

How Israel Uses an AI Genocide Program to Obliterate Gaza

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According to whistleblowers, Israel's AI system is generating targets so fast, based on inputs so broad, that everyone in Gaza is in the crosshairs

It should already have been evident from the scale of death and destruction [inflicted on Gaza](#) over the past eight weeks that Israel was implementing a policy of ethnic cleansing and genocide against Palestinians in the besieged enclave.

Now Israeli whistleblowers have provided details of how these crimes against humanity are being carried out – and how they are being rationalised internally within Israel's military and political echelons.

An extraordinary series of testimonies jointly published by the Israel-based publications 972 and Local Call last week established that the huge death toll of Palestinian civilians is, in fact, [integral](#) to Israel's war aims, not an unfortunate side effect.

The known dead so far are estimated at almost 16,000, with a further 6,000 missing, presumably crushed under rubble. Two-thirds of those killed by Israel are women and children.

Two years ago, during an earlier attack on Gaza, Israeli military officials admitted for the first time that a computer was supplying them with potential targets. The intention appears to have been to bypass the restraints imposed by human assessments of likely casualties by outsourcing the killings to a machine.

The whistleblowers confirm that, given new, generous parameters of who and what can be attacked, the artificial intelligence system, called "Gospel", is generating lists of targets so rapidly the military cannot keep up.

Israel's inputs are now so broad that they allow the bombing without warning of high-rise apartment blocks, so long as it can be claimed that one person residing there is believed to have a connection to Hamas.

As Hamas not only has a military wing but runs the enclave's government, the new policy potentially widens the circle of targets to include civil servants, police, health workers, educators, journalists and aid workers.

That helps explain how, according to United Nations figures, some 100,000 homes in Gaza have been levelled or made uninhabitable and at least 1.7 million Palestinians displaced, some three-quarters of the enclave's population.

Basic survival

The revelations definitively give the lie to claims by western politicians, such as US President Joe Biden, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and opposition Labour leader Keir Starmer, that Israel is simply defending itself and trying to avoid civilian casualties.

In a report last Friday, the Guardian corroborated Israel's reliance on the Gospel computing system. The paper quoted a former White House official familiar with the Pentagon's development of autonomous offensive systems as stating that Israel's no-holds-barred AI war on Gaza was an ["important moment"](#).

The official added: "Other states are going to be watching and learning."

Perhaps the most significant of the disclosures from current and former Israeli officials who have spoken to 972 and Local Call is the fact that Israel is aware its many thousands of air strikes on Gaza's residential areas are having a minimal impact on the armed wing of Hamas.

This contrasts with public declarations that Israel is seeking to eradicate the group.

Even according to the Israeli military's own claims, likely based on the new, much broader definition of who counts as a Hamas target, Israel has killed between 1,000 and 3,000 "operatives" – meaning that, even by Israel's assessment, civilians comprise between 85 and 95 per cent of those dead from its bombing campaigns.

This is not accidental, according to the sources.

Israel is continuing long-standing military policies towards Gaza – principally the so-called [Dahiya doctrine](#), sometimes known as ["mowing the lawn"](#) – but has changed the focus to allow for far greater bloodshed among civilians.

The doctrine, which has guided Israel's repeated attacks on Gaza over the last 15 years, is named after the destruction of an entire neighbourhood of Beirut in Israel's war on Lebanon in 2006.

The doctrine has two key premises: that laying waste to an enemy area will force the population to concentrate on basic survival rather than resistance; and in the longer term it will encourage ordinary people to rise up against their rulers.

Traditionally, the Dahiya doctrine was chiefly about the destruction of infrastructure. At least officially, given the strictures of international law, Israel claimed it issued advance warnings. That was supposed to give civilians in the targeted area time to evacuate.

According to military officials, this notice period has largely ended, placing civilians [directly in Israel's crosshairs](#).

‘Not surgical’

A source explained the effects of the new policy to 972: “The numbers increased from dozens of civilian deaths [permitted] as collateral damage as part of an attack on a senior [Hamas] official in previous operations, to hundreds of civilian deaths as collateral damage.”

A former military intelligence official said the policy was designed to make most of Gaza’s infrastructure legitimate targets: “ Hamas is everywhere in Gaza; there is no building that does not have something of Hamas in it, so if you want to find a way to turn a high-rise into a target, you will be able to do so.”

According to these sources, given that Hamas’ armed wing is underground in tunnels, Israel has struggled to identify primary targets, such as weapons sites, armed cells and headquarters.

Instead, it has focused on what it calls “power targets” – or more accurately, symbolic targets – such as high-rise buildings and residential towers in urban areas, as well as public buildings such as universities, banks, government offices, hospitals and mosques.

These attacks, say the sources, are seen as a “means that allows damage to civil society”, weakening the ability of the society to organise and function, and families to subsist. According to 972, the former Israeli officials it spoke to “understood, some explicitly and some implicitly, that damage to civilians is the real purpose of these attacks”.

Referring to the high death toll among civilians, another source stated: “Everything is intentional. We know exactly how much collateral damage there is in every home.”

Five different sources told 972 that Israel had compiled files on tens of thousands of private homes and apartments in Gaza where low-level Hamas members live. The homes, as well as everyone who lives in them, were viewed as a legitimate target as soon as a Hamas-linked person entered the building.

One noted: “ Hamas members who don’t really matter for anything live in homes across Gaza. So they mark the home and bomb the house and kill everyone there.”

Another source observed of this practice that its equivalent would be for Hamas to bomb “all the private residences of our families when [Israeli soldiers] go back to sleep at home on the weekend.”

An official who had overseen previous attacks on Gaza said Israel would claim one floor in a high-rise was serving as the office of a Hamas or Islamic Jihad spokesman to justify levelling the building. “I understood that the floor is an excuse that allows the army to cause a lot of destruction in Gaza.”

If the truth were known about what Israel was doing, the source added, “this would itself be seen as terrorism. So they do not say it.”

Another stated that Israel's aim was to inflict maximum damage rather than hit the part of the building associated with Hamas. "It was also possible to hit that specific target with more accurate weaponry. The bottom line is that they knocked down a high-rise for the sake of knocking down a high-rise."

Don't be fooled. Biden is fully signed up to genocide in Gaza.

My latest article here: <https://t.co/cRfBfYf9RX>

— Jonathan Cook (@Jonathan_K_Cook) [November 15, 2023](#)

Senior Israeli officials have made this goal explicit over the past few weeks. Omer Tishler, the head of the Israeli air force, [told military reporters](#) that entire neighbourhoods had been attacked "on a large scale and not in a surgical manner".

A source said Israel's long-term aim was "to give the citizens of Gaza the feeling that Hamas is not in control of the situation".

Holy war

In previous attacks on Gaza, Israel adopted a strategy that inflicted wanton destruction on infrastructure and led to large numbers of Palestinians being killed. But according to the sources quoted by 972 and Local Call, all restraints have been removed, dramatically scaling up the fallout for civilians.

Tishler, the head of the air force, has confirmed that, in many cases before bombing a building, Israel no longer provides a warning strike with a small shell – known as "[roof knocking](#)". The practice, he said, was "relevant to rounds [of fighting] and not to war."

The risk this poses to civilians has been highlighted by the disclosure that the Israeli military is now using an artificial intelligence system, Habsora or Gospel, to identify targets.

The very name, with its biblical connotation, confirms the dangerous influences of religious fundamentalism now at play in the Israeli military, and the increasing assumption that Israel is engaged in a holy war against the Palestinians.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, traditionally seen as a secular figure, has adopted the language of the extremist settler right in calling Israel's attack on Gaza a [war against "Amalek"](#) – a biblical enemy whose men, women and children the Israelites were commanded by God to exterminate.

Speaking of the military's new reliance on Gospel, Aviv Kochavi, the former head of the Israeli military, told the Israeli Ynet website [earlier this year](#): "In the past, we would produce 50 targets in Gaza per year. Now, this machine produces 100 targets a single day, with 50 per cent of them being attacked."

The goal, he observed, was to address a “problem” in earlier bombing campaigns against Gaza that the Israeli military quickly ran out of Hamas and Islamic Jihad targets its human staff could identify.

A former intelligence officer told 972 that the Targets Administrative Division that runs Gospel had been turned into a “mass assassination factory”. Tens of thousands of people had been listed as “junior Hamas operatives” and were therefore treated as targets. The officer added that the “emphasis is on quantity and not on quality”.

A source who worked in the division added that most of Gospel’s recommendations were being nodded through without meaningful scrutiny: “We work quickly and there is no time to delve deep into the target. The view is that we are judged according to how many targets we manage to generate.”

Ethnic cleansing plan

The significance of these revelations – and what they disclose about Israel’s “war aims” – should not be underestimated.

Previously, the permanent siege on Gaza and Israel’s intermittent rampages based on the Dahiya doctrine were used as tools for managing the enclave.

They served as a constant reminder to Hamas of who is boss. The goal was to keep the group focused on administrative duties rather than armed resistance: repairing the destruction, devising ways to work around the siege, and restoring Hamas’ political legitimacy with a battle-weary wider public.

Now, Israel’s aim appears much more comprehensive – and final. According to a report in [last week’s Financial Times](#), Israel is still in the early stages of a campaign that could last up to a year.

Despite the destruction of vast swaths of northern Gaza, and Israel’s current, intensified rampage in the south, an official familiar with the Israel’s war plans told the paper Israel still had a long way to go.

“This will be a very long war... We’re currently not near halfway to achieving our objectives.”

Most of Gaza’s population is being herded into the Rafah area, pressed up against the short border with Egypt. As has been explained [in these pages before](#), Israel has had a long-term ethnic cleansing plan, seeking to pressure Cairo into rehousing Gaza’s population in Sinai.

The rapid onset of disease and starvation in the enclave from Israel’s intensified siege, denying the population food, water and power, is firmly aimed at forcing Egypt’s hand.

'Thinning' the population

According to Israel Hayom, an Israeli paper with historically close links to Netanyahu's ruling Likud party, officials in Washington have been presented with a scheme to weaken Egyptian opposition further.

The US would offer aid to other neighbouring states conditioned on their [accepting refugees from Gaza](#), thereby lifting some of the burden from Egypt.

Additionally, the paper's Hebrew edition refers to a plan drafted at Netanyahu's request by Ron Dermer, one of his senior ministers, to "[thin the population](#) in Gaza to the barest minimum possible" through expulsions. The paper refers to this as a "strategic goal" for Netanyahu.

Netanyahu is reported to believe that, after the world has accepted millions of refugees displaced from Iraq, Syria and Ukraine, why should Gaza be different?

The plan envisions Palestinians leaving Gaza across the border with Egypt or fleeing by boat to Europe and Africa.

Israel's genocidal destruction of Gaza, making it uninhabitable, is entirely consistent both with its leaders' stated aims of treating Palestinians as "human animals" and with the whistleblowers' revelations.

And yet western politicians and media continue maintaining the fiction that Israel's objectives are limited to "eliminating" Hamas – and that the only legitimate question is whether Israel is acting "proportionately".

This wholesale failure to see the forest for the trees is not accidental. It is evidence that western elites are wholly complicit in Israel's expulsion of Palestinians from Gaza.

However strong the proof, even when insiders disclose Israel's policies of genocide and mass ethnic cleansing, the West is determined to turn a blind eye.