

Introduction

In the contemporary era, the dynamics of local, regional, and international politics demand that we critically revisit concepts of power, language, and colonial legacies. It is necessary to challenge and dismantle the narratives that have historically justified unspeakable crimes—wars, massacres, and genocides. Today, fear, terror, and political violence function as new instruments of governance for modern states and neo-colonial structures. In this framework, large groups of people are stripped of their humanity, their suffering dismissed as irrelevant, and their voices silenced.

Palestine stands at the heart of this struggle. For more than seventy-five years—ever since the establishment of the Zionist settler colony—it has been the most vivid front where power and knowledge collide. What is at stake is not merely land or religious authority but also control over language, history, and collective memory. As with every settler-colonial project, Israel deliberately intervenes in historiography, aiming to rewrite the story of the indigenous population. This becomes obvious when examining the vocabulary used to describe the conflict. Searching online, one encounters a variety of labels: the “Arab-Israeli Conflict,” the “Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” the “Israel-Gaza War,” or the “Israel-Hamas War.” Intellectuals who support Palestinian self-determination are wary of calling this a war, emphasizing how even the most minor linguistic details carry weight. Something as simple as which side’s name is mentioned first—Israel or Palestine—can reveal an author’s bias. We live in a climate where individuals are pressured to respond to reductive questions such as “Do you condemn Hamas?” or “Does Israel have a right to exist?”

Within this landscape, universities and academic institutions bear a special responsibility. They are not only centers of critical thinking but also guardians of justice and human rights. Especially in light of repeated Israeli attacks on Gaza, these institutions provide intellectual spaces where scholars and researchers can analyze the geopolitical context, expose violations of human rights, and amplify the voices of Palestinians. The veil that has long obscured global opinion in favor of Israel is lifting, much like fog finally dispersing to reveal hidden truths. The Palestinian struggle is therefore not only about national liberation but also a revolt against a global order imposed in the twentieth century under the shadow of nuclear deterrence. In this order, perpetrators of atrocity became leaders of the so-called “free world,” while victims were denied both recognition and justice. The result was a cruel reality: one group’s genocide could be dismissed as another group’s “tragic episode.”

Israel continues to follow its occupation manual page by page—whether through forced displacement reminiscent of another Nakbah or through extrajudicial assassinations abroad. Since October 7, Israel’s military campaign against one of the most densely populated territories on earth has compelled the international community to acknowledge that what is unfolding in Gaza fits the textbook definition of genocide. Civilian infrastructure—hospitals, schools, mosques, and churches—has been systematically destroyed. Gaza has been reduced to ruins. More than 40,000 people have been killed, and countless others remain buried beneath the rubble. By the time these words are read, the number of deaths and the scale of destruction will have grown far worse, leaving behind an even harsher record of devastation.

For anyone who has followed Israel’s seventy-six years of occupation, Palestine has become a moral landmark, a point of reflection for global public opinion. What was once expressed mainly through transnational solidarity movements and street demonstrations has now taken root in the collective memory of humanity itself.

The central intellectual challenge is how to define what we are witnessing within the broader scope of local, regional, and international politics. Two phrases echo powerfully here. One comes from the 19th-century French critic Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr: “The more things change, the more they stay the same.” The other is the widely repeated slogan of the past century and a half: “Never Again.” Alongside these, however, looms a term that the West has long feared to pronounce—genocide. What has been happening in Gaza since October 7, 2023, has forced that term into open use. Its recognition has fractured the supposed “international community” and sparked intense debates about whether Israel’s actions truly warrant the weight of the word.

History shows that every so-called “new world order” has been built upon genocide. This may sound provocative, yet it is borne out by reality. Consider 1492: the so-called “discovery” of the Americas by Christopher Columbus—actually an occupation—set the stage for centuries of extermination. That same year saw the expulsion of Muslims and Jews from Andalusia after the Reconquista. The late 19th and early 20th centuries were no different, with slavery and colonialism across Africa, South Asia, and the Americas laying the groundwork for future atrocities, culminating in the Holocaust.

The Holocaust—most infamously symbolized by Auschwitz—introduced new vocabulary into human consciousness. The term “Holocaust,” though explicitly used for the Nazi extermination of Jews, sometimes extended to other victims such as Romani people, Soviet prisoners of war, and disabled individuals. Yet no other genocide has been

granted the same designation. Later decades produced new terms–“ethnic cleansing,” “mass atrocities,” “mass killings”–to name large–scale violence. Language itself has been used to obscure reality: during the U.S. “War on Terror,” “torture” was euphemistically recast as “enhanced interrogation techniques.”

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the triumphalist proclamation of a new U.S.–led order soon gave rise to two genocides–in Bosnia and in Rwanda. In both cases, the United Nations and the international community observed events unfold yet failed to intervene. “Never again” became a bitterly ironic refrain, invoked in memory but denied in practice. The more things changed, the more they remained the same.

Amid these failures, academia retains immense power to shape public discourse, influence policy, and foster a more just resolution of conflicts like Gaza. Through research, publications, and public engagement, intellectual institutions can build empathy, call for cooperation, and expose injustice. The responsibility of intellectuals during genocide is especially heavy: silence itself becomes a form of complicity. Interpreting history while living through it is a difficult task, yet essential. What we face today is genocide on multiple levels: the extermination of people (genocide), the destruction of schools and universities (educide), the erasure of cities and territory (spacio–cide), and the annihilation of systems of knowledge (epistemicide).

This reality requires a transformation of both method and theory. Instead of uncritically accepting the questions imposed upon us–such as “Why did October 7 happen?”–we must ask why the sixteen–year blockade of Gaza, lasting 5,972 days from June 2007 to October 2023, was normalized and accepted by the global community.

For these reasons, the *Journal of Ibn Haldun Studies* has devoted a special issue to Gaza, published in Turkish, English, and Arabic. This issue brings together perspectives from history, sociology, theology, education, political science, and international relations, reflecting the interdisciplinary scope needed to confront this moment in its full complexity.

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