

GRACE Editors' Note:

GRACE journal presents this conversation among Stanford students about Israel's war on Gaza which began after the Hamas attack on October 7th, 2023, with a unique focus on the role of AI technologies in that conflict. Although GRACE invited articles that focused specifically on technology, as is the mission of this journal, both groups argued that the historiography of Zionism and anti-Zionism remain inseparable from the unique technology development in Israel. Thus, these two articles present competing histories and critiques. They have read each other and respond to each other, to the Stanford community, and GRACE readership at large.

The opinions in both articles do not reflect the views of GRACE or Stanford, but rather only those of the two groups of students and their affiliates. The Stanford Sit-in to Stop Genocide and The Stanford Students for Israeli Technology are entirely responsible for their respective content. Because conversation proved contentious both in writing and in public exchanges, some students feared for their safety, and therefore requested anonymity. GRACE made the singular exception to allow the groups to publish collectively without individual names. Each article has a corresponding email for the author group responsible for the content of the article. Moving forward, GRACE will require all authors to use their real names.

Ultimately, the writing process challenged everyone involved and these papers demonstrate the willingness of students to learn from each other and evolve their own ideas. GRACE is proud to see contributors engage in this learning process.

Israeli Technology: Instrument of Oppression or Path to Coexistence?¹

Stanford Students for Israeli Technology

addressing

The Israel-Hamas war

and

Anti-Zionist Antisemitism



Topic(s): Israel-Hamas War, AI, Technology, Terrorism, Anti-Zionism, Antisemitism, Zionism.

¹ We are not affiliated with [Stanford's Blue and White tent](#), which set up across from the Stanford Sit-in to provide a pro-Israel perspective on the war in Gaza. But several B&W tent Israeli Stanford students read drafts of this paper and we thank them for their helpful feedback. A special thank you to Professor Gabi Brahm for his thoughtful, detailed feedback. All our readers greatly improved this paper.

Palestine is a land that was seized by a racist, anti-human, and colonial Zionist project.

Hamas Charter, 2017

Returning to their homeland, Jewish people hoped to flee the cycle of hatred that physically endangered them. In fact, it widened the circle with something new: antisemitism which is now framed as anti-Zionism.

Eliezer Schweid, 2012

Anti-Zionists use “zio” like an insult, or as a slur for “Jews,” but they won’t say the word “Zionism” because they see it as a dirty word, like “racism,” or “colonialism.” For them, there’s no positive term for Jewish self-determination.

Overheard on the Stanford University Campus, December 6, 2023

Abstract

This paper affirms Israeli technology and its potential to improve the quality of life for both Israelis and Palestinians. It argues the choice lies in the Palestinians' hands — renounce Hamas, renounce terror, acknowledge Israel's right to exist, and we can move toward peace. Focusing on the Israel-Hamas war, we examine efforts to delegitimize Israel, its AI-driven tech, and its right to self-defense. Anti-Zionist Stanford students and tech critics decry Israel as a “racist,” “settler colonialist” project armed with tech that enforces its “apartheid.” Yet, they promote their own ethnic “Arab Palestine” “from the river to the sea,” as though anti-racist justice consists in statehood for Arab Palestinians but not any other inhabitants of the land. Through a close reading of anti-Zionist work and the key influences of Palestinian scholars Edward W. Said and Elia Zureik, we demonstrate that the settler colonialism thesis, which claims to be an “objective, historical, secular” lens, is flawed and antisemitic. This is a long read. We hope to do justice to Said and Zureik's work and seriously address criticisms of Israel, its technology, and Palestinian loss of life, before offering our positive views moving forward. Contrary to the anti-Zionist critics and the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, we believe that Palestinian suffering can end without delegitimizing Israel. Most importantly, normalization of Palestinian and Israeli relations can provide Palestinians self-determination, freedom, and equality. By normalization, we mean that neither side will attain the all-or-nothing demands of groups like BDS or far right Israeli organizations, and that instead both will gain acceptance and equality. After October 7, 2023, such a coexistence appears increasingly fraught, but remains possible. We end with our view of Israeli technology as an important component for an Israeli and Palestinian future.

Introduction

If you think Jews will never get over Hamas' October 7, 2023 brutal attack on Israel, you're right. Neither will the Palestinians easily move on from the life-threatening conditions in Gaza and many deaths due to Israel's effort to destroy Hamas. Nor should either party. This time, Hamas has succeeded in rendering normalization of relations between Israelis and Palestinians seemingly impossible, and that is what anti-Zionists in the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement and at universities want as well when they chant "We don't want no two-state, we want 48." With grizzly video of Hamas terrorists celebrating their attack alongside daily footage of more than 30,000 Gazans dead and South Africa's effort to sue Israel in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for genocide, the future of Israeli-Palestinian peace looks grim. However, we, a group of Jewish and Israeli Stanford students, believe in coexistence. We affirm the right of Palestinians to freedom, dignity, and self-determination. Yet, we reject the anti-Zionist assertions that this October 7 war is solely Israel's fault (Orbey, 2023) and that the Israeli tech industry is merely serving oppressive ends (NoTechforApartheid, 2024). Most of all, we condemn any defenses of terrorism and Hamas. Some of the most vocal AI Ethics critics and student groups not only downplay the horrors of October 7, 2023, they laud the attack as an "uprising" and thereby defend Hamas. For them, genocide is only perpetrated by the Israeli tech industry as a purveyor of surveillance and social domination to the globe. Analyzing the rhetoric of anti-Zionism and its influence on the tech industry criticism as well as the NoTechForApartheid movement, we demonstrate the flawed, antisemitic claims of

their settler colonial theories. In the end, we conclude with our view of Israel's technology culture and how it might recover from this conflict. We believe Israeli technology can benefit education and rebuilding for both Palestinians and Israelis. Tech is no solution. But it can serve our now fragile hope for coexistence.

One question which provides insight into the limitations of anti-Zionist criticism sounds deceptively simple: when did the war start? Most Israel supporters view this current war as yet another defensive response to an act of horrific terror in a history of persistent Palestinian rejectionist and militant group assaults on the State of Israel, funded by Iran, which spends close to \$350 million a year supporting Hamas (Peltka, 2023; Schanzer, 2022). The Palestinian side insists that Hamas initiated no new conflict on October 7, 2023, but rather enacted an "uprising" against Israeli occupation of Palestinian land, the blockade of the Gaza Strip, the expansion of illegal Israeli settlements, and escalating settler violence. Hamas describes its operation "Operation Al-Aqsa Flood" as a "heroic epic of resistance" (Majed, 2023). Israelis characterize the multi-pronged surprise attack that included a barrage of rockets and infiltrations into Israel by land, sea, and air, killing around 1200 adults and children, as well as extensive rapes, torture, and pillage, as an act of genocidal terror (Dayan & Lecker, 2023; Rubin, 2023; Lemkin Institute, 2024) In fact, such brutality has been described around the globe as evidence that Hamas never abandoned its fundamental commitment to the destruction of Israel and the creation of an Islamist state in all of what it considers historical Palestine (Samudzi, 2024; Margolin & Levitt, 2023; Kransa 2023; Dostri, 2023; Porter & Alderman, 2023). Responding with "Operation Swords of Iron," the Israeli military has incurred by far the largest death count of any Israeli war in 40 years

(Stack, 2023). Israel asserts total war on Gaza is an “existential” battle for its own future, even a “second war of independence” (Netanyahu, 2023; Gantz, 2023; Jaffe-Hoffman, 2023). This is a decidedly different claim than Netanyahu made for a decade as Israel collaborated with Hamas on a balance of power (Hendrix & Balousha, 2023). While Hamas may have cooperated with Netanyahu to serve their own interests in undermining a two-state solution, there is no lack of evidence for Hamas’ eliminationist view. The 1988 Hamas charter mandates the killing of Jews, and the 2017 revision continues its call to eliminate the State of Israel and dismisses antisemitism as a “European problem” as though Palestinians and Arab nations never articulated any homegrown antisemitism of their own (Hamas Covenant, 1988; Hamas Charter 2017; Hroub, 2017; Herf, 2008; Herf, 2022; Küntzel, 2023). Moreover, because Hamas operates among Palestinian civilians, Israel argues that Hamas deserves the blame for the high level of casualties, accusing Hamas of using the Gazans as “human shields.” As the world sees pictures of suffering Gazans, Israel has shown that Hamas’ elite remains well-funded internationally, insulated from the suffering on the ground, and that if they really cared about the Palestinians, they would surrender and return the hostages (*Agencies & Times of Israel*, 2023).

With so much killing and such an urgent humanitarian crisis in Gaza, support for Israel’s self-defense and campaign to dismantle Hamas is dwindling (Gur & Senor, 2024; Telhami, 2023; Kirby, 2023). Some observers claim that Israel is precipitating an unprecedented genocide in Gaza (Kahn, 2023; Litvin, 2023; Farge, 2023, Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2023; Yaqub, et al., 2023). Yet, the definition of genocide requires intent: “To constitute genocide, there must be a proven intent on

the part of perpetrators to physically destroy a national, ethnical, racial or religious group” (United Nations, 2024). Per this definition, the only genocide in this war was Hamas’ murder of innocent civilians on October 7, 2023 (UN, Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 2023; UN News, 2023; Rauhala & Hendrix, 2023). Nevertheless, on January 26, 2024, reviewing the South Africa genocide suit against Israel, the ICJ ruled that Israel must avoid killing Palestinian civilians in Gaza, and though the court mandated no ceasefire, it moved forward on South Africa’s genocide claims (Jeong, et al., 2024). Unhappy with the ICJ ruling that merely suggests the plausibility of genocide, many Israelis, including Netanyahu (2024) on the one hand, and anti-Zionists on the other, registered their fury in the press and on social media. But there are a range of moderate positions as well. We think the ICJ ruling is reasonable and assert that Israel should take every precaution (which they claim to do) to protect Gazan lives in their effort to rout Hamas. We also agree that humanitarian relief is paramount and that the aid must get to the civilians rather than Hamas leadership. Hamas and every other Iranian proxy are the ones who must meet their reckoning at the ICJ. At the time of writing, we remain divided on whether Israel should agree to a ceasefire. Of the four of us, two are in favor of a ceasefire, two against, and our views continue to evolve with deteriorating conditions in Gaza, most recently since botched and deadly delivery of aid efforts, which has Israeli and Gazan officials trading blame (Berger, Loveluck, & Harb, 2024). Is the current misery in Gaza singularly inflicted by the IDF? Or is Hamas also to blame here? It’s difficult to tell from the perspective of the Stanford campus, but we demonstrate how the two sides

shoulder blame, and offer a complex, nuanced view anti-Zionist narratives consistently forsake.

Our difference in opinion as authors of this paper and Jewish students at Stanford mirrors the larger diversity of Jewish views on Israel, its legitimacy, and potential future. Since the 1980s Zionism has benefited from a series of bold revisionist historians investigating Israel's responsibility for killing and expelling Palestinians in 1948. We proudly embrace such conversations as evidence Israeli society is willing to interrogate its own claims to nationhood and democracy, and move toward justice for the Palestinians. Among the revisionist many historians, who include Avi Shlaim and Simha Flapan, as well as others like Tom Segev, Hillel Cohen, Baruch Kimmerling, Joel Migdal, Idith Zertal and Shlomo Sand, are Benny Morris and Ilan Pappé, who represent opposing positions. Morris' important book *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (2004) presents unflinching criticism of Zionist responsibility for Palestinian death and disposition as the result of war rather than design. Pappé, meanwhile, in his 2006 book *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* claims that from its origins Israeli leadership always planned to intentionally eliminate Palestinians. Pappé supports the settler colonialism narrative and cheers Hamas as resistance fighters. In a recent talk at U.C. Berkeley (Pappé, 2023) and in a recent article, Pappé asserts the October 7 Hamas attack as an act of “resistance” against “the settler colonial nature of Zionism... and its policies against the indigenous people of Palestine.” He lauds the attack: “Hamas had to act, and quickly so....” in a way that led him to “admire the courage of the Palestinian fighters who took over a dozen military bases, overcoming the strongest army in the Middle East” (Pappé, 2023). Pappé has

joined a side with no such multiplicity of views on Palestinian-Israeli history, one that relies only on a singular settler colonialism narrative. There are better arguments for Palestinian justice and we hope to offer an argument for coexistence. But first, we address the anti-Zionist narrative at large and on campus, and investigate this charge of settler colonialism by closely considering the work of Palestinian scholars Edward W. Said, Elia Zureik and their followers.

Settler Colonialism: a Flawed Thesis

Both Said and Zureik first identified the role of technology in controlling Palestinian lives long before Israel's tech industry ever demonstrated its AI war machine. In seminal early books *Orientalism* (1978) and *The Question of Palestine* (1979), Edward Said makes clear that the European immigrants to Palestine before 1948 always enjoyed a technological advantage that he claims well-served Israel's settler colonialist ambitions, by which he means, European colonial desire to conquer "distant lands" and displace indigenous people. Drawing on Maxime Rodinson's famously nuanced and complex 1967 article "Israel: A Colonial Settler-State?" Said simply follows interpreters like Peter Buch, who reduce Rodinson's claim to a theory of the evils of settler colonialism in Palestine (Strawson, 2019). The "absolute wrong of settler-colonialism," Said declares, becomes "diluted" through a narrative of "Jewish survival that uses settler-colonialism to straighten out its own destiny" (Said, 1979, p. 119). Here, Said denies Jewish claims of any indigenous or historical connection to Palestine, suggesting such assertions are merely an effort to supply Zionists with a linear argument that explains their complicated Jewish identity and history. Said asserts

Israel's success in usurping Palestinian land derives equally from claims about the necessity of a state for Jewish survival as well as a powerful military industrial technology complex fueled by a Global North indifferent to native lives. Building on Said, Patrick Wolfe, in his influential essay "Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native" (2006) defines Israel as a settler colonialist society with an eliminationist policy toward Palestinians. In Wolfe's theory of the "logic of elimination," he presents settler colonialism as a system, not a historical event, that erases native peoples as it expropriates lands and resources. Elia Zureik, who began writing about Israel as a settler colony in *The Palestinians in Israel: A Study in Internal Colonialism* (1979), draws both on Said and Wolfe in his theoretical and empirical analysis of Israeli surveillance technologies. In *Israel's Colonial Project in Palestine: Brutal Pursuit*, Zureik (2015) elaborates on his earlier work to reveal how Israeli surveillance is fundamentally racist in dispossession of indigenous Palestinians. For Zureik, surveillance is "no mere collection of behavioral and personal data," it shapes a people's self-understanding and memory formation, alienating themselves from their identity and decisions in the world (p. 113). Both Said and Zureik rely on language they adopt from Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975), where Foucault traces the historical development of disciplinary institutions and the technologies of surveillance and control.

Said and Zureik, however, remain much more optimistic than Foucault, especially in envisioning Palestinian liberation, and therein lies their important definition of resistance, which apologizes for terrorism and denies Jews any claim to "Palestinian" land (Nelson, 2019; Shapira, 2012). In "Intifada and Independence" (1989), Said parses a "distinction between resistance to

occupation (to which Palestinians are entitled according to the UN Charter and international law) and indiscriminate violence whose aim is to terrorize civilians” (p. 35). The UN Charter outlines for Said a legitimate path of resistance in the face of unjust occupation and colonization of Palestinian lands. Zureik takes the argument a step further, criticizing Foucault who “misses” understanding any potential for resistance (p. 31), while Zureik makes a quintessentially Foucauldian argument that blames the state and “technologies of power” for terrorism, and thus excuses the actors from any responsibility or agency. Zureik asserts terrorism originates not “from the perpetrator of the act, but from the behavior of states toward the disenfranchised and colonized,” (p. 14).

There are problems in both the settler colonialism thesis and terrorism definition as the fault of the oppressor arguments, which now pervade most of the protest materials from anti-Zionists and tech ethics activists. First, Said’s settler colonialism thesis imagines Jews solely as white opportunists in European colonialism, as though Jews were ever accepted truly as Europeans and as though there were never any indigenous or Mediterranean Jews. Said is partially correct in describing Israel’s dominant culture as European, especially since Mizrahi Jews were long treated as second class citizens rated only above the Israeli Arabs when it suited the dominant culture (Massad 1996; Shohat, 1999). However, Said’s generalization erases the struggle of these non-European Jews to gain social and cultural legitimacy, while also projecting a white skin privilege onto European Jews, who survived all kinds of antisemitic European pogroms (Gilman, 2020; Fischbach, 2020). S. Ilan Troen (2021) claims such a denial of Jewish life in historic Palestine is both erroneous and racist. Were Jews ever beneficiaries of the European colonial project? In part, yes, as the othered Europeans, a displaced people, were

nearly annihilated by the Nazis and then reluctantly and belatedly offered a partitioned Israel by the British.

As Said lays the blame for Israel's supposed settler colonialism on the "father of Zionism," Theodor Herzl, whom he interprets through Desmond Stewart's 1974 biography. Adopting Stewart's assessment, Said provides future anti-Zionists with a reductive view of the highly controversial Herzl, whose reception among Zionists has long been critical. Historian Rashid Khalidi, from the prominent Palestinian Khalidi family, also begins with Herzl as the nemesis in his personal narrative of settler colonialism where he argues that Zionism has remained a racist, nineteenth century European movement for the past hundred years. While Khalidi's earlier work in *The Iron Cage* (2007) proved more critical of Palestinians (at least their leadership) for their lack of nationhood, his 2020 book, *The Hundred Years' war on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917–2017*, rewrites history to present Palestinians as innocent victims of a Jewish colonial campaign (Morris, 2024). Khalidi frames his book with a cartoonish depiction of lying, money-grubbing Herzl, who intends to "deceive" and/or disregard Khalidi's venerable great-great uncle, erstwhile mayor of Jerusalem, Yusuf Diya al-Khalidi (Khalidi, 2020, p. 7). This black/white opposition of evil colonialist Jews and the innocent "indigenous" Palestinians, who pleaded "in the name of God, let Palestine be left alone" (Khalidi, 2020, p. 5) reduces the whole contested history of Zionism to Herzl's often contradictory, incoherent musings in his diaries. Khalidi adopts from Said who borrows from Stewart this Herzl 1895 diary quote which has become standard for anti-Zionists and the settler colonialism critique:

We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our

own country... expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly (Khalidi, 2020, p. 4).

While Khalidi reads this passage from Herzl's diary as proof of Zionist "deceit," many scholars including Shapira (1999), Morris (2004), Penslar (2005), Pawel (2011) and others offer context for Herzl's problematic vision of "buying" out the poorer Arabs and discouraging their return, which Herzl understood was wrong. Was Herzl the "smug" (p.7) European, who mistakenly believed Palestinians could be "bribed or fooled" (p.7) into allowing Jews to settle in Palestine with their money and culture? Herzl's diaries suggest as much, and there's a lot to criticize about Herzl, nineteenth century Europeans, and their attitude toward non-Europeans. However, for Khalidi, this quote is paradigmatic for the whole of Zionism to the present day and renders Herzl, whom he presents as the stereotypical "wandering Jew," and all the other Jews in his book, as "deceivers," (pp. 7, 12, 32, 104, 165, 278) "liars" (pp. 106, 165) who mistakenly assume the noble, innocent Palestinianians can be bought with "money" (p. 56, 96, 148, 206, 229, 232, 249). For Khalidi these crass, corrupt, colonial Jews and their money form a direct lineage from Herzl to Donald Trump, who is not Jewish, but whose Jewish son-in-law carries out his imperial designs (p. 247). Except for the extra devious and avaricious character Khalidi assigns to Zionists and Jews in general, they appear colonial settlers no different than white South Africans. Likewise, Zionists are simply imposing a new form of apartheid on Palestinians. If the antisemitic claims of the settler colonial/apartheid thesis with its fantasy of Jews who are simultaneously arrogant white Europeans and abject othered menaces, escaped anyone before reading Khalidi, they will be abundantly clear after his latest book.

Israel is not South Africa

Pace Said, Zuriel, Khalidi and their followers, however, Israel is not South Africa, whose members of the British and Dutch Empires were rarely displaced, persecuted minorities. South Africans kept Black indigenous peoples out of white universities, denying them the right to vote. In Israel, Arabs enjoy active roles in the Knesset, the supreme court, health care, and all other professions. Yet, equality remains imperfect and there are some resemblances which need to be addressed: in the Occupied Territories there is an increasingly segregated state security apparatus that ant-Zionists claim fulfills the definition of apartheid according to the UN International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, which defines apartheid as a crime involving “inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them.” Moreover, there are also similarities between Israel’s divisions and segregations of the Palestinians and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court’s definition of apartheid as a crime involving “an institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other racial group or groups.” B’Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, has designed Israel an “apartheid state” due to its denial of Palestinian human rights, liberty, and equality: “The entire area that Israel controls is ruled by a single apartheid regime, governing the lives of all people living in it and operating according to one organizing principle: establishing and perpetuating the control of one group of people – Jews – over another – Palestinians – through laws, practices, and state violence” (B’Tselem, 2023). However, we think the comparison remains simplistic historically and culturally. One can certainly criticize inequality and discrimination in Israeli society. One can question the legality of Israel’s settlements and

segregated roads and walls in the West Bank. Yet, describing these as “apartheid” is a massive trivialization of historical apartheid in South Africa that also erases the specific flaws of Israeli policy toward the Palestinians. We thus reject the #NoTechForApartheid campaign in the use of the term “apartheid” as well as its one-sided criticism of Israel's military surveillance state.

NoTechForApartheid “strives to connect the experiences of Black, brown, immigrant communities in the U.S. to Palestinian people living under apartheid and how tech-fueled state violence impacts them.” Described as a project of MPower Change and The Jewish Voice for Peace, NoTechForApartheid has been highly influential in calling attention to the harms of Israeli AI technology. Likewise, “The Responsible AI Community in Solidarity with Gaza and the Palestinian People” makes many of the claims the literature we cited here have as well.

AI Ethics Public Statements

The “Academics and Intellectuals for a Free Palestine” also points to the Geneva Conventions and other international legal justifications of resistance. However, unlike Said, who distinguishes between resistance and “indiscriminate violence whose aim is to terrorize civilians” (Said, 1979, p. 35), the writers of this letter offer a reductive, purely theoretical definition of terrorism as a mere ideological construct. In their example of South Africa, which labeled the ANC as “terrorist,” they argue that Israel and the U.S. make an equally ideological false claim of terrorism:

Resistance to apartheid and fascist-type oppression was labeled “terrorism” by U.S. politicians when the African National Congress took up arms against the

racist apartheid regime in South Africa. The same false “terrorism” label is being applied to the Palestinian people and those in solidarity with them.

Here, this letter elides any reference to the Hamas murder and rape of civilians on October 7, 2023, which would corroborate Said’s definition of “terror” as opposed to resistance, and instead invokes the history of South African apartheid and Palesinian suffering as justifications of October 7 as “resistance.” Invoking the Geneva Conventions to justify resistance, they omit that this very same law in the Geneva Conventions also condemns such attacks on civilians as genocide. In collapsing the definition between resistance and terrorism, this letter apologizes for Hamas. Equally mendacious is its criticism of the Jewish ethnostate advocating for an Arab Palestine. The letter ends with a false equation between the English words “Free Palestine” and the Arabic فلسطين عربية which says literally “Palestine is Arabic” and indicates their understanding of freeing Palestine is ethnic cleansing, a replacement of Israel — which clearly has its problems with its Jewish nation-state law — with their own ethnostate, one that displaces Jews with Arabs. When questioned about the phrase “Palestine is Arabic,” several of the authors accounted for the phrase as not one of ethnic cleansing but as a slogan calling for Arabic unity after Israel’s dispossession and fragmentation of the Palestinian population. The authors draw a parallel to Yousef Munayyer’s 2021 article “What Does ‘From the River to the Sea’ Really Mean?,” which claims the slogan merely “resists the fragmentation of Palestinian land and people by Israeli occupation and discrimination” (Munayyer, 2021). Munayyer’s rendering of the phrase is “symbolic” (of what?) rather than a call for literal removal of Jews and resonates with many pro-Palestinian protestors, who rightfully call for Palestinianian autonomy in some form. The phrase “from the river to the sea,” in Arabic, من النهر إلى البحر “min al-nahr ila al-bahr,” allows for many interpretations, having originated with the Palestinian nationalist

movement in the early 1960s and adopted by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as a call for returning to the borders under British control of Palestine, where both Jews and Arabs had lived before the founding of Israel in 1948 (Demirjian & Stack, 2023). Yet, over time, the phrase also served Hamas' eliminationist goals as it was incorporated into the 1988 Hamas charter and its 2017 revision (Hamas, 1988; Hamas 2017). In a speech in Gaza celebrating the 25th anniversary of the founding of Hamas, Hamas leadership declared: "Palestine is ours from the river to the sea and from the south to the north... There will be no concession on any inch of the land" (Kellman, 2023). The "Academics and Intellectuals for a Free Palestine" letter reads like an academic abstraction as if the word "terrorism" were merely an ideological insult and "from the river to the sea" made no reference to antisemitic groups like Hamas, who perpetrated the October 7 attack, which must be understood as a violation of the Geneva Conventions just as Israel's disproportionate bombing of civilians also contravenes international law. Such laws are not merely arbitrary; it is possible to resist oppression and secure national borders without genocide, as both Israel and Hamas will have to demonstrate in the international courts. In the meantime, AI ethics activists can be more precise.

As we examine each of the above letters, we assert that merely questioning Israel and its military technology is not antisemitic. Fighting for a Palestinian homeland is not antisemitic. One can decry the injustice of murdering and expelling Palestinians from their land in 1948 (Morris 2008; Brahm, 2015) and strongly censure current Israeli government policies of expansionism, occupation, and surveillance, without being antisemitic. However, the Palestinians are not supine victims as Said and Elia Zureik imagine, with no responsibility for terror in their name. Palestinians must also take responsibility for having misplaced their hopes in Hamas and distance themselves, even as Gazan citizens too long imagined Hamas as their "only hope for

resistance” and allowed Hamas to thoroughly infiltrate civilian life. Gazans should not be collectively punished or ethnically cleansed just because they wrongly embraced or tolerated Hamas. One can separate Palestinians from the terrorists among them, and it is not anti-Arab to imagine Palestinian unity without such false resistance fighters. Yet, this is the caricature that anti-Zionists draw uncritically and often without having read their “heroes” like Said and Zureik, who either willfully or through intellectual neglect, draw their criticisms from the same antisemitic reasoning that allowed Hamas to declare in 2017 that antisemitism is a “European problem.”

Anti-Zionist Tech Criticism

It is this same, simplistic, anti-Zionist criticism that fails to understand the wide ranging possibilities of Israeli technology. No anti-Zionist tech critic has been in the media more since October 7 than Australian Jewish journalist Antony Lowenstein, who presents an exemplary case among anti-Zionists. Like many Jews who have become disenchanted with Israel’s authoritarian approach to the Palestinians, Loewenstein denies the success of Israeli democracy and questions its legitimacy as a state. But it remains unclear if he, like some tech critics, apologizes for Hamas’ October 7 attack. In 2009, Loewenstein posted a blog entitled “Will Australia Stand Up and Back Hamas?” (Loewenstein, 2009), whereas in his many recent interviews about this war, he has avoided direct defense of Hamas. Loewenstein’s 2023 book *The Palestine Laboratory: How Israel Exports the Technology of Occupation Around the World* builds on Israeli filmmaker Yotam Feldman’s 2013 documentary *The Lab*, which asserts Israelis have turned the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) into a laboratory where Israeli security forces experiment with technologies and market these worldwide as “battle-tested” (p.15). Provocatively asserting Israel presents itself as a uniquely authoritarian “ideal ethnonationalist model” (p. 20) from which other

countries can purchase technologies of social subjugation, Loewenstein describes how the Israeli tech industry gained much of its early support from “secret” deals with South African apartheid (p. 155) and has since marketed its technologies of social domination to “anyone” including “despots” (p.47). According to Loewenstein, even nations critical of Israel eagerly sustain Israel’s tech industry. Europeans, who claim to be squeamish about “Israel’s lack of democracy” and “violations of human rights” (p. 14), nevertheless purchase Israeli arms and “technologies of occupation” (p.131). While Loewenstein convincingly portrays Israel as a politically realist state with an absolute priority of national security and few moral qualms about its political and industry partnerships, he presents Israeli technology as singularly malevolent: “despotism has never been so easily shareable with compact technology” (p. 28) without examining the technology itself. It’s as though Loewenstein fails to understand that most of the computing technology we now have around the globe originated in military defense programs including the US ENIAC (Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer), Britain's Colossus, Germany’s Z3 scientific and military calculations in Germany for code-breaking, and the Soviet Strela Computer for scientific and military applications (Schechter, 1989; Goldstine & Goldstine, 1946; Whittaker, 2021).

What Israeli Tech Offers

Israel’s tech industry and its famous Technion Institute originated, like most nationally-funded science institutes around the globe, in the early twentieth century out of nation-building efforts. Technion increased focus on military development after 1967 when the French, in order to appease Arab nations, enacted an embargo on military exports to Israel (Lockwood, 1972). Well aware of its isolation, Israel has always developed technology with the goal of self-sufficiency and security. Like other nations, these security applications translate far

beyond military use, so that even as anti-Zionists decry Israel as a “surveillance nation,” in fact, their AI has much wider civilian applications in the fields of healthcare, education, and agriculture. Against the anti-Zionist, reductive view that the whole of Israel’s “Start-up Nation” arises from the military in some way or another, many AI companies that NoTechForApartheid and BDS want boycotted never arose from military research. NoTechForApartheid asserts “Israeli technology companies are complicit in the genocide of Palestinians.” Such companies include HR platforms [Bob](#) and [Deel](#), web analytics companies [Similarweb](#) and [Lusha](#), workflow platform [Monday](#), and payment platform [Rapyd](#). Claiming that because company leadership are veterans, the military played some role is simply false: For example [Waze](#), founded in 2008, is a navigation app that provides real-time traffic information. It was acquired by Google in 2013. [Wix](#) is a web development platform that enables users to create websites. It was founded in 2006 by Avishai Abrahami, Nadav Abrahami, and Giora Kaplan. [Fiverr](#) is an online marketplace for freelance services. It was founded in 2010 by Micha Kaufman and Shai Wininger. [Playtika](#) is a mobile gaming company known for its social casino games. Founded in 2010, it has become a major player in the mobile gaming industry. [SimilarWeb](#) provides website analytics and market intelligence. It was founded in 2007 by Or Offer. [Healthy.io](#) provides medical treatment and diagnosis remotely. [Mobileye](#), founded in 1999 by Amnon Shashua and Ziv Aviram, focuses on advanced, vision-based driver-assistance systems. Many of these tech entrepreneurs are also reservists, some who, like IDF reservist [Adam Bismut](#), have lost their lives in the war. Bismut was the CEO and founder of an AI company named [Sightbit](#) that helps lifeguards prevent swimmers from drowning. Other companies include [Activefence](#), which promotes trust and safety online by fighting online child porn distribution and child slavery in China. [Cyabra](#) uncovers threats to your company, product, people, and places by exposing malicious actors,

disinformation, and bot networks online — which has been instrumental in debunking deep fakes in this war. Of course, we do not mention all the great Israeli tech orgs here but just offer an overview of the diversity of projects, which clearly show the NoTechForApartheid project claims are unfair and poorly informed.

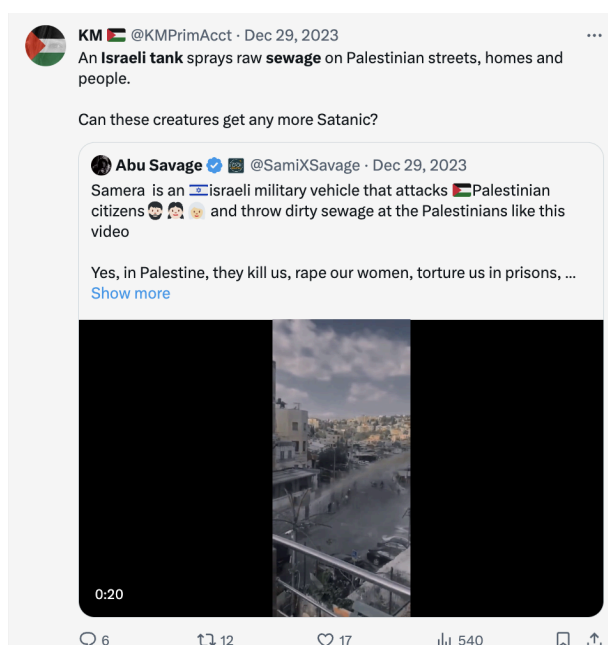
Unlike many computer vision companies around the globe, Mobileye did not begin as a military surveillance project. Computer vision indeed aids surveillance and has many critics, but it also serves many non-military, non-surveillance ends. For example, Tel Aviv-based [EyeControl](#), a wireless communication system designed for people unable to speak due to degenerative muscular conditions or medical procedures like intubation. The device, a wireless head-mounted system, utilizes eye movements for navigation and communication, acting as a joystick for more accurate outcomes. The system can operate in darkness and offers a home device for comprehensive communication solutions for individuals transitioning to remote home care (Leichman, 2024). Another computer vision technology used for education and healthcare comes from Jerusalem-based [OrCam Technologies](#) that assists with hearing and visual impairments. OrCam Hear utilizes AI and deep learning to isolate and amplify selected speakers' voices while filtering background noise, addressing the main problems of traditional hearing aids. OrCam MyEye, enhanced with AI, supports users with visual impairments by reading text, recognizing faces, and identifying products. OrCam Read 3 scans and reads text, offering interactive responses and contextual information. OrCam Learn aids students with reading challenges by providing feedback, summarizing, translating, and explaining words (Fink, 2024).

Computer vision, thus often, but not always, derives from military surveillance research and offers uses far beyond military operations. A more reasoned criticism of Israeli tech might be that Israel, like the U.S., Russia, and many nations around the world, profits from their

surveillance technologies, which remain often flawed and harmful. Israeli AI tech served covert operations, whose legality came under fire in global courts (Marczak, et al., 2018; Levinson, 2020). Anti-Zionist tech critics decry Israel's cloud computing surveillance program, Project Nimbus and Blue Wolf, the Israel army's biometric identification system (Goodfriend, 2023; Abdelnour, 2023). Many of these criticisms suffer from lack of insight into the tech industry itself, so that even the latest technology and its legal human rights protocols for usage remain unexplained. For example: "Habsora," "the Gospel," uses AI to more accurately identify targets and try to avoid civilians (IDF, 2023). What exactly the technology involves, its error rates and legal preparation for deployment never make it to critics' talking points. Denouncing the technology as a "mass assassination factory" (Abraham, 2023), critics question its genocidal operations without any real insight from those who build the technology. Developed since at least 2019, Habsora utilizes probabilistic inference in machine learning to automate target selection in the densely populated Gaza region. There are many questions about how this technology avoids killing innocents. AI military machines require real time situational awareness, must synchronize across complex domains, adapt dynamically to changes, and must be deployed in combination with human-AI teaming (Boury-Brisset, et al., 2020). Israel follows these protocols. For every technology developed in Unit 8200 and deployed in the field, there are also tech, legal, and ethics teams working together in real time to arrive at decisions for usage (Baram, et al., 2019; Barak, et al., 2023). Such human-computer and interdisciplinary cooperation proves especially important in asymmetrical war, where the enemy infiltrates civilian life. No doubt after the ICJ case, there will be many international bodies inquiring into the technology and its protocols for usage. For now, it is up to the IDF to clarify how its teams

use this technology, rather than relying on journalistic hyperbole growing out of a single +972 Magazine source (Abraham, 2023).

A closer look at Israel's technology, in fact, reveals a careful effort to avoid contravening international human rights laws, while also raising its profile as the purveyor of the world's most cutting edge security technology. For example, Israel's crowd dissemination technologies prove controversial for very different reasons than critics claim. Here's a post on X, formerly Twitter, claiming that an Israeli tank is spraying sewage on Palestinians:



Spraying sewage is an international crime against humanity to use in warfare. In fact, this skunk water is a non-lethal mix of organic and inorganic compounds developed by the Israeli company Odortec, designed to smell like a mix of rotting sewage, garbage, and other offensive smells and to linger over time. While skunk water breaks no international laws and replaces the much more dangerous rubber bullets, it has been criticized for its powerful and long-lasting smell, as well as its potential impact on individuals' health and the environment (Tremblay, et al. 2023). Such criticism could go farther and be more specific. A much better approach would be to inquire

about AI system design and safety protocols both for AI-developed chemical engineering and artillery. AI-related technologies are already well-known to inflict lasting human suffering and environmental damage, especially against marginalized groups (Bender, et al., 2021, Bommasani et al, 2022), so with this understanding of the need to regulate AI, it is also important to consider how to best steer such technologies toward positive outcomes for Palestinians and Israelis.

Discussion: Israeli Tech Education as Path to Coexistence

As Israel prepares its AI tech design for international oversight, its industry can also provide educational outreach, sharing key technical skills with Palestinians — a challenging task after October 7, since Palestinians will now encounter even more difficulty crossing borders from Gaza or the West Bank. Most importantly, tech is not the complete solution, but, as we've seen before October 7, 2023, it can initiate dialogue, understanding, and offer a better life for Palestinians and Israelis. For tech to serve well, it has to be designed well with input from both Palestinians and Israelis. Teaching tech offers an important opportunity to collaborate on just designs, which can emerge through common effort. Groups like [Tech2Peace](#), founded by Palestinian activist Abeer Bandak and Israeli educators Uri Rosenberg and Tomer Cohen, partners with Google, Microsoft, and MIT to provide high-tech training, networking opportunities, and support to young Palestinians and Israelis. While learning valuable tech skills, Palestinian and Israeli students complete collaborative projects and build relationships based on shared goals and common humanity. Alongside every project, Tech2Peace also offers courses on conflict resolution that foster discussions, positive cooperation, and understanding between participants. Tech education can also destigmatize for Palestinians the idea of normalizing

relations with Israelis. Palestinian Tech2Peace advisor, Adnan Jaber, had been reluctant to join the group at first, but took a chance because he wanted to develop tech skills: “It wasn’t an easy decision to apply to this program, because it has the word ‘peace’ in it, and that word is difficult for me as a Palestinian... I was worried my friends might see me as a traitor or a normalizer. But I wanted to make connections, I wanted to get a job” (Wright, 2022). As Jaber comments, the word “peace” often raises red flags for Palestinians because they have come to expect it means they have to accept the status quo of their terrible living conditions. Groups like BDS inflame this fear, claiming normalization merely enables Israelis to maintain control over Palestinian lives (BDS, 2024). In fact, through Tech2Peace, Jaber gained a new perspective along with his highly marketable tech skills. He remained cautious in his interactions with Israelis and often disagreed with his teammates, and in the process both he and his Israeli counterparts learned to rethink some of their long-ingrained narratives they held about each other. Jaber’s experience proves it's possible to consider working together without compromising one’s identity. Jake Shapiro, who helps build these bridges at Tech2Peace asserts: “both sides can benefit from cooperation... you don’t have to agree on everything to work together” (Wright, 2023).

In their article “Algorithmic Palestine: A Partial Path to Liberation,” Stanford students and Palestine activists Ronnie Hafez, Maryam Khalil, and Lara Hafez argue that while tech is no panacea for Palestinians, it can benefit Palestinians if they gain sovereignty over their data and algorithmic design. They point to such great organizations like Code for Palestine, which is now Horizons Academy, and Gaza Sky Geeks that offer skills that provide empowerment for Palestinians (Hafez, et al., 2023). There are also many other organizations focused on tech education for Palestinianians that offer education and networking opportunities, which build bridges. However, the war has imperiled these. Until October 7, 2023, despite continual

skirmishes with Hamas and economic challenges, Gaza had enjoyed the support of organizations like Amideast and Al-Nayzak as well as Big Tech corps like Nvidia and Alphabet. Now, the question remains how to move forward and rebuild after both infrastructure and trust have been demolished (Butcher, 2023).

One possibility during the post-war rebuilding of Gaza could include tech education in the much maligned Rawabi City in Area C of the West Bank, which took a decade to build, remains largely uninhabited, and embodies all the problems of Israel's occupation of the West Bank. BDS derides it as a misguided effort to uplift the Palestinians, denouncing this project as an “act of normalization with Israel that helps it whitewash its ongoing occupation, colonization, and apartheid against the Palestinian people” (BDS, 2012). Indeed, this \$1.5 billion planned, private city developed by Palestinian real-estate mogul Bashar Masri and his Qatari partner company LDR has made many missteps. It absorbed Palestinian land the Palestinian Authority (PA) confiscated. It built a posh, upper-middle class western-style development outside of financial reach for most Palestinians, and, to critics, looks like just another “settlement.” Many bureaucratic failures and disagreements between Israelis and Palestinians over water rights delayed construction of the city for half a decade. Now more than a dozen years from its original planning, Rawabi remains largely unfilled due to ongoing conflicts. Despite all these problems which mirror exactly those of the larger conflict — no one is getting exactly what they want out of the project — Rawabi nevertheless has the infrastructure to house Palestinians as well as the many currently struggling programs of co-education and coexistence. With better collaborative design and cooperative rethinking, Rawabi could offer a place for Palestinians to gain a fresh start, learn academic and tech skills, and work together with Israelis. The undertaking will be difficult. Rawabi is just one possible location with space for learning and living; there are others,

and the rebuilding of Gaza should learn from Rawabi's mistakes. Most important is to design possibilities for coexistence and collaborative learning.

Even with such an uncertain future for Palestinians and Israelis, there are efforts to imagine Palestinian Arab and Jewish sovereignty without eliminating one group or the other. The cooperative Palestinian and Israeli group Standing Together offers a way forward:

We work under the basic assumption that millions of Palestinians and millions of Jews live in this land today, and no one is going anywhere. Ending Israeli control over Palestinians and forging a society in which everyone is free and equal between the river and the sea is in the interest of both Palestinians and Jewish Israelis (Standing Together, 2024).

Committing to coexistence on equal terms is the just path forward. Palestine can be Arabic, if Israel can also be Jewish. Neither may have total unity with exclusion of the other or mistreatment of minority groups. In the words of Stanford University Professor Russell A. Berman, to deny Jews any possible nation that centers their diverse peoples, faith, and histories, and instead claim Palestine as an ethnostate for Arabs, would indeed be antisemitic. For Berman, one might “genuinely be anti-Zionist without being antisemitic” only in a hypothetical state where there was no sovereignty for anyone. In the contradictory anti-Zionist logic, an Arabic Palestine is just, but a Jewish Israel is racist (Berman, 2023). The peoples of the Middle East include Israelis and Jews who seek security within their borders. October 7, 2023 has rendered the two-state solution extremely unpopular among Israelis of all political perspectives. The way forward must begin more modestly with infrastructure and educational efforts, which reveal outdatedness of many narratives about both Palestinians and Israelis.


Conclusion

As we reflected on Palestinian liberation theory, we hope we articulated a vision of a free Palestine that rejects Hamas, terrorism, and racist formulations. We questioned assertions of Jews as merely settler-colonialists, white Europeans with no connection to the land and no right to be there after 75 years, a historically incorrect, racist negation of Jewish ethnic and historical diversity, and a call for ethnic cleansing. In many AI ethicist interventions against Israel's war with Hamas, there is a clear elision of responsibility of Hamas in the conflict, as well as an overall delegitimation of Israel's right to exist. In the above analysis, we endeavored to present a Palestinian perspective alongside the AI ethicist criticisms of Israeli AI technologies and offer a position that affirms their analysis while calling for consideration of Hamas' role and the problem of antisemitism in some delegitimization of Israel. Our hope is to have shown the great diversity of Israeli technology as well as Jewish and Israeli perspectives on coexistence and moving forward. Every discussion of Israeli tech becomes a referendum on 1948, which continues in search of a just resolution for both peoples. Many Israelis now also say "we want 48," by which they mean we want to remember what coexistence looks like and find solutions for the future. Just as many Israelis now have October 7, 2023 tattooed on their arms, let's learn from the past and focus on the future.



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