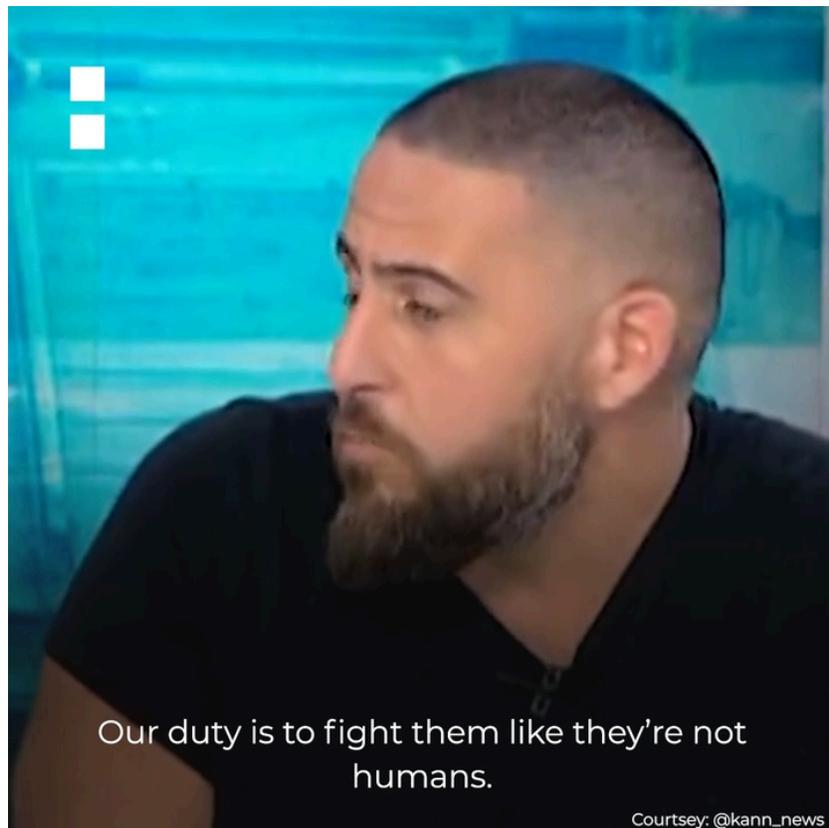
Israel has long been indoctrinating its children to believe Palestinians are less than human, and thus not worthy of empathy or compassion.



Rifat Audeh

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Israeli state TV video shows children singing about Gaza

In November, Israel's public broadcaster, Kan, uploaded on its official X page a [video](#) of Israeli children singing a song celebrating their country's ongoing genocide of Palestinians in Gaza. The broadcaster deleted the video clip after a huge online backlash.

Even after the video was silently erased from social media, however, the song remained a subject of discussion and controversy. Many across the world were shocked to see children sing happily about "eliminating" an entire people "within

one year". Yet a closer look at Israeli literature and curricula shows this open celebration of genocide was the only natural outcome of Israel's persistent indoctrination – or brainwashing to be more blunt – of its children to ensure that they do not view Palestinians as human and fully embrace apartheid and occupation.

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There is myriad evidence of Israel's brainwashing of its citizens to erase the humanity of Palestinians spanning many decades.

Israeli scholar Adir Cohen, for example, analysed for his book titled "An Ugly Face in the Mirror – National Stereotypes in Hebrew Children's Literature" some 1700 Hebrew-language children's books published in Israel between 1967 and 1985, and found that a whopping 520 of them contained humiliating, negative descriptions of the Palestinians.

He revealed that 66 percent of these 520 books refer to Arabs as violent; 52 percent as evil; 37 percent as liars; 31 percent as greedy; 28 percent as two-faced and 27 percent as traitors.

Such persistent negative descriptions dehumanised Palestinians in the eyes of generations of Israelis, established them as dangerous "others", and paved the way for children to celebrate their genocide in a video produced by the state broadcaster in 2023.

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Towering Palestinian academic and literary critic, Edward Said, also elaborated on the issue in his 1979 book *The Question of Palestine*, noting that Israeli children's literature "is made up of valiant Jews who always end up by killing low, treacherous Arabs, with names like Mastoul (crazy), Bandura (tomato), or Bukra (tomorrow). As a writer for *Haaretz* said on September 20, 1974, "children's books 'deal with our topic: the Arab who murders Jews out of pleasure, and the pure Jewish boy who defeats 'the coward swine!'"

Israel has also used the painful memory of the Holocaust to desensitise Israeli children to the suffering of Palestinians and support without question Israel's treatment of them.

In his 1999 book, *One Nation Under Israel*, historian Andrew Hurley explained how Israel weaponises the Holocaust education it provides to Israeli children against the Palestinians.

“The mind of a child (or of anyone else for that matter) cannot absorb the horrors of the Holocaust without finding someone to hate,” Hurley argued. “Since there are no Nazis around against whom vengeance can be sought, [Former Israeli Prime Ministers] [Menachem] Begin, [Yitzhak] Shamir and [Ariel] Sharon have solved this problem by calling the Arabs the Nazis of today and a proper target for retribution.”

Israel's current Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, appears to be eagerly continuing with this tradition and has even claimed that it was a Palestinian who gave Adolf Hitler the idea for the Holocaust.

Israeli professor Meytal Nasie strongly corroborates Hurley's view above on the ramifications of the way the Holocaust is taught. In her 2016 study, *Young Children's Experiences and Learning in Intractable Conflicts*, she found that 68 percent of Israeli children suggested “beating,” “fighting,” “killing,” or “expelling” the Arabs as a solution. Nasie states that imparting these beliefs at such an early age, in a frequent and intense manner, leads to inculcation of these conflict-related narratives deep within the children's socio-psychological repertoires.

Of course, the Israeli state's brainwashing of its citizens against the Palestinians is not limited to ridiculous lies about history told by political leaders or to children's literature. This propaganda effort is highly systemic and at the very core of Israeli education.

Just take a look at Israel's official textbooks.

For his 1998 research paper, *The Rocky Road Toward Peace: Beliefs on Conflict in Israeli Textbooks*, Israeli academic Daniel Bar-Tal analysed 124 Israeli textbooks on various subjects and for various age groups approved by the Israeli Ministry of Education to be used in religious and secular schools across the country.

To map out the ideological content transmitted to Israeli children in the education system, he looked at which “societal beliefs (society members' shared cognitions on topics and issues of special concern for their society)” received the most coverage in state-approved textbooks. He found that overall, the societal beliefs relating to (national) security received the most emphasis, followed by those concerning a positive self-image of Jews, and those that present Jews as the victims of the conflict. A majority of the analysed books were also found to include negative stereotypes about Arabs, portraying them as “cruel, immoral, unfair” and determined “to annihilate the State of Israel”.

The widespread demonisation of the Palestinian “Other” in textbooks, coupled with the emphasis placed on the positive representations of Jews and the claim that they are the “victims” in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and supported by overarching narratives about the importance of national security and survival, created the perfect conditions for generations of Israelis to leave the education system convinced that any and all aggression against Palestinians – including ethnic cleansing and genocide – are at least justifiable, if not necessary.

This is because when children are thought that they belong to an inherently good “chosen people” and that they are being attacked and victimised by a demonic and inhuman “Other”, they easily accept the oppression, displacement or mass killing of those who belong to this “Other” (ie, the Palestinians) without any moral qualm or hesitation.

Bar-Tal’s study is from over 20 years ago, but more recent studies show that the situation is hardly any different today.

For example, for her 2013 book, *Palestine in Israeli School Books: Ideology and Propaganda in Education*, Israeli scholar Nurit Peled-Elhanan analysed Israeli history, geography and civic studies textbooks for grades 8-12 and reached a conclusion rather similar to Bar-Tal’s: That in Israeli school books, Palestinians are still represented as evil “Others”, and Israelis as innocent victims of history and circumstance.

But there was another, important dimension to Peled-Elhanan’s study. Since all Israelis are drafted into compulsory military service at 18 years of age, she designed her study around the specific question of “How are Palestine and the Palestinians against whom these young Israelis will potentially be required to use force, portrayed in school books?”

She found that the books commonly label Palestinians as “terrorists” and also “simplify history” to the benefit of Israelis.

She concluded that Israeli textbooks prioritise “the creation of a usable past over accuracy and often harness the past and manipulate it for the justification of the present”.

“The books – in defiance of actual evidence- still present the Palestinians as the ‘thugs’ and the Israelis as the victims” she wrote, and reflect the Zionist-Israeli opinion that “the Palestinians cannot be viewed but as an obstacle or a threat to be overcome or eliminated. Therefore their stories, their suffering, their truth or their human faces cannot be included in the narrative”.

In his book, *One Nation Under Israel*, Hurley explained the consequences of such indoctrination through the testimony of Israeli educator Shlomo Ariel, who had met with 10 groups, each made out of 50 Israelis about to enter the army, and discussed with them their perception of and attitudes towards Arabs.

“In each discussion group there were a few who proposed physically liquidating the Arabs, right down to the elderly, women and children,” Hurley quoted Ariel as saying. “They received the comparison between Sabra and Shatila (massacres in Lebanon) and the Nazi destruction favourably and said with full candour that they would carry out such destruction with their own hands with no inhibitions or pangs of conscience. Not one expressed shock or reservations about these declarations...Many supported apartheid on the model of South Africa...In each group, there were not more than two to three holders of humanitarian, antiracist views.”

Several decades have passed since Ariel had these discussions with young Israeli conscripts and learned that very few of them see Palestinians as human. Yet the ongoing brutal war on Gaza, and the many posts we see online by young Israelis – including many young conscripts – celebrating the carnage, applauding the military, and mocking Palestinian suffering, prove that little has changed since then.

So no, no one should be shocked to see Israeli children singing happily about the genocide of the Palestinians. Israel has been brainwashing them to do so for many generations.

The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect Al Jazeera's editorial stance.

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