

How the Israeli army used 95-year-old veteran of Deir Yassin massacre Ezra Yachin to “motivate” the troops

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Presenting South Africa’s case at the International Court of Justice that Israel is guilty of perpetrating genocide in violation of the 1948 Genocide Convention, South African High Court advocate Tembeka Ngcukaitobi drew attention to how senior political and military officials had sought to cultivate genocidal intent within the Israel Defence Forces (IDF).

In a notable passage he explained how the IDF had called up Israel’s oldest army reservist and settler, the 95-year-old Ezra Yachin, to speak to soldiers in the run up to the ground invasion of Gaza that began on October 27. Amid adulatory media coverage, they had driven Yachin around in an official army vehicle, dressed in army fatigues and wielding a weapon to “motivate” the troops.

Yachin said in a video that went viral (see X posting below), “Be triumphant and finish them off and don’t leave anyone behind. Erase the memory of them,” adding, “Erase them, their families, mothers and children. These animals can no longer live.”

He added that there was “no excuse”, as Hezbollah “could send air strikes” and “Arabs here could attack us”. “Every Jew with a weapon should go out and kill them. If you have an Arab neighbour, don’t wait, go to his home and shoot him,” Yachin said. “We will witness things we’ve never dreamed of. Let them drop bombs on them and erase them,” he added. “All of the prophecies sent by the prophets are about to occur.”

Yachin explained in an interview with the press, “I talk to the soldiers, I encourage them and strengthen their morale. I explain to them that we are not in Nazi Europe and that we will not allow anyone to do to us what the Nazis did.” It was clear to him that “ Hamas are the Nazis of today.” He added, “I want to be with the fighters and give them the fighting spirit of the underground, instill in them the Jewish spirit and prepare them for war.”

Yachin’s statements, designed to imbue the troops with the spirit of “Nakba 2”, and his being chosen to “motivate the troops” give the lie to the claim that the IDF had no genocidal intent.

The Stern Gang, Irgun and the Nakba

In his youth, Yachin had served as a combat soldier with the paramilitary Stern Gang, officially known as Lehi, whose declared aim was to drive out the British, who then ruled Palestine under a League of Nations Mandate, by means of terrorist attacks and thereby allow the unrestricted immigration of Jews into Palestine and the formation of a Jewish state. Both the Stern Gang and the Irgun from which it had split in 1940 belonged to the fascist wing of the Zionist movement associated with the Revisionists, led by Vladimir Jabotinsky.

Jabotinsky rejected the view of the Labour Zionists, led by future Prime Minister David Ben Gurion, that the Palestinians would one day acquiesce to the Jewish domination of their land. In a 1923 article, “The Iron Wall,” he wrote, “Zionist colonisation must be either terminated or carried out against the wishes of the native population. This colonisation can, therefore, be continued and make progress only under the protection of a power independent of the native population—an Iron Wall, which will be in a position to resist the pressure to the native population. This in toto is our policy towards the Arabs... A voluntary reconciliation with the Arabs is out of the question either now or in the near future.”

The Revisionists were very clear that with the Jews a minority in Palestine, a Jewish state would necessarily mean expelling the Arab population to ensure its Jewish character. During the 1930s, they were oriented towards the fascist regimes of Germany, Italy and Poland, in a bid to secure a strong international ally to help them expel the British from Palestine, to the extent of offering to support Germany in World War II. They carried out a campaign of terror aimed at driving out the British and establishing a Jewish state on the entire land of biblical Palestine, including Transjordan.

Their paramilitary organisations, the Irgun and Stern Gang, assassinated British officials, including Lord Moyne, the British Minister Resident in the Middle East, in Cairo in 1944, bombed the British embassy in Rome in October 1946, and in 1948 assassinated UN mediator Count Folke Bernadotte, whom they viewed as a puppet of the British and the Arabs and therefore a threat to the emerging State of Israel.

Their political descendants went on to form the Herut party and ultimately the Likud party of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The former Irgun leader Menachem Begin held the premiership from 1977 to 1983, while the former leader of the Stern Gang, Yitzhak Shamir, became prime minister in 1983. Netanyahu’s father was a Revisionist activist and went on to become Jabotinsky’s personal secretary.

Netanyahu’s fascist political ancestry gives the lie to the assertion that Israel’s criminality is simply the result of the inclusion of his far-right partners in government, Religious Zionism, Jewish Power and the ultra-orthodox religious parties.

The Irgun and the Stern Gang waged a brutal war on the Palestinians, attacking their towns and villages and killing several thousand in a roughly 30-year period up to 1948. One of their most infamous terrorist acts was their attack on the Palestinian village of Deir Yassin on the outskirts of Jerusalem in which the war criminal Yachin played an active role. The terrorist groups massacred between 117 and 250 men, women and children, going from house to house to drive out Palestinians.

Israeli historian Benny Morris, who used archival material to document some 24 massacres in his ground-breaking 1988 book *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem: 1947-1949*, exposed the lie of the

Palestinians' voluntary exodus from their homes. He makes clear, the sheer brutality of the terrorist attack on Deir Yassin was one of the most important factors in "precipitating the flight of Arab villagers from Palestine."

Between November 1947 and the end of the British Mandate in May 1948—even before the establishment of the state of Israel and the 1948–49 Arab Israeli war—more than 375,000 Palestinians became refugees, driven out by a combination of force, atrocities and a campaign of terror including killings. A further 425,000 Palestinians of the 1.4 million Palestinians were displaced from their towns and villages during the war itself, with the majority fleeing to the West Bank, Gaza and neighbouring countries. Israel made sure that the Palestinians could not return to their villages, razing their homes, building over them or planting forests in their place.

Yachin, propagandist for ethnic cleansing

Yachin, known as "The IDF's Oldest Reservist," has spent his life delivering lectures to IDF soldiers. According to the IDF, he gave more than 9,000 lectures to the military since 1973, recounting the atrocities that led to the establishment of the state of Israel and the war that followed. In 2018, the IDF's chief rabbi rewarded him for his services by promoting him to the rank of First Sergeant. Accepting the award, Yachin boasted of how the first song he had learned as a youngster was the Lehi anthem:

*Unknown Soldiers are we, without uniform
And around us fear and the shadow of death
We have all been drafted for life.
Only death will discharge us from ranks,
On red days of riots and blood
In the dark nights of despair
In towns and villages shall we raise our banner
On which are inscribed defence and conquest*

Among the lessons Yachin sought to impart regarding the Deir Yassin massacre was his statement, "To take a house, you had either to throw a grenade or shoot your way into it."

The IDF's use of Yachin to "motivate" the troops came just five days after the October 7 Palestinian incursion into Israel. It was part of a foul propaganda campaign to whip up and incite a genocidal atmosphere among the newly called-up reservists, many of whom had pledged during the months-long anti-government protests to refuse to serve in the military. It was meant to send a message that there "are no limits" Israel would not cross to drive the Palestinians from Gaza. It provoked no opposition, or even a mention, from the leaders of the months-long protest movement against Netanyahu's efforts to give his government dictatorial powers.

Fascism rehabilitated

The choice of Yachin as a poster boy was an egregious example of the way the war is being accompanied by a systematic attempt to rehabilitate the Revisionists' programme of ethnic cleansing and fascism. That it largely passed without comment in the world's media or crucially from Israel's paymasters in Washington is testimony to way fascism is being rehabilitated and resuscitated across the globe.

Last September, Canada's entire Parliament, led by Prime Minister

Justin Trudeau and visiting Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, gave a standing ovation in parliament to another war criminal, the 98-year-old Ukrainian veteran of Adolf Hitler's Waffen SS, Yaroslav Hunka. The Waffen SS played a leading role in the extermination of Europe's Jews between 1941 and 1945. Canada's political establishment and media felt obliged to concede it had made a "shameful" blunder and make an apology because it cut across their plans to escalate the war against Russia in Ukraine.

No such pro-forma qualms are shown by Israeli politicians regarding the crimes of the Zionists. In the years following the establishment of the state of Israel, Israeli politicians led by Prime Minister David Ben Gurion repeatedly claimed that Israel didn't drive out a single Arab. "The Palestinians all left voluntarily," was the refrain. Ethnic cleansing, coming so soon after the Holocaust, did not conform with the picture they wanted to portray of the newly formed Jewish state.

Following the research based on Israel's own archives by Israel's "New Historians" in the 1980s and 1990s, this history has become impossible to deny. Instead, the shame underlying this denial has vanished and the idea of "transfer"—a euphemism for ethnic cleansing—has been legitimized beyond ultranationalist circles to the entire official political spectrum. The assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who signed the 1993 Oslo Accords with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, by a far-right nationalist in 1995, ushered in the return of right-wing politicians under Netanyahu in 1996 committed to Israeli expansionism, segregation and ethnic cleansing.

Since then, politicians have openly proclaimed that the mistake in 1948–49 was not the expulsion of the Palestinians but the failure to expel them all. Criminality on a massive scale is now seen as the solution and espoused by all of Israel's leading politicians.

In the 2015 elections, Netanyahu called on voters to mobilise against the "hordes of Arabs" being "brought by the Left" to the polls to stop his re-election. In July 2018, under his premiership and emboldened by the Trump administration's unqualified support for Israel—epitomised in its recognition in violation of international law and longstanding US policy—of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and the relocation of the American embassy there, the Israeli parliament passed its "Nation-State" law.

This enshrined Jewish supremacy, the hitherto de facto apartheid-style discrimination and segregation practiced against the country's Palestinian citizens, in a quasi-constitutional Basic Law. Restricting nationality rights to Israel's Jewish as opposed to Palestinian citizens, who constitute 20 percent of Israel's population, it signified that Israel was dispensing with any pretence of commitment to democracy or equal rights and was preparing to carry out massive crimes against the Palestinian people alongside preparations for a military confrontation with Iran. It backed the creation of Jewish-only communities within Israel, just as in the occupied West Bank, through the isolation and expulsion of Palestinians, legitimising apartheid. It heralded the beginning of a campaign of ethnic cleansing, mirroring the Nazis' *Lebensraum* policy, now being finalised in Gaza.

Leading political figures had no hesitation in making vile racist remarks without any moral restraint. To cite but one example, Likud legislator Miri Regev, minister of culture 2015–2020—having earlier denounced Sudanese immigrants and asylum seekers as "a cancer in the nation's body"—called Arab legislators "trash" and "garbage" and declared she was "happy to be a fascist."

In the run up to the 2019 elections, Netanyahu's Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked, a leading figure in the settler movement, declared on television the two-state solution wasn't working, promoted the evisceration of all judicial restraints on government and waved a perfumed bottle labelled *Fascism*, saying, "Smells like democracy to me."

Netanyahu and his Likud party struck a deal with Jewish Power, the political heir to the Kach party banned from standing in the 1988 election

due to its virulent racism, whose offshoots were ruled illegal terrorist organizations in 1994. In December 2022, Netanyahu gave Jewish Power and its sister party, Religious Zionism, key posts in his coalition government. He lost no time in mounting provocations against the Palestinians, seeking a retaliatory attack that could be used as the pretext for completing the unfinished job of 1948-49 while eviscerating the few legal constraints on the establishment of an executive dictatorship.

Israel's evolution into a fascist state has vindicated the position outlined by the Fourth International in an editorial "Against the Stream" in May 1948. Insisting that Zionism was utopian and reactionary, it denounced the UN's decision to partition Palestine into two tiny states. Partition would divide Arab and Jewish workers, while "The Zionist state with its provocative lines of demarcation will bring about the blossoming forth of irredentist (revenge) movements on either side." It would lead to fighting for an "Arab Palestine" and a "Jewish state" within Israel/Palestine, creating a chauvinistic atmosphere that would poison the region. It would "throttle the anti-imperialist fight of the masses, while Zionists and Arab feudalists will vie for imperialist favours.'

The Fourth International warned that it could "well turn out—as Trotsky said—a bloody trap for hundreds of thousands of Jews." It called on Arab and Jewish workers to unite in a common front against imperialism and its agents. More than 75 years later, every word of that message retains its validity.



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