

“Those Who Cannot Remember the Past Are Condemned to Repeat It”

The promise of “never again,” born from the ashes of the Holocaust, has been a cornerstone of international human rights law and global moral consciousness.

Yet, as George Santayana warned in the quote that titles this essay, the parallels between past atrocities and present crises reveal a troubling continuity in both the ideologies that fuel genocide and the systemic failures that enable it. This essay explores these parallels through three chapters: first, the role of superiority and dehumanization in the Holocaust and the failure of international institutions like the League of Nations and the Permanent Court of International Justice (PCIJ) to prevent or stop it; second, the striking similarities in Israel’s attitudes toward Arabs, particularly Palestinians, and its actions in Gaza; and third, the compelling evidence of **mens rea** and **actus reus** that establishes genocide in Gaza, underscoring the moral and legal obligation of states and officials to act under the “never again” promise, the Genocide Convention, and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine.

Superiority, Dehumanization, and the Failure of International Institutions

The Holocaust, one of history’s most systematic genocides, was underpinned by an ideology of racial superiority and dehumanization that justified the extermination of six million Jews and millions of others. Nazi ideology, rooted in the concept of Aryan supremacy, positioned Jews as a subhuman threat to the German nation. Propaganda depicted Jews as “vermin,” “parasites,” and a “racial enemy,” stripping them of their humanity and facilitating their systematic destruction. This dehumanization was not a spontaneous act but a deliberate strategy, as seen in Hitler’s speeches and Goebbels’ propaganda, which framed Jews as an existential threat requiring elimination for Germany’s survival.

The Nazi regime concentrated Jews into ghettos like Warsaw, where starvation and disease killed tens of thousands, before deporting them to extermination camps like Auschwitz for industrialized murder via gas chambers. The intent to destroy Jews as a group was explicit in the “Final Solution,” meeting the **mens rea** for genocide, while the acts—killing, causing serious harm, imposing deadly conditions, preventing births through sterilization, and killing 1.5 million children—fulfilled the **actus reus** under the later-defined UN Genocide Convention (1948).

International institutions, namely the League of Nations and the PCIJ, failed to prevent or stop this genocide due to structural weaknesses and geopolitical realities. The League, established in 1920 to maintain peace, lacked enforcement mechanisms and relied on unanimous decisions, allowing major powers like France and the UK to prioritize appeasement of Nazi Germany over intervention. The Évian Conference (1938), supported by the League,

failed to address the Jewish refugee crisis, as most countries refused to accept refugees, enabling Nazi atrocities. The PCIJ, the League's judicial arm, could settle state disputes but had no mandate or power to address internal atrocities like the Holocaust, reflecting the era's prioritization of sovereignty over human rights. By the time the Holocaust's full scope was known, the League was defunct, and the world was at war, underscoring the catastrophic failure of international mechanisms to protect vulnerable populations.

Parallels in Israel's Attitudes Toward Arabs and its Actions in Gaza

Israel's attitudes toward Arabs, particularly Palestinians, and its actions in Gaza reveal chilling parallels to the Holocaust, rooted in ideologies of superiority, dehumanization, and systematic violence. Historical statements from Israeli leaders demonstrate a long-standing intent to exclude or destroy Palestinians. Yosef Weitz (1940s) called for a "land of Israel... without Arabs," advocating for the "transfer" of all Palestinians, leaving "not one village, not one tribe." Menachem Begin (1982) claimed Jews as the "Master Race," labeling other races "beasts and animals, cattle at best," echoing Nazi Aryan supremacy. Rafael Eitan (1983) envisioned Palestinians as "drugged cockroaches in a bottle" once the land was settled, dehumanizing them in a manner akin to Nazi propaganda. More recently, the Jerusalem Flag March (2023) saw thousands chant "Death to Arabs" and "May your village burn," while a 2024 settler conference planned to "settle in Gaza," envisioning a future "without Hamas"—and implicitly without Palestinians. Additionally, Heritage Minister Amichai Eliyahu stated in November 2023 that one of Israel's options in the war against Hamas could be to "drop a nuclear bomb on the Gaza Strip," a comment that, despite being disavowed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, reflects an extreme rhetoric of annihilation that has been echoed in many calls for the total destruction of Gaza, both on social media and elsewhere.

These attitudes translate into actions in Gaza that mirror Nazi tactics. Gaza, with 2.1 million people confined in 365 square kilometers under a blockade since 2007, resembles a Nazi ghetto, now transformed into what can be described as a "large extermination camp." Since October 2023, Israel's campaign has killed over 40,000 Palestinians, including 15,000 children, through bombing, per Gaza health authorities (late 2024). A two-month total siege (as of May 2025), confirmed by Israel Katz ("no humanitarian aid is about to enter Gaza") and Bezalel Smotrich ("not a grain of wheat"), has caused famine, with 1.1 million at risk of starvation and children dying of malnutrition, per UN reports (2024). Infrastructure destruction—70% of housing, most hospitals—creates unlivable conditions, while white phosphorus use has been linked to congenital deformations, per Human Rights Watch (2023). In the West Bank, described as a "ghetto" with its checkpoints and settlements, 83 children were killed in 2023, double the previous year's total, amid increased military operations, per UNICEF.

The Times of Israel's 2024 article calling for "lebensraum" in the West Bank to accommodate Israel's growing population (15.2 million by 2040) directly parallels Nazi territorial ambitions, which justified genocide to clear space for German settlers. Israeli officials' statements, like Yoav Gallant's "human animals" (2023) and the parliamentary document de-

manding the IDF “kill everyone not flying a white flag” (2025), further dehumanize and target Palestinians indiscriminately, much like Nazi policies targeted Jews. Smotrich’s additional comment in November 2023 that Israel will control Gaza post-war suggests a long-term plan to eliminate Palestinian presence, aligning with the settler conference’s vision and historical calls for a land without Arabs. This systematic violence, enabled by pre-existing confinement in Gaza and the West Bank, mirrors the Holocaust’s use of ghettos and camps to isolate and destroy.

Evidence of Genocide in Gaza and the Global Obligation to Act

The evidence in Gaza establishes both **mens rea** and **actus reus** for genocide under the UN Genocide Convention and Rome Statute, compelling states and officials to act under the “never again” promise, the Genocide Convention, and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine.

Mens Rea (Intent): The intent to destroy Palestinians in Gaza is evident in a pattern of dehumanizing rhetoric and explicit policies. Historical statements (Weitz, Begin, Eitan) set a precedent for exclusion, while contemporary ones confirm this intent in action: Gallant’s “human animals,” Smotrich’s “not a grain of wheat,” Katz’s “no humanitarian aid,” and the Flag March’s “Death to Arabs” all frame Palestinians as a group to be destroyed. The settler conference’s plan for a Gaza “without Hamas”—and implicitly without Palestinians—aligns with numerous calls for the total annihilation of Gaza, both on social media and elsewhere, such as Heritage Minister Amichai Eliyahu’s 2023 suggestion to “drop a nuclear bomb on the Gaza Strip.” Smotrich’s assertion that Israel will control Gaza post-war further indicates a vision of eliminating Palestinian presence entirely. Israel’s non-compliance with the ICJ’s 2024 measures, which ordered aid access to prevent genocide, further ties these acts to intent, as it shows a deliberate choice to exacerbate deadly conditions.

Actus Reus (Acts): Israel’s actions meet multiple genocidal acts: (1) **Killing:** 40,000 deaths in Gaza, 83 children in the West Bank (2023); (2) **Serious Harm:** Bombing, injuries, trauma, and chemical exposure (white phosphorus); (3) **Conditions of Life:** Siege, famine, and infrastructure destruction, creating unlivable conditions; (4) **Preventing Births:** Miscarriages and reproductive harm from malnutrition and chemicals; (5) **Transfer of Children:** Killing 15,000 children in Gaza, 83 in the West Bank (“transfer to graves”). The Flag March assaults and West Bank violence add to this pattern, showing a systematic campaign across territories.

This evidence meets the legal threshold for genocide, as the ICJ (2024) found a plausible risk and the ICC issued warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant for war crimes, including starvation as a method of warfare. The parallels to the Holocaust—supremacist ideology, dehumanization, concentration, and systematic killing—underscore the gravity of the crisis. Eliyahu’s nuclear bomb comment, even if disavowed, reflects an extreme rhetoric that, alongside Smotrich’s vision of post-war control, suggests a willingness to contemplate total destruction, further evidencing genocidal intent. Yet, international institutions fail once

again: the UN is paralyzed by U.S. vetoes, the ICJ's rulings are unenforceable, and the ICC's warrants lack enforcement, mirroring the League's failures during the Holocaust.

Under the "never again" promise, born from the Holocaust's lessons, the Genocide Convention (Article I obligates states to prevent and punish genocide), and the R2P doctrine (states must protect populations from genocide, with international intervention if they fail), every state and official has a moral and legal duty to act. This includes imposing sanctions, halting military aid to Israel (e.g., the U.S.'s \$17 billion since 2023), enforcing ICC warrants, and supporting humanitarian intervention to end the siege and bombing. Failure to act repeats the League's mistakes, betraying the promise to protect humanity from genocide.

Conclusion

The Holocaust and Gaza reveal a tragic continuity in the ideologies of superiority and dehumanization that fuel genocide, and the systemic failures of international institutions that enable it. The UN, ICJ, and ICC, paralyzed by great power politics and sovereignty norms, fail to stop Israel's actions in Gaza, which are underpinned by a history of supremacist rhetoric and intent to displace Palestinians. The evidence of **mens rea** and **actus reus**, further solidified by extreme statements like Eliyahu's suggestion of nuclear annihilation and Smotrich's vision of post-war control, establishes genocide beyond reasonable doubt. The global community's obligation under "never again," the Genocide Convention, and R2P demands immediate action to stop the atrocities in Gaza, lest history repeat its darkest chapters. The promise of "never again" must be more than words—it must be a call to action for justice, protection, and humanity.