Investigative report exposes Microsoft support for Israeli war crimes in Gaza and the West Bank

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A joint investigation by *The Guardian* and +972 Magazine has revealed that Microsoft has been providing its Azure cloud computing infrastructure to Israeli military intelligence to store a vast archive of intercepted communications by Palestinians. The data stored and utilized by intelligence agents within Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Unit 8200 has facilitated deadly airstrikes and military operations in both Gaza and the West Bank.

This unprecedented integration of Microsoft with the war crimes of the Israeli military exposes the increasingly central role played by and correspondence of interests between giant global tech corporations and the strategic aims of US imperialism in the ongoing genocide and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people.

According to the investigative reports, the collaboration between Microsoft and Unit 8200 was brokered at the highest levels. In late 2021, a delegation from Israel's military intelligence, led by then-commander Brigadier General Yossi Sariel, met at Microsoft's Seattle headquarters with CEO Satya Nadella and other key executives.

Nadella personally committed Microsoft's technological resources to the project, reportedly calling the partnership "critical" for Microsoft's future, and approved the creation of a customized, segregated area within Azure for exclusive use by Unit 8200.

This platform, according to anonymous sources and leaked internal Microsoft documents, was not for hosting generic cloud services but was designed to meet "the most ambitious demands for mass data collection and analysis ever proposed to the company." Within months, Unit 8200 was able to begin storing and analyzing intercepted communications on a scale that the Israeli military had previously regarded as technically impossible.

The technological infrastructure that Microsoft built and now maintains is significant in its scale and scope. The foundation of the system is Azure data centers located in the Netherlands, with additional clusters in Ireland and within Israel itself. By July 2025, at least 11,500 terabytes of Israeli military data—equivalent to about 200 million hours of audio—were being stored on Microsoft servers.

Most of the data, according to Israeli and Microsoft sources cited by the investigation, consist of recordings of phone calls by Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Surveillance officers and internal documents described the ambition to "capture and store up to a million calls an hour."

This required "collaboration on security architecture between Microsoft engineers and military staff," with Unit 8200 alumni among the Azure development teams responsible for implementation. Internal memos reveal "a rhythm of daily, top-down and bottom-up interaction" between the company's cloud division and its Israeli military client, with project secrecy so tight that non-essential Microsoft personnel were not permitted to refer to the "8200 project" by name.

The Israeli surveillance of Palestinians is universal. The operations described in the investigation mirror details revealed by former NSA intelligence officer Edward Snowden in 2013 about the scale and scope of US government surveillance, data storage and searching of the electronic communications of everyone in the country, if not throughout the entire world.

Having long controlled the telecommunications infrastructure in the occupied territories, Israel indiscriminately intercepts all phone calls, radio transmissions and internet traffic, gathering up the communications of millions of ordinary Palestinians.

Leaked documents show the primary purpose of this data is to generate rapid "targets for kinetic action," that is, identify cellular phones and voices for tracking and subsequent drone strikes, air raids or ground operations. Several anonymous Israeli intelligence officers, speaking to reporters, described a machinery that "finds incriminating material to be used for anything: blackmail, mass arrests, administrative detention, or retroactive justification for killing."

Three sources specifically confirmed the data collected and stored using Microsoft's cloud has been pivotal in planning lethal airstrikes in Gaza, as well as sweeping military detentions in the West Bank, operations which have left thousands of Palestinians dead or disappeared since October 2023.

The source of these revelations is derived from a rare trove of leaked documents—internal emails, technical memos, contracts and meeting summaries—supplemented by extensive interviews. At least 11 current and former Microsoft and Israeli intelligence sources, some of whom participated directly in the system's development, provided corroboration under strict anonymity due to the immense legal and career risks involved.

One well-placed official warned that a successful legal challenge to this arrangement, especially under international human rights law, would threaten both Israeli and American interests, given the "codependence of government and cloud monopolies in waging cyber and kinetic war."

The evidence spans top-secret deals, private communications between Nadella and Sariel, and invoices showing payments amounting to tens of millions of dollars in exchange for priority computing resources and ongoing technical support for both Azure and connected artificial intelligence products.

For its part, Microsoft continues to publicly deny it is abetting Israeli war crimes. In response to questions from *The Guardian* and +972 Magazine, the company issued carefully worded statements. "Microsoft's engagement with Unit 8200 has been based on strengthening cybersecurity and protecting Israel from nation state and terrorist cyber-attacks," a spokesperson said.

With standard language used to deny any connection between US

corporations and military violence, Microsoft said, "At no time during this engagement or since that time has Microsoft been aware of the surveillance of civilians or collection of their cellphone conversations using Microsoft's services, including through the external review it commissioned."

Nadella's office insisted that, during the 2021 Seattle meeting, he only "attended for ten minutes at the end" and that "no discussion took place regarding any data the unit intended to transfer to Azure." The company's repeated refrain is that it has "found no evidence that Azure or its artificial intelligence products were used to target or harm individuals." However, the leaked documents and the testimony of Israeli intelligence officers flatly contradict these denials.

The Israeli military, through official IDF spokespeople, has also denied any direct relationship with Microsoft on the processing and storage of surveillance data. One statement reads, "The coordination between the Defense Ministry and the IDF with civilian companies is conducted based on regulated and legally supervised agreements. … The army operates in accordance with international law, with the aim of countering terrorism and ensuring the security of the state and its citizens."

In a follow-up after the publication of the investigative exposé, the IDF added, "We appreciate Microsoft's support to protect our cybersecurity. We confirm that Microsoft is not and has not been working with the IDF on the storage or processing of data." These denials are sharply contradicted by the facts of the reporting, technical documentation and verification by multiple Israeli defense sources.

Unit 8200, the entity at the core of this operation, is Israel's signals intelligence and cyber warfare unit, widely referred to as the "backbone" of the IDF's intelligence directorate and described internally as the "Israeli NSA." Established in 1952 as part of the Aman intelligence directorate, Unit 8200 is responsible for collecting, decrypting and analyzing all forms of electronic communications: calls, texts, radio and internet traffic.

As Israel's elite military signals intelligence and cyberwarfare unit, Unit 8200 has been central to decades of Israeli military operations, clandestine surveillance and cyber-attacks. It has provided critical intelligence for Israeli wars and targeted assassinations, from the 1967 Six-Day War to operations in Lebanon, Syria and Iran. The unit is closely tied to US and allied intelligence agencies.

Intelligence produced by Unit 8200 has guided countless Israeli attacks on Gaza and underpins the digital infrastructure of occupation, working alongside other Israeli agencies such as Mossad and Shin Bet. Its alumni dominate Israel's tech sector, reflecting the convergence between surveillance, military violence and privatized digital capitalism.

The Unit 8200 workforce, which reportedly reached 6,000 by 2023, is infamous for developing cutting-edge surveillance technologies and for its ruthless pursuit of "total information dominance" over the Palestinian population. Its alumni permeate Israel's corporate tech sector and have played roles in high-profile hacking, cyber espionage and malware such as Stuxnet, the computer worm that was designed to sabotage industrial control systems, most notably targeting Iran's nuclear facilities.

In recent years, and especially under Sariel's command, the unit was restructured to increase its artificial intelligence (AI) and data-mining capabilities, with over 60 percent of its staff being engineers or data scientists as of October 2023. Unit 8200 was at the center of both the biometric policing—the use of facial recognition, fingerprints, iris scanning, etc. to identify and track individuals in real time—in the West Bank and the aerial kill chains used in Gaza since the intensification of military attacks after October 7, 2023.

Yossi Sariel, who commanded Unit 8200 from 2021 through September 2024, was the architect of the recent shift toward cloud-based surveillance and AI-driven targeting. After a sabbatical in Washington D.C., where he further developed his vision for artificial intelligence on the battlefield, Sariel led the reorganization of the unit's intelligence efforts into what were dubbed "AI factories" located in a new "targets center" at Nevatim Airbase.

He promoted a doctrine in which the constant harvesting, storage and automated analysis of data—enabled by partners like Microsoft—could reduce the time between interception and lethal action to mere minutes or seconds. *The Guardian* investigation identified Sariel as the author of "The Human Machine Team," an influential 2021 treatise published under the pseudonym Brigadier General Y.S.

The book is a manifesto for "synergizing" human and machine decision-making, advocating for the migration of military intelligence databases to secure commercial cloud platforms and the deployment of AI to "generate, prioritize, and execute battlefield targets faster than human adversaries could ever respond."

Sariel's text, now available through military academic channels, called on Israeli and allied intelligence services to "leverage cloud supercomputing" as the only path to victory in imperialist warfare.

In January 2025, *The Guardian* published details showing that Microsoft, along with Google and Amazon, had dramatically deepened their collaboration with the IDF in the wake of the October 2023 assault on Gaza. Leaked documents and commercial records from Israel's defense ministry showed Microsoft providing at least $10 million worth of technical support and computing resources to the IDF during the most intense phases of the bombardment.

Azure's participation went far beyond basic administrative services and included core infrastructure essential for "combat and intelligence activities." The company also provided the IDF with privileged access to artificial intelligence models, including OpenAI's GPT-4, following policy changes that explicitly allowed such military applications.

At that time, industry analysts noted that Microsoft's products and expertise played a central role in the IDF's automation of target selection and in the computerization of "kill/life" decisions in the war on Gaza. Clearly, any errors in this automated selection process were of no concern to the Zionist regime, which has now officially killed more than 60,000 people in Gaza, most of them women and children.

Multiple reports confirm that AI-driven algorithms—built by or with the aid of US tech companies—have been used to rapidly sift through Unit 8200's Azure-hosted surveillance, producing so-called "target banks" that have enabled targeted strikes on homes, schools and hospitals at a scale and speed previously unknown in world history.

Leaked Israeli documents and internal interviews reveal that commercial cloud access was not a luxury but a strategic requirement for the accelerated pace of massacre in Gaza and the West Bank, with AI-powered identification making mass murder "efficient, scalable, and deniable" for the Israeli government and military command and its US imperialist masters.

The revelations have ignited outrage among workers within Microsoft itself, some of whom have been fired or otherwise sanctioned for their principled opposition to it. On June 14, 2025, GeekWire published an interview with Hossam Nasr, a software engineer who was terminated for organizing protests and open letters against Microsoft's collaboration with what he called "an apartheid regime committing war crimes."

Nasr, an American of Egyptian descent, described the atmosphere inside Microsoft as "toxic for dissent," saying, "When I tried to raise concerns, I was told that contracts with governments are above reproach. The stakes for Palestinians are existential, but for Microsoft's executives, they are just another revenue stream."

Nasr also confronted Nadella in a public forum, demanding an end to what he described as the "integration of our cloud with instruments of genocide." His firing, along with mounting employee resignations and shareholder criticisms, has become part of the broader complicity of the tech giants in modern warfare.

An analysis of Microsoft's business priorities exposes the link between its drive for profit, and the war aims in the Middle East of US and other imperialist powers and around the world. As of 2025, Microsoft remains the world's second most valuable company, with annual revenues exceeding $228 billion and a market valuation hovering near $3 trillion.

CEO Satya Nadella's compensation in the previous fiscal year was over $56 million, a figure linked not only to stock performance but to Microsoft's ability to secure and expand lucrative government and defense contracts.

Azure's client roster includes every major branch of the US military, intelligence community and a roster of allied security agencies, making Microsoft's bottom line dependent on the architecture of surveillance, conquest and war. Key contracts include JEDI (later JWCC) for the US Department of Defense, running into the billions, along with deals with the National Security Agency (NSA), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

The company's strategy is to position its platforms as indispensable "force multipliers" for both commercial and military clients, a model that fuses monopoly capital with the apparatus of military and police violence on a world scale.

The Guardian and +972 Magazine investigation exposes that the ongoing Israeli genocide in Gaza and ethnic cleansing against Palestinians is enabled by the operations and interests of American tech monopolies like Microsoft. As has been clear from the start, the barbarism in Gaza is not an Israeli project alone. It is a global enterprise funded, engineered, supplied and justified at each step by the world capitalist system and its most powerful representatives.

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