



# Structural Genocide as an Institutionalized Practice in Settler Colonialism: The Case of the 2023 Gaza War

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## ABSTRACT:

This study examines the concept of structural genocide as one of the structural practices adopted by settler-colonial regimes in their quest to dismantle indigenous groups and destroy the elements of their physical and moral existence. Genocide here is not limited to direct mass murder, but is embodied in organized policies that target the political, economic, educational and cultural infrastructures and institutions of the society under control, thereby weakening its ability to continue as an independent entity and transforming it into a marginal group of the colonial center.

In the Palestinian context, especially in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank after October 7, 2023, structural genocide is manifested in its clearest form, as it intertwined with genocide in a war that continues to this day, and in which modern tools were used, including artificial intelligence, the destruction of infrastructure, and the militarization of humanitarian aid as part of a systematic project to re-engineer Palestinian society spatially and demographically.

Facts on the ground and political analyses reveal that what happened in Gaza was not a conventional war but rather an organized structural extermination, using killing, starvation, and forced displacement as tools to dismantle society and turn it into a group incapable of reproducing itself. It was also embodied in the West Bank through dismemberment, the destruction of camps, and the political and economic undermining of the Palestinian Authority. In this way, the Zionist project is reproduced in its most modern form, based on the denial of the Palestinian existence rather than merely controlling it.

**Keywords:** Structural Genocide, Settler Colonialism, Institutional Violence, Gaza War 2023.

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## Introduction

Since its founding by Theodor Herzl, the Zionist movement has been viewed as a political project aimed at establishing a national home for the Jews in Palestine through various means, including: organized immigration in time-spaced waves, settlements and land acquisitions. This logic was cemented with the formation of the Yishuv as the structural nucleus of a colonial entity and a settlement project that possessed economic resources, political institutions, and a military force that began to arm and train to achieve the process of removal and erasure of the Palestinians (Shafir, 1997).

This path reached its peak on the day of the Nakba in 1948, when the Palestinian social space was dismantled through forced displacement, the destruction of Palestinian villages and cities, and the seizure of the urban space, which led to the recrystallization of a geographical and demographic space for the natives and colonizers in accordance with the Zionist project, which later became a state declared by David Ben-Gurion on the ruins of the Palestinian people. The first is the ethnic cleansing of the indigenous population, and the second is the theft of land and property (Al-Khalidi, 2021).

With the outbreak of the first Palestinian intifada in 1987, the logic of colonial violence returned in a crude form, giving rise to new forms of confrontation embodied in popular disobedience and armed

resistance, which ended with the Oslo Accords and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. The Second Intifada (2000) faced severe militarization of space on Palestinians and the expansion of the policies of closure, killing, incursions and arrests, which still exist in the West Bank to this day.

In the last two decades, colonial structural violence has deepened through repeated wars on Gaza (2008, 2012, 2014, 2021, and 2023), and the rounds of fighting in between, which lasted only a few days, as they represented frequent stages of structural violence that targeted the social, economic, and urban structure of the Strip, and entrenched the logic of removal as an extended process rather than an isolated event, making the conflict in Palestine a continuous path of settler-colonial violence against the indigenous people.

The Israeli war on Gaza in 2023 represented an unprecedented pivotal moment, not only because of its two-year prolongation and continues to move from direct confrontation to low-intensity war, but also because of the nature of its founding event, represented by the first time since the establishment of Israel that it could not protect Israelis, as well as for the first time that there has been an exodus of citizens in Israel (Orna Braun-Lewensohn, 2025). This led to the collapse of the Israeli security system. The uniqueness of this event was compounded by the scale of Palestinian casualties and the mass destruction inflicted on the Gaza Strip, in addition to the quality of the military, political and media tools used by Israel and the rhetorical alignment it showed in support of the war, as well as the unequivocal American support that gave the operations unprecedented international cover. Taken together, these facts call for a reflection of the nature of Israeli colonial violence and the limits of the transformations that took place in it at this stage.

In this context, the question arises as to whether this violence represents an extension of the deconstruction structure that formed the core of the settlement project, or whether it is a shift towards extermination as the culmination of colonial violence.

Hence, it is necessary to have a theoretical framework capable of placing these propositions in a single framework, and then studying them systematically in order to highlight their interactions, boundaries, and intersections.

Returning to the Nakba – as the clearest historical moment of colonial erasure before the war on Gaza (2023) – the Zionist project followed a policy that researchers called erasure (Ghanem, 2013), as Ghanem believes that erasure is not limited to the removal of the population from their homes, but also includes the erasure of their symbolic, geographical, cultural, social, and political existence, and this logic is based on a biblical imagination adapted from the concept of "erasing his name and remembrance", and here is a clear indication of the complete elimination in the settler-colonial project.

However, the importance of this dimension is not limited to its linguistic level, as it reveals that removal was not designed as a temporary tool linked to the specific event, but rather as an existential goal that ensures the sustainability of the settlement project itself, so that the evacuation of the place and the replacement of an alternative foreign group becomes a foundational condition for building the modern community and modern settlement. It is this overlap between substitution and the colonial and religious imagination that gives erasure and removal the ability to continue, as well as makes them dynamic and continuous structures that produce violence and reproduce it in its various forms.

Patrick Wolfe's theory provides an additional framework for understanding this logic, asserting that settler colonialism is a permanent structure rather than a transient event, and that it is based on removal rather than exploitation as in traditional colonialism (Wolfe, 2006)

This means that the colonizer is constantly working to deny the existence of the indigenous population because he does not need them at all, but sees their presence as an obstacle. Hence, we can understand the destruction and displacement of Palestinian villages and cities in 1948, as the villages that did not resist faced the same fate as the villages that resisted, revealing that the removal is not a response to the Palestinian resistance, but an existential condition for the continuation of the settlement project itself. This refutes the view that the war of extermination on the Gaza Strip is a response to the October 7 attack.

Lorenzo Verraccini takes a different interpretive path, pointing out that the war of extermination on Gaza represents a moment of disintegration in the settler colonialism model itself, as he argues that the colonizer, when it fails to subjugate the indigenous population through directed violence or systems of control and control, resorts to extermination as an option aimed at restoring control (Veracini, 2025)

This proposition contributes to illuminating many of the scenes of the war in Gaza and explaining its structural logic, but the question remains open as to whether extermination is an alternative model to settler colonialism or just one of its tools, especially since other colonial experiences have witnessed widespread waves of extermination and have nevertheless continued within their colonial system.

In this context, Veracini's analysis can be read as a complement to what Hanida Ghanem proposes, which links the internal structural crisis in Israel to the war on Gaza, stressing that the settler-colonial project changes its tools in the event that one of them fails, in order to maintain its permanence and continuity. (Ghanem, 2025).

In this regard, there is an institutional transformation that took place inside Israel after 2014, as Israeli colonial policies moved from the "carrot/stick" or "reward/punishment" model to the "stick/punishment" model, which produced a repulsive environment that gradually dismantles the components of life through economic, security, and administrative policies that have been crystallized in such a way that the Palestinian existence is bound to suffer from constant and disparate violence (Habbas, 2025). From this, we conclude that this transformation is one of the reasons that laid the foundations for the October 7 attack and the war that followed. In an attempt to prove that the extermination is not an emergency decision but the result of a long process of disintegration and structural violence.

This contradicts the view that the 2023 war on Gaza was the result of internal transformations among Palestinians and Israelis alike, and broader regional and international transformations, which make this war protracted and open for years to come, and perhaps the last war that will lead either to a political settlement or to the defeat of one of the parties in order to end its future aspirations (Ghanem, 2025).

Therefore, the announcement of the cessation of the war on October 9, 2025 as part of what US President Donald Trump called a "peace plan" does not constitute an end to the war of extermination, but rather a transition from one phase to another within the colonial structure itself, and the war was not limited to Gaza alone, but its repercussions extended to Lebanon, Iran, Yemen, and Syria.

It is worth mentioning that Avi Shlaim considers the war on Gaza (2023) to be a full-fledged genocide due to the existence of a number of practices: denial of aid, starvation, destruction of infrastructure, killing of civilians, and public statements inciting mass destruction (Shlaim, 2025). This view acquires important added value as a Jewish historian who rejects Zionism, which weakens Israel's ability to market its narrative. This is in contrast to Ilan Pappé's statement that the Zionist leadership before and during the 1948 war saw the displacement of Palestinians as a prerequisite for the establishment of a Jewish-majority state, which developed into a well-defined project that took on the character of "ethnic cleansing" in planning and implementation before and after 1948. (Pappé, 2006)

When these theses are combined, a clearer picture is formed: that what happened in Gaza in 2023 is the result of the confluence of three tracks: the first is the continuation of the settler-colonial structure as the regulating framework for violence, the second is the protracted structural annihilation that works to dismantle the living conditions of the Palestinian over time, and the third is the violent explosion caused by the long-term extermination that has reached the point of failure, revealing new forms of colonial violence.

Hence, the study attempts to present the concept of institutional structural annihilation as the framework through which the interaction between slow-accumulating violence and direct violence can be understood. Structural annihilation is a long-term policy of the colonial institution through its legal, administrative, security, urban, and economic systems, with the aim of weakening the Palestinian community and destroying the conditions for physical, social, cultural, political, and economic survival. As

well as emptying and re-engineering the geographical and demographic space. It is essentially based on gradual dismantling; resulting Disjointed and unlivable environments over time.

In this context, it must be emphasized that the settlement expansion in the West Bank, the dismemberment of geography between Palestinian areas, daily arrests, killings and economic sanctions against the PA are an integral part of structural genocide, albeit at a different pace from what is happening in Gaza.

Here, the conceptual distinction between genocide, structural annihilation and removal becomes useful from a theoretical and academic point of view, but it may be ineffective in practice, because the colonial context employs different tools for the same end. Direct extermination targets the body, structural annihilation targets the conditions of existence, and the logic of erasure targets geography, all of which aim at the removal and erasure of the Palestinian.

### **Study Hypothesis**

This study assumes that the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip in 2023 is not an exceptional event, or a response to the October 7 attack, but rather is part of a settler-colonial path based on combining the logic of removing the natives with the system of structural annihilation, after dismantling the elements of the Palestinian collective existence through the destruction of infrastructures, institutions, and vital resources in the context of the institutionalized structural annihilation.

It argues that this fusion, equipped with the tools of modern technology, policies of blockade and starvation, the militarization of humanitarian aid, and explicit and dehumanizing rhetoric of Palestinians, has transcended the boundaries of military operations toward a project to re-engineer Palestinian society and place spatially and demographically, transforming the war into a typical case of settler colonialism in its newer, more comprehensive form.

### **Study Problem**

The literature faces a gap in the interpretation of the war on the Gaza Strip (2023), as it is addressed exclusively as a response to the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023, rather than as an exposure of the Zionist project based on removal to structural annihilation (targeting knowledge, health, housing, management of starvation, etc.). The problem of the research lies in deconstructing and documenting this Israeli transformation in the current Palestinian situation as a sustainable pattern rather than a war situation, in order to serve the Israeli colonial project.

### **The fundamental question**

The central question of this study is to what extent the Israeli war on Gaza (2023) represents an extension of the structure of removal and extermination in the Zionist settler colonialism, and to what extent it represents a shift towards extermination as the culmination of colonial violence, within the framework of what the study proposes from the concept of institutional structural annihilation.

Two sub-questions emerge from this central question:

1. How does Israel reproduce the logic of removal in the Palestinian context during and after the war on Gaza?
2. What mechanisms and tools turn this war into a system of structural annihilation aimed at dismantling Palestinian collective structures, not just controlling them?

### **Objective of the study**

The study seeks to directly answer the central question of the nature of the logic of Israeli colonial violence by analyzing the war on Gaza (2023–2025) in its extended structural context, rather than as an exceptional event or a temporary reaction, through the concept of "institutional structural annihilation" as a theoretical framework that explains the interaction of three interrelated paths: the continuation of the settler colonial structure, the long-term dismantling policies of the living conditions of Palestinians in

Gaza and the West Bank, and the moment of direct genocidal explosion in the aftermath of the October 7 attack when tools fail Traditional control.

### Study Methodology

The study adopts an analytical approach based on three interrelated approaches. First, the comparative theoretical analysis, by reading and comparing the theses of a number of theorists and researchers in settler colonialism, in order to build a clear conceptual framework for the concept of "institutional structural annihilation", through which we explain the war on Gaza 2023. Second, the policy analysis approach by examining policies and actions on the ground, such as blockade, starvation, destruction of infrastructure, and settlement expansion, as structural tools that contribute to the industry of structural annihilation and the re-engineering of the geographical and demographic space of the Palestinians. Third, the method of analyzing critical discourse, through the analysis of Israeli political, military, and media discourses related to the war on Gaza, and incitement discourses, to reveal how language and media are used in the production of colonial legitimacy of violence and extermination.

### Indications of Structural Annihilation Established Since October 7

In this chapter, we review the evidence of quantitative escalation (i.e., the escalation of the number of victims, the scale of destruction and displacement) and the qualitative escalation (i.e., the change in the nature of discourse and methods of violence) in Israeli practices after October 7, 2023.

#### 1. Quantitative Escalation – Unprecedented Numbers of Casualties and Destruction

##### First: The Gaza Strip

The data available as of October 10, 2025, reveal that the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip was characterized by a systematic genocidal character that targeted civilians and infrastructure at the same time, making it the longest and most severe phases Aggression in contemporary Palestinian history in terms of the number of casualties and the extent of physical, human and structural destruction. During the period between 7 October 2023 and 7 October 2025, the Ministry of Health in Gaza announced that 67,173 Palestinians were killed and 169,780 others were injured, reflecting the scale of the unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe inflicted on the Gaza society, both in terms of lives and injuries that changed the course of life for thousands of wounded.

Data on the age and gender distribution show that children, women and the elderly constitute a high proportion of the victims, with children alone accounting for about one-third of the martyrs, while women and the elderly together constitute nearly a quarter of them, as shown in Table 1. These figures reveal a pattern of widespread targeting of civilians, which weakens the claim that military operations are limited to combat objectives or military-style infrastructure, and points to a collective punitive nature directed against society as a whole, rather than against specific armed formations. The high number of casualties The seriousness, amputations, and the proportion of children among the wounded deepen the genocidal image of war as violence that has far-reaching effects on the demographic, social and psychological structure of future generations.

**Table 1: Distribution of Martyrs and Injured by Age and Gender (October 7, 2023 – October 7, 2025)**

Category	Number of Martyrs	% of Total Martyrs	Number of Injured	% of Total Injured
<b>Children</b>	20,179	30%	44,143	26%
<b>Women</b>	10,427	16%	23,769	14%
<b>Elderly</b>	4,813	7%	11,885	7%
<b>Men</b>	31,754	47%	89,983	53%
<b>Total</b>	<b>67,173</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>169,780</b>	<b>100%</b>

Note: Data are adapted from the Ministry of Health in Gaza (2025), the Government Information Office in Gaza (2025), and the United Nations (2025).

The targeting is not limited to civilians in general, but systematically extends to medical, humanitarian and journalistic staff, as well as to civilian police, municipalities and aid workers, as shown in Table 2. Hundreds of doctors, paramedics, civil defense and humanitarian aid workers, as well as hundreds of journalists and media workers, have been martyred in one of the highest rates of targeting of humanitarian and media personnel in contemporary armed conflicts. This pattern of targeting weakens rescue capacity. The provision of basic services and media documentation, and contributes to deepening the genocidal nature of the war by striking the mechanisms of community protection and intermediary networks that enable society to withstand and continue.

**Table 2: Targeting medical, humanitarian and media staff (7 October 2023 - 7 October 2025)**

Category	Estimated Number	Brief Notes
<b>Medical Staff</b>	1,670	Martyred while providing medical care and first aid.
<b>Civil Defense Personnel</b>	140	Killed during rescue operations and firefighting.
<b>Humanitarian Workers</b>	565	Includes 183 women and 376 UN staff members.
<b>Civil Police Force</b>	Over 1,000	Targeted while performing civil order and law enforcement duties.
<b>Journalists &amp; Media Workers</b>	252	Includes 34 female journalists; among the highest rates globally.
<b>Municipal &amp; Service Workers</b>	Hundreds	Targeted while operating facilities and essential services.

Note. Data are adapted from: United Nations (UN) United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

In parallel, the field data and UN assessments show an unprecedented scale of destruction in Gaza's vital sectors, especially the health sector, the educational sector, urban space, and places of worship, as shown in Table 3. Dozens of hospitals and health centers have been put out of service, hundreds of schools and universities have been partially or completely destroyed, hundreds of thousands of housing units have been destroyed, hundreds of mosques have been targeted, churches and cemeteries have been attacked, and nearly 90% of Gaza's population has been displaced. These indicators reflect the spread of violence. From targeting individuals to targeting the very structure of life, i.e., the social, cognitive, and urban survival of the Palestinian society in Gaza, including the health, educational, religious, economic, and water infrastructure, in a way that turns reconstruction into a long-term and risky process, and makes the continuation of daily life to a minimum conditional on overcoming deep structural destruction.

**Table 3: Indicators of Structural Destruction in Vital Sectors in the Gaza Strip until the Beginning of October 2025**

Sector	Key Quantitative Indicators	General Significance
<b>Health</b>	38 hospitals out of service; dozens of health centers; 788 direct attacks; over 80% of health capacity destroyed.	Near-total collapse of the healthcare system.
<b>Education</b>	670 schools; 165 universities & educational institutions; 13,500 students, 830 teachers, and 193 academics martyred.	Systematic targeting of the community's intellectual and educational foundation.
<b>Places of</b>	835 mosques fully destroyed; dozens partially; 3 churches attacked; 40 cemeteries destroyed;	Symbolic and physical violence targeting religious identity and

Sector	Key Quantitative Indicators	General Significance
<b>Worship</b>	theft of 2,450+ bodies; 7 mass graves.	collective memory.
<b>Housing &amp; Urbanism</b>	300,000 units fully destroyed; 200,000 partially damaged; ~2 million displaced; 70M tons of debris; 20k unexploded artilleries.	Deconstruction of urban space, making reconstruction a process that will span decades.
<b>Infrastructure</b>	78% of buildings in Gaza damaged (83% in Gaza City); 86% of agricultural land and 77% of the road network damaged.	Near-total paralysis of movement, production, and agriculture.
<b>Economy &amp; Food</b>	Losses exceeding \$70 billion; food prices increased by 9,900%; 641,000 people at famine stage (IPC Phase 5).	Use of economy and food as a weapon of war and structural genocide.
<b>Water &amp; Sanitation</b>	Half the population receives <6 liters of water/day; 77% depend on water tankers; extreme overcrowding at water points.	Direct threat to public health and increased risk of epidemics and diseases.
<b>Food Inflation</b>	9,900% increase in food prices (up to July 2025) compared to February levels.	Making food inaccessible and unaffordable for the vast majority of families.

Note. Data are adapted from: United Nations Programme for Operational Satellite Applications (UNOSAT), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), World Health Organization (WHO), and Government Information Office in Gaza.

Taken together, these ratios reveal three central structural indicators:

1. The focused targeting of the following civilian groups (women, children, the elderly, and professional staff), at rates exceeding 55%, indicates a pattern of not indiscriminate but systematic killings.
2. Dismantling institutional structures with a destruction rate of more than 70-90 % in the education, health, and housing sectors, which is consistent with the definition of structural annihilation that targets the survival of society.
3. Forced demographic engineering through the displacement of 90% of the population and the destruction of 70% of housing, ratios that mimic historical models of extermination and spatial cleansing in multiple colonial contexts.

Consequently, these quantitative data, including the unprecedented numbers of civilian casualties and the extent of the destruction that has affected the health, educational, urban, and religious sectors, prove that the war on Gaza cannot be reduced to being a mere military response to a specific attack, or a transient stage in a cycle of security escalation, but rather represents a structural extension of a settler colonialism that works, since the Nakba until today, to empty the space from its original inhabitants and reshape it demographically and urbanely according to the logic of removal and replacement.

The high proportion of children, women and the elderly among the martyrs and the wounded, the systematic targeting of medical, humanitarian and journalistic staff, the near-total collapse of the health and education systems, the widespread displacement of nearly 90% of the population, and the destruction of most housing units and infrastructure facilities, are all indications that the subject of targeting is no longer limited to the fighting enemy, but that the entire society, including a social, knowledgeable, urban, and cultural entity, has become a direct target of violence.

This quantitative picture thus provides a strong analytical basis for the foundational concept of structural extermination addressed in this study: genocide is practiced not only through direct killing, but also through the dismantling of the physical, social, economic, and environmental conditions of life necessary for the survival of the indigenous community. These figures also allow the war on Gaza (2023-2025) to be

placed within the framework of settler colonialism as an architecture rather than an event, and to interpret it as a moment of maximum escalation within a long course of subversive violence, in which the tools of control are reproduced and the circles of targeting are expanded, so that mass killing, urban destruction, starvation, and the dismantling of service and knowledge structures are juxtaposed as integrated mechanisms for the destruction of Palestinian society as a historical group rooted in the place.

## Second: The West Bank

The following tables provide a focused presentation of the most prominent humanitarian and security indicators in the West Bank during the period under study, according to reliable UN and human rights sources. These data show the structural accumulation of policies of repression, displacement, demolitions, and detentions as an integrated system that reshapes the demographic and social sphere of Palestinians. These indicators represent a basic analytical basis for understanding the general trends of structural violence and its extended repercussions on the Palestinian social structure in the West Bank.

**Table 4: Humanitarian Data, Losses and Displacement in the West Bank (October 7, 2023 – November 3, 2025)**

Indicator	Value
Total number of Palestinian martyrs in the West Bank	1,012
Number of child martyrs (out of the total)	215
Number of martyrs since the beginning of 2025	206
Number of child martyrs since the beginning of 2025	42

**Table 5: Levels of Building Damage in Selected Palestinian Refugee Camps**

Camp	Destroyed Buildings	Severe Damage	Moderate Damage	Total Damaged Buildings	%of Total Camp Buildings
Jenin Camp	125	101	322	548	43%
Nur Shams Camp	89	35	156	280	35%
Tulkarm Camp	31	21	105	157	14%

**Table 6: Humanitarian Assessment (Up to February 2025)**

Indicator	Value
Number of displaced Palestinians in Jenin and Tulkarm camps	More than 37,400 Palestinians
Most affected camps	Jenin - Tulkarm - Nur Shams
Number of closed UNRWA schools in the northern West Bank	10 Schools
Number of children affected by school closures	More than 5,000 children
Displaced persons due to settler attacks since October 2023	More than 3,200 Palestinians
Displaced persons due to home demolitions since October 2023	More than 2,907 Palestinians

**Table 7: Data on Arrests and Families in Israeli Prisons as of November 9, 2025**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Value</b>
<b>Total number of prisoners and detainees</b>	More than 9,100 prisoners
<b>Sentenced prisoners</b>	1,242 prisoners
<b>Number of female prisoners</b>	53 prisoners
<b>Number of child prisoners</b>	400 children (in Ofer, Megiddo, and Damon prisons)
<b>Administrative detainees</b>	3,544 detainees
<b>Detainees classified as "Unlawful Combatants"</b>	1,205 detainees

Note: These figures do not include detainees from Gaza held in army camps, as well as detainees from Lebanon and Syria, in the absence of any official provision of numbers or data by the Red Cross, the IDF, or any of the relevant international institutions.

The data presented in the tables paint a complete picture of the reality of the West Bank as being subject to an institutional structural annihilation that is progressing at a different pace than the Gaza Strip, but no less dangerous in terms of its structural impact. Rather than relying on mass military destruction as in Gaza, a complex system of policies is being practiced in the West Bank, including excessive use of force, urban dismantling of camps, repeated forced displacement, educational closures, and systematic mass detention.

This pattern of repression intersects to gradually reshape the demographic and social sphere, targeting the infrastructure of daily life, the ability to survive and continue, the educational system, community effectiveness, and the demographic mass rooted in camps and cities. Thus, violence takes on a gradual and long-term character, in which the genocide is carried out through legal, security, and administrative tools that weaken society from within and confiscate its future.

Accordingly, the tables reveal that the West Bank is not subjected to a single type of violence, but is subject to a systematic strategy based on the depletion of the population and the dismantling of their incubating environments, which constitutes a parallel model of extermination, albeit less overt than the total destruction to which the Gaza Strip is exposed, but which in essence has the same effect of undermining living conditions and making the West Bank a repellent environment, destroying structures, and re-engineering the Palestinian presence in the long term.

## **2. Qualitative Escalation – Shifting in the Discourse of Genocide**

Along with the unprecedented rise in the number of victims, and the scale of violence directed against Palestinians, there was also a qualitative shift in Israeli discourse after October 7, 2023. Whether at the popular or official level, as it is described as a discourse that promotes the idea of genocide and murder against Palestinians, this shift was not evident before October 7, 2023.

For example, on October 9, 2023, two days after Hamas's surprise attack, former Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant announced an absolute blockade on Gaza, saying, "There will be no electricity, no food, no water, no fuel – everything is closed, we are fighting humans and animals, and we have to act accordingly" (Zaitoun, 2023). The use of phrases that identify Gaza's skits as "human animals" is a motivating factor for all forms of genocide. For example, Israeli National Security Minister Itar Ben-Gvir wrote on October 17 on Platform X that "as long as the hostages (i.e., the Israeli prisoners in Gaza) are not released... Let only hundreds of tons of bombs enter Gaza – not a drop of humanitarian aid" (Azoulay, 2023).

Israeli President Isaac Herzog also made similar statements, saying on October 12, 2023: "It is a war between the whole of Gaza and Gaza that bears responsibility for this talk of innocent civilians who do not know and do not participate, is absolutely true" (Herzog, 2023). In other words, Herzog abolished the status of innocent people in Gaza.

Operationally, too, there is no longer a designated target bank that Israel considers legitimate to target and destroy. After October 7, everything in the Gaza Strip was classified as a legitimate target, as vital infrastructure was systematically destroyed – as mentioned earlier: hospitals, schools, universities, refugee shelters and even UN shelters, mosques, markets.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gave speeches in which he defended the bombing of entire neighborhoods, saying that the responsibility for this lies with Hamas, which is hiding among civilians. Thus, the speech moved to the principle that the killing of civilians is the fault of the other side and not Israel's fault (Netanyahu, 2023). This change is in line with the concept of the state of exception, as the residents of Gaza are now excluded from any rights before Israel.

This control was not separate from Israel's political and media structure, but rather an extension of a long-standing collusion between the security establishment and the mainstream media, which often adopted and promoted the official narrative. Despite the existence of a spectrum of media outlets with different orientations, censorship succeeded in imposing strict limits on public debate, preventing excesses, especially with regard to war, Palestinian resistance, and civilian casualties.

The recent war has exposed complex mechanisms for shaping Israeli public opinion, based on employing language and terminology in a way that redefines Israeli military action and justifies it morally and politically. In most media coverage, Israeli military operations have been described as self-defense, a legitimate rhetoric of terrorism, and the elimination of an existential threat, as Letour Ackerman wrote in the Maariv newspaper *The War of the Iron Swords* It arose as a result of two fundamental factors: the first was the horrific massacre carried out by Hamas militants against Israeli civilians on October 7, 2023.

The second is the large-scale abduction of hundreds of Israeli civilians and soldiers of various age groups, where they were transferred into the Gaza Strip (Alkerman, 2023). This linguistic pattern, which is repeated in news bulletins and editorials, reproduces the image of the Palestinian as a barbaric and dehumanizing opponent, and establishes in the Israeli public's consciousness a simplistic perception of the conflict, based on the duality of good and evil (Manna, 2025).

This picture is evident in the coverage of channels such as Kan 11 and Channel 14, where phrases such as "responding to the massacre" and "uprooting the infrastructure of terrorism" are used, for example, the Walla website published on June 20, 2024, "The Minister of the Defense has identified three main objectives of the war: eliminating the presence of Hamas as a military and governmental entity in the Gaza Strip, ensuring that there is no security threat from Gaza towards Israeli citizens, and ensuring the full freedom of movement and use of force without restrictions, so as to enable it to work throughout the Gaza Strip as well as in the West Bank" (Bahbut, 2024).

Statements by journalists such as Zvi Yehez Kili of Channel 13, who said: "You should have killed tens of thousands more than 20,000. You should have started killing 100,000 and reducing Hamas's fighting force to two-thirds, 20,000 fighters killed." These statements are clearly incitement that do not need to be interpreted, and they have not been met with any action by the channel, for example, which reflects an implicit acceptance of this violent discourse.

Similarly, Shimon Reclin, a journalist for Channel 14, made sensational statements: "I can't sleep well unless I see houses collapsing in Gaza, what should I do? More houses, more towers, so they have nowhere to go back" (Ezekiel, 2023). His remarks, which expressed a clear enthusiasm for the complete destruction of infrastructure, were widely circulated through the media and social networks.

### **New control and extermination tools**

This part of the study reviews some of the high-tech techniques and tools used by Israel during its ongoing war on Gaza. The shift has become evident after October 7 in the rise in the level of violence in all its forms and the ways in which it is implemented. We will also review several key areas in this context, namely:

## 1. Digital Surveillance and Artificial Intelligence in War

In recent decades, Israel has developed a modern digital surveillance system with the aim of tightening control over Palestinian society. This was clearly observed after October 7, 2023. Numerous press investigations have revealed that the IDF and its intelligence services rely on a range of digital tools and artificial intelligence to guide its operations in Gaza.

Among these tools are artificial intelligence systems that rely on machine learning to analyze a sea of data — communications, movement directions, and electronic communications — with the aim of classifying potential targets and prioritizing their hits. One of these systems he unveiled is called Lavender, a military artificial intelligence platform that, according to Israeli intelligence sources, has identified 37 A thousand targets in Gaza by inferring the links of these individuals or sites to Hamas. This enormous number raises the question of the classification methodology: Is it reasonable that there are 37,000 legitimate targets in a densely populated area like Gaza without a huge number of innocent civilians among them? Indeed, sources involved in the operation of Lavender have acknowledged that the regime has expanded the definition of the target, and that the military leadership has allowed large numbers of civilian casualties to occur under the pretext of pursuing underdog Hamas operatives during the first weeks of the war (Abraham, 2024).

These testimonies reveal a dangerous new dimension: the decision to die to cold algorithms. One intelligence officer told the Guardian: "The machine did it coldly... This has made the task easier." In other words, human anger after October 7 has been harnessed by a machine that separates revenge from feelings of hesitation, choosing targets objectively but without moral distinction. Another officer stated that he would review each goal for only 20 seconds and agree, adding: "My role as a human being was a seal of approval with almost no added value." These testimonies illustrate the dangers of relying on AI in a war in civilian areas: the algorithm may be based on inaccurate or outdated data, or based on social relationships (e.g., someone with a relative in Hamas would be designated a target, even if they were civilians).

The Israeli military has used 4 digital tools in Gaza based on flawed data and inaccurate estimates, which compound the risk of targeting civilians. In addition, comprehensive pre-war surveillance of all Gazans – through continuous aerial photography and facial recognition techniques that have been tested in the West Bank such as the Blue Wolf program and digital eavesdropping – means that Israel entered the 2023 war with an electronic file for every home and family. This enabled it to send text messages and automated calls to tens of thousands of citizens threatening or ordering them to evacuate within hours, sometimes misleading them by securing escape routes and then bombing them.

All of this demonstrates an unprecedented level of technical control on the battlefield against a largely unarmed people whose recent military operations Israel has relied on advanced artificial intelligence systems such as the Annunciation and Lavender to identify targets in the Gaza Strip. These systems are used within the Targeting Directorate to analyze big data, including aerial imagery, signal surveillance, and social media posts, to identify individuals affiliated with Hamas or Islamic Jihad.

The Lavender system showed a qualitative shift after October 7, 2023, as thousands of individuals were classified as targets regardless of their rank or actual military activity, relying almost entirely on automated assessment without detailed human analysis. The algorithms relied on tracking programs such as "Where's the father?" to determine the moment the targets were in their homes and carry out the strike. Location or humanitarian conditions were no longer taken into account, as the fall of civilians – even women and children – was considered as pre-permissible collateral damage, it goes as far as accepting the death of 20 civilians per target, and in some cases even a hundred civilians (Abraham, 2024).

In this text, Chris Hills Gray examines the shift in Israeli military doctrine toward the use of artificial intelligence to target Palestinian civilians, especially in Gaza, in what is known as postmodern warfare. The author focuses on the gospel system as a central tool in a strategy of mass killing, justified by

technology that produces targets algorithmically, far from moral and legal norms. Collective punishment, where homes, neighborhoods, and hospitals are struck under the pretext of the presence of a single terrorist element, in light of an official recognition that dozens of civilians may have fallen as acceptable collateral damage (Hills Gray, 2024).

Gray criticizes Israel's reliance on disproportionate force, linking it to the Dahiya doctrine, which justifies the complete destruction of civilian infrastructure under the pretext of deterrence. He also analyzes the concept of momentum in the new combat doctrine that replaces traditional military victory with the systematic annihilation of the enemy, both physically and psychologically. They are in control, but in reality they lead to strategic disasters, as happened in ignoring the pre-October 7 warnings. Gray argues that Israel today embraces a combination of religious nationalism and systematic killing, making war a means of extermination rather than realistic political goals.

Israel's 8200 intelligence unit has developed a massive AI-based language model, similar to Chat GPT, but trained on 100 billion words in spoken Arabic, collected from monitoring Palestinians in the occupied territories. The goal of this model is to enable intelligence officers to ask direct questions to obtain accurate and quick information about suspects, relying on personal intelligence data that is not necessarily related to any illegal activity. They are used to feed surveillance and analysis tools that enhance the IDF's control (Abraham, 2025).

In the West Bank, these tools have become used daily to identify individuals who may be suspected of demonstrating or expressing protest, allowing field commanders to carry out mass arrests based on reports automatically translated from Arabic to Hebrew without the need for direct human analysis. The investigation notes that global technology companies such as Microsoft and Meta have indirectly contributed through their employees to the project, while refraining from officially commenting.

This reality shows that artificial intelligence in Israel is not being used for defensive purposes so much as it is being reconfigured as a digital weapon to impose total domination over the Palestinians, beyond the traditional boundaries of surveillance toward a proactive security architecture based on algorithmic targeting.

## **2. Militarization of humanitarian aid and control of the humanitarian economy**

Since the outbreak of the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip on October 7, 2023, there has been a qualitative shift in the concept of humanitarian aid as a tool outside the field of confrontation. In the Israeli experience, this aid has become an integral part of the security-military equation, and has not been provided as a neutral humanitarian response, but has been included in the structure of overall control over the Palestinian population. Thus, aid has been weaponized and transformed from a relief activity into a functional function in the project of reorganizing society within the terms of power and sovereignty.

This shift emerged in an integrated context known today as the militarization of aid, where food and medical supplies are not used to alleviate suffering, but rather as means of pressure and subjugation conditioned by the behavior of the beneficiaries and their geographical locations. Israel, in coordination with international partners, has relied on a new system of aid management, based on centralized distribution in specific areas subject to tight security control, excluding traditional international organizations, and involving private security companies in the supervision and implementation processes, as happened in the case of the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, which was established 2025 as a private executive arm for distribution (Habbas, 2025).

Perhaps the most striking manifestation of this strategy has been the linking of aid to forced displacement to the south of the Gaza Strip. Israel has encouraged mass displacement from north to south under the banner of "safe passageways," but not only that, but has also made food and medicine distribution points exclusive to these new areas, in a landscape that links aid and population reposition. This fusion of relief and displacement reflects an approach that reproduces spatial control through seemingly nonviolent, but in fact soft displacement tools and Geographical Engineering.

At the same time, the tasks of monitoring and distribution have been entrusted to private security companies, some of which are the remnants of companies involved in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, such as Kun Thales (the institutional extension of Blackwater), "Safe Reach Solutions", these companies are not subject to any international accountability, and are managed under commercial contracts based on the logic of profit, which empties the relief work of any moral or legal content. The aid has been privatized and transformed into a security commodity that is managed according to market conditions, not according to the principles of international humanitarian law (Manna, 2025).

The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) emerged as an institutional embodiment of this transformation. The initiative, which was drafted in a joint U.S.-Israeli format, was presented as a new program to manage humanitarian aid in the Gaza Strip, but was met with widespread objections from the United Nations, European countries, and international aid organizations. These reservations, which centered on the ambiguity of the organization's officials and the lack of transparency in funding sources and distribution mechanisms, led to the temporary suspension of the initiative's implementation by a decision of the Prime Minister Israel, under direct pressure from the administration of US President Donald Trump, despite opposition from within the Israeli establishment itself (Schneider, 2025).

According to a press release No. 864 issued by the Government Information Office, the Israeli army has turned US-Israeli aid centers into killing sites, by directly targeting these sites. As a result, 13 civilians were killed and 153 others were wounded, bringing the total number of casualties to 125 martyrs and 736 wounded, in addition to 9 missing cases.

## **Conclusion**

This study answers its central question of whether the Gaza War (2023) is the embodiment of the fusion of the logic of removal with structural annihilation, as the theoretical evidence and facts of the process have proven that what happened was directed as an organized process of re-engineering Palestinian society and place rather than as a military operation that came in response to the attack of October 7, 2023. Theoretically, Patrick Wolfe's concept of the logic of removal provides a useful analytical framework that distinguishes between the structural character of settler colonialism as a force that works to abolish the original existence in continuous ways This distinction helps to understand how seemingly militarized security or humanitarian policies can represent mechanisms of structural genocide in the medium and long term.

First: With regard to the first sub-question (how do the structural and intellectual foundations of settler colonialism reproduce the logic of removal during the Gaza war?), the evidence showed that the war was exploited to accelerate policies that were fundamental to the structure of settler colonialism (expanding control of the land, dismantling local institutions, destroying infrastructure and turning Gaza into an unlivable area), thus turning destructive actions into a systematic component to weaken the ability of Palestinian society to Staying and living on his land. The destruction of the built environment and infrastructure, and the blocking of the flow of water, food and medicine, leads to a collective lack of viability — which is consistent with the definition of structural annihilation that goes beyond direct killing to include the termination of the basic conditions of life of society.

Second, with regard to the second sub-question (what mechanisms and tools turned the war into a system of structural annihilation): the military means of large-scale bombardment, organized destruction, economic (blockade and restrictions on the movement of goods, fuel and aid), humanitarian (militarization and restriction of aid access), and technological (the use of digital tools and artificial intelligence to speed up and reduce the process of targeting people and places) have produced a cumulative effect that undermines the continuation of the social, cultural and economic life of the population.

The war served to induce strategies that already existed in the structure of colonial domination, transforming the situation into a project of permanent re-engineering of place and society and paving the way for its displacement by creating and consolidating the conditions that led to it.

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