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In recent months, the streets of Australia — and indeed across much of the Western world — have filled with people demanding justice for Palestine. Al Jazeera reports that as many as **300,000 Australians** rallied nationwide under the banner of the “March for Humanity,” calling not for symbolic gestures, but for real consequences: sanctions on Israel, an end to the bloodshed in Gaza, and an end to complicity in what they see as war crimes.

These were not fringe protests. They were mainstream, multigenerational, multicultural, reflecting a groundswell of anger at the unrestrained use of military power against a civilian population.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has been clear: *“The recognition of Palestine is a step forward towards Israelis and Palestinians living side by side in peace and security and advancing the prosperity of both peoples.”*

But let us be equally clear: recognition alone means little if Israel’s most powerful patrons — above all the United States, but also Australia, Britain, and others — continue to arm and shield the IDF as it pulverises Gaza and deepens occupation in the West Bank. Unless and until this military and diplomatic blank cheque is revoked, no amount of recognition, no matter how well-intentioned, will deliver peace.

What it will deliver is more blood, more displacement, and another generation radicalised by trauma and despair.

And now, Netanyahu prepares to unleash yet another offensive — this time against Gaza City itself. Right now, as we sit here in the relative safety of Adelaide, thousands of Palestinians are fleeing with whatever they can carry, clutching their children, leaving behind the ruins of their homes. This is not a strategic triumph. It is not the defeat of terrorism. It is the systematic destruction of an entire population’s capacity to live with dignity.

Gaza City has already been bombed into rubble; its hospitals lie in ruins, its people starved and broken. To order another assault in such circumstances is not self-defence — it is cruelty calculated to break a people’s spirit, to drive them from their land, and to ensure that the “Palestinian problem” is resolved by erasure rather than negotiation.

Since the beginning of Trump 47, only 8 months ago, the world has been witness to massive upheaval and significant change.

The world’s cockpit, the Middle East, has been set on fire like never before.

On October 7, 2023, Hamas struck southern Israel, not with primitive rockets or minor raids, as had been their pattern, but with armed militia men who stormed into Israel, killing approximately 1,200 Israeli citizens, injuring over 5,000 more and capturing 250 as hostages in what has been described as the worst massacre of Jews since World War II.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his right-wing colleagues in the Knesset decided that bold action was necessary.

Israel's revenge was not to be limited and piecemeal, but decisive, altering the balance of power in Israel's favour and neutering the threat posed by the Islamic Republic of Iran and its anti-Israel regional network once and for all.

A massive military campaign was waged against Hamas by the IDF in its Gaza strongholds.

Sadly, for those Palestinians who were neither Hamas supporters nor fighters, they became collateral damage.

Israeli government spokesmen & women defended the high Palestinian civilian death toll by arguing that to get to Hamas operatives, large swaths of Gaza's cities had to be eliminated owing to the hundreds of kilometres of tunnels under these cities that Hamas used as sanctuaries, command centres, logistical hubs and arms caches.

To many Israelis, shocked and outraged by the initial Hamas assault on October 7, and tired of the incessant penny packet Hamas attacks against Israel over the years, this seemed like a reasonable response.

Let's briefly look at the number of wars the Israelis and Palestinians have been involved in, as it is easy to forget the past conflicts when engaged in a contemporary one.

The Gaza War must be seen in the context of the longer history of bloodshed.

In the years immediately after the Oslo Accords (1993–1999), violence between Israelis and Palestinians remained intense but at comparatively lower levels. Roughly 250–300 Israelis were killed, largely in suicide bombings, shootings, and clashes. On the Palestinian side, about 1,000–1,200 people lost their lives in targeted killings and Israeli operations. Even in this relatively restrained period, the death toll was already unequal, with Palestinians dying at about four times the rate of Israelis.

The outbreak of the Second Intifada (2000–2005) marked a bloody turning point.

This was the deadliest era for Israelis since Oslo, with around 1,050 killed in suicide bombings and mass shootings. In response, the IDF mounted sweeping incursions and operations across the West Bank and Gaza, resulting in some 3,200–3,300 Palestinian deaths. The casualty ratio narrowed to roughly three Palestinians for every Israeli, but the ferocity of violence underscored how destabilising this uprising was for both sides.

As large-scale suicide bombings inside Israel declined, the dynamic shifted again.

Between 2006 and 2013 — the era of the Gaza blockade and wars in 2008–09 and 2012 — the human cost was disproportionately borne by Palestinians.

Some 300–350 Israelis were killed, compared to 3,500–4,000 Palestinians, widening the ratio to about 10–12 to one.

The 2014 Gaza War, known as Operation Protective Edge, was even more lopsided: 73 Israelis (67 soldiers and 6 civilians) lost their lives, while 2,251 Palestinians were killed, a ratio of 31 to one.

This was the deadliest single conflict since Oslo, until the events of 2023.

From 2015 to 2022, violence simmered at lower intensity, punctuated by spikes such as the “Knife Intifada,” the 2018 Gaza border protests, and the 2021 escalation. Over those years, 200–250 Israelis were killed compared with 2,000–2,500 Palestinians, again reflecting a casualty ratio of roughly 9–12 to one.

But everything changed on October 7, 2023, when Hamas launched its devastating assault into southern Israel.

About 1,200 Israeli civilians were killed that day, with another 700–800 soldiers killed in the ensuing war across Gaza and Lebanon, bringing Israeli losses to nearly 2,000.

In Gaza and the West Bank, however, the toll has been catastrophic: between 62,000 and 66,000 Palestinians killed in under two years. With a ratio of 31–34 Palestinians killed for every Israeli, this has become by far the deadliest period for Palestinians since 1948, underscoring the unprecedented scale of the current war.

Since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, approximately **3,900–4,000 Israelis** and between **75,000–79,000 Palestinians** have been killed in conflict. The ratio of Palestinian to Israeli deaths is roughly **19 to 1**, and in the period since October 7, 2023, alone, Palestinians have borne unprecedented losses—over **62,000** killed in Gaza and the West Bank.

To outside observers in both the Muslim world and elsewhere, the unrestrained nature of Netanyahu’s counter-attack against not just Hamas but what seemed an assault against the entire Gazan population was not just unreasonable but unjustified.

The state of Israel was collectively punishing Palestinians in Gaza for the sins committed by Hamas.

No man, woman, child or disabled Palestinian was spared the relentless IDF air and artillery strikes.

City blocks were and continue to be bombed by the IDF.

Of course, Israeli government spokespersons claimed that no Palestinian civilians were being deliberately targeted. That if they happen to be close to legitimate military targets after the IDF warned civilians to stay clear, the IDF could not be held to account.

To many Israelis, this is just and correct. After all, didn't the Gazans vote for Hamas in 2006? Hasn't the support for Hamas remained high throughout their rule among Palestinians in Gaza up until and including their October 7 attack on Israel after Israel's unilateral withdrawal of Jewish settlers from Gaza in 2005?

The problem with all of this is that in war, we strive for simplicity of communication.

We strive to paint ourselves as the good guys and our enemies as the bad guys. We heed no criticism of our actions, and yet we apply the blowtorch on the motivations of those we seek to portray as the diabolical, unhinged enemy.

In this sense, the Israel of today is typical of any other state caught up in war.

But is Israel a typical state?

Israel was a state founded on trauma.

The trauma of the Holocaust of European Jewry in the first instance, the trauma of its birth and survival in the Middle East in the second instance and of course, the trauma of its struggle for legitimacy in the third instance, while simultaneously undermining if not outright destroying any hope of legitimate Palestinian statehood.

Complicating all of this is the fact that modern Israel's politics is a heady witches' brew of secular and religious thought, with the spiritual component seeing Israel as the land of 'God's chosen people.' Whereas the old 20th-century wars against the nationalist Arab states in 1948, 1967, and 1973 were waged as secular wars by secular leaderships, in today's environment, things are very different.

Religion has been weaponised.

The religious component has been used and exploited by politicians like Benjamin Netanyahu to great effect within Israel.

The wars he has unleashed since 2023 are not so much secular wars for secular and limited aims and objectives; they are maximalist wars aimed at the establishment of Israel as a greater Jewish state, reclaiming the lands once promised to the Jewish people by God.

Hamas is also fighting a religious war, and its attack on Israel was one of suicidal fervour. Its charter has as its declared objective the end of Israel, which it sees as a religious duty. Because in Islam, there isn't a division between church and state like we are used to in the West. In Islam, religion is the foundation of politics and the law according to the Koran, or the word of God. When you pick a fight against any Muslim group, it rapidly becomes Jihad, a religious and physical struggle, or to put it more bluntly, a Holy War.

So, what do Western secular countries do with a state and a non-state actor locked in Holy War against each other?

The wisest course would be to keep your diplomacy behind closed doors and hope that common sense prevails. That both sides will see the advantage of de-escalation at some point, or, at least, tire of the killing.

But we have not reached that point yet.

Netanyahu has, as his near-term objective, planned an invasion of Gaza City, which we are now starting to see.

Having smashed up most of the urban landscape of Gaza, with most Gazans homeless and now starving, this latest order from Tel Aviv seems almost absurd.

What is to be gained from such a military act?

Will Hamas be defeated once and for all?

The militia cannot have that much fight left in them. Many arms caches must have been destroyed by now, and I would argue that much of Hamas's tunnel network as well. The fact that Hamas has not surrendered isn't because they have some secret weapons stash somewhere in the ruins of Gaza waiting to strike at the heart of the Jewish state. It is because in their minds, they are in a state of Holy War and failing in their fight against Israel is the equivalent of failing God.

What we are in fact seeing is a zero-sum game being played out. And while Hamas does not have the weapons to push back and defeat the IDF, it has something else. International public opinion.

The destruction and human suffering that we have been witness to in the aftermath of October 7 in Gaza have been terrible.

You do not have to be Muslim or Arab to sympathise with the suffering of Palestinian civilians. Palestinian community groups in the West, as well as secular Israelis and liberal Jews abroad, have joined in many anti-war protests around the world.

These are not self-hating Israelis or Jews. They are people exercising their democratic rights.

Even within Israel, the Middle East's only democracy, protesting Netanyahu's war against Hamas is not uncommon. It's just that the Western media doesn't make a big deal of it. Let's have a look at these protests for a moment.

According to **Al Jazeera** (mapping protests since October 7, 2023, through ~end August 2024), there have been **at least 1,240 demonstrations** across Israel calling for a ceasefire deal.

About **86%** of the protests were for ceasefire/hostage deals (i.e. anti-war or anti-Netanyahu in this context) rather than unrelated causes.

One major protest: **September 1, 2024** — over 700,000 people protested across Israel, including 550,000 in Tel Aviv, after the discovery of hostages killed in Gaza. That was one of the largest single anti-government / anti-war protests in Israel. On March 23, 2025, more than 100,000 Israelis took to the streets in a nationwide protest over the Gaza War.

More recent protests (2025) were also large and frequent, especially around key events. For example, in August 2025, tens of thousands demonstrated, and there was a “day of disruption” with hundreds of thousands participating in protest activity.

This is what you would expect in a vibrant democracy, even though the Netanyahu government and the Prime Minister’s allies remained unmoved by it all.

The Gaza war has not only reshaped the Middle East; it has also rekindled some of the darkest currents in Western societies.

Across Europe, North America, and Australia, legitimate outrage at the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza has too often bled into a wider, indiscriminate hostility toward Jewish communities.

Synagogues have been defaced, Jewish schools and businesses threatened, and Jewish students on university campuses intimidated.

While criticism of Israel’s government and its military conduct is both valid and necessary in open societies, the line between anti-Zionism and antisemitism has been dangerously blurred in public discourse.

This surge is being amplified by extremist movements. On the far right, old antisemitic tropes have been repackaged and attached to anti-war slogans.

On parts of the radical left, anger at Israel’s policies has been weaponised into broad claims about Jewish power and influence. The result has been a climate in which Jewish communities in the West once again feel vulnerable, caught between geopolitical battles abroad and scapegoating at home. The Gaza war has become not just a Middle Eastern tragedy but a catalyst for the revival of an ancient hatred.

And this is not helped by statements coming from Netanyahu defenders, such as the Israeli envoy to the UK, who recently accused Prime Minister Keir Starmer of **rewarding the new Nazis. Or Israel’s Permanent Representative to the UN, Danny Danon, who** dismissed recognition of Palestine efforts as a “circus.” This only delegitimises criticism of the Gaza war and raises public anger against Netanyahu and his supporters.

To appease the public outrage in the West at how Netanyahu is conducting and expanding his war into the Middle East, some key Western governments have now decided to

recognise Palestinian statehood. So far, Canada, Australia, Portugal and the UK have done so, with France and Saudi Arabia likely to follow.

This will have absolutely no impact on the conduct and duration of the war in Gaza.

It is a domestic ploy used to dampen down public protests. A fop to the masses, if you will.

Netanyahu has condemned these announcements recognising Palestine and has promised unspecified actions against the countries involved. Furthermore, Netanyahu has said: “there will be no Palestinian state west of the Jordan River.”

The one Western country that will never walk away from its commitments to Israel, the United States, has so far remained quiet.

This could be because of the Charlie Kirk funeral service. But Trump will say his peace, of that you can be sure.

As Prime Minister Netanyahu is on close terms with President Trump, it will not be a surprise if Trump backs Netanyahu and launches a series of punitive punishments against some, if not all, of those Western countries now claiming to support a Palestinian state.

And what will this recognition of Palestine mean for the Palestinians?
Netanyahu’s war against Hamas will continue in Gaza.

The trauma meted out to Palestinian families by the IDF will not ease up but will likely escalate further. And why not? Netanyahu has claimed that Israel is fighting for its existence.

Concerning that oft-forgotten part of Palestine, the West Bank, administered by the weak, incompetent and corrupt Palestinian Authority, a territory which has been carved up into Jewish-only areas patrolled by Jewish settlers with their own apocalyptic religious mindset, a further expansion of these settlements and displacement of local Palestinian communities is likely to continue.

As for the public proclamations in favour of Palestinian statehood. It is a case of too little, too late.

With Gaza smashed to pieces and the West Bank Palestinians being quietly displaced, whatever is left of ‘Palestine’ won’t be enough for a viable state.

Furthermore, who is going to fund such a state?

Postwar reconstruction will run into the tens of billions of dollars. And any such reconstruction will need the permission of Israel to happen. That is highly unlikely under current circumstances.

Widening his war to include Iran, the southern Lebanese militia Hezbollah, Syria, the Houthis of Yemen, and, most recently, Qatar, might roll back what Netanyahu sees as an existential

Iranian threat to Israel. Still, it is also something that may well come back to haunt Israel in the years to come.

Let's quickly recap the expanded war on Iran and its regional allies.

Since October 7, 2023, Israel's military operations have spread well beyond Gaza, opening multiple fronts that illustrate how deeply the war has destabilised the region. The first and most immediate front was Lebanon, where Hezbollah launched rocket and missile fire into northern Israel beginning on October 8. In response, Israel carried out sustained airstrikes on southern Lebanon. Hezbollah agreed to halt active hostilities as part of the U.S.- and France-brokered ceasefire with Israel, which took effect at **4:00 AM local time on November 27, 2024**.

This deal came after 14 months of cross-border fighting that started after the October 7, 2023, attacks.

The ceasefire required Hezbollah to stop firing rockets or otherwise engaging militarily across the border, and Israel to halt offensive strikes in southern Lebanon.

The agreement is structured around a "60-day truce," with a phased withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon and repositioning of Hezbollah fighters north of the Litani River. It also involved the deployment of about 5,000 soldiers from the Lebanese Armed Forces to the southern border areas to enforce the terms.

While the ceasefire is meant to suspend Hezbollah's military operations under the deal, loopholes remain. Both sides maintain the right to respond to perceived threats, and there have been accusations of violations.

At the same time, Israel intensified its activities in the West Bank.

Since October 11, 2023, raids, arrests, and armed clashes have become almost daily occurrences. The IDF has targeted Palestinian militias, claiming to prevent attacks against Israelis. Still, these operations have often overlapped with the Gaza campaign, spreading the violence across multiple parts of the occupied territories. The West Bank, long fragmented by Jewish settlements and Israeli checkpoints, has become an additional theatre of conflict, compounding the suffering of Palestinian civilians already facing displacement and repression.

Israel also expanded its campaign into Syria and Iran.

On December 8, 2024, the IDF struck Iranian and Hezbollah-linked sites in Syria, including a high-profile raid on the underground missile facility at Masyaf.

The conflict then broadened dramatically in June 2025 when Israel launched strikes inside Iran itself, targeting nuclear and missile infrastructure.

This marked one of the most dangerous escalations of the war, opening the possibility of a direct Israel–Iran confrontation rather than a conflict fought through proxies.

Further afield, Israel has clashed with the Houthis in Yemen, whose drones and missiles have targeted Israel and international shipping routes in the Red Sea since late 2023. Israel has responded with strikes on Houthi positions, treating them as part of the wider “Axis of Resistance.”

And most recently, in September 2025, Israel carried out an unprecedented airstrike in Doha, Qatar, targeting Hamas leaders.

This marked one of the first Israeli strikes in the Persian Gulf, underlining just how far the conflict has expanded geographically.

From Lebanon to Qatar, the Gaza war has metastasised into a regional conflagration, threatening to drag multiple states into open confrontation.

We have to remember that Israel is a small country with a Jewish population of 7.7 million people.

Its armed forces, equipped with some of the world's best military technology, have 169,000 regulars and over 400,000 reservists.

The vast majority of Israel’s ultra-Orthodox men are **exempt from compulsory military service**.

That’s about 13–15% of Israel’s population.

Open-ended and escalating war puts enormous strain on the IDF to sustain military operations. Reservists, taken out of the civilian workforce for extended periods of time, hurt the economy and, needless to say, cause significant disruptions to the family life of those in uniform.

And for those children in Gaza who have lost their parents, siblings, relatives and friends at the hands of the IDF they will never embrace Israel.

Their trauma at the receiving end of IDF ordnance will likely radicalise the next few generations of Palestinians.

The same is likely to be true of Hezbollah, Syria, the Houthis and Iran.

Postwar cooperation and collaboration between Israel and the Gulf states that signed up for Trump 45’s Abraham Accords may well choose to walk away from this agreement.

Israel is in danger of losing its only chance at full regional integration and the economic benefits that entail.

For the international community, eager to focus on other parts of the world, a stillborn, unsupported Palestinian state and the conflicts that are likely to ensue, at the behest of a population whose only real option now is to abandon their homes and become stateless people in other Arab countries, will have nothing but revenge on their minds. And they will act out that revenge from wherever they are based – in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon or Syria.

This will mean that any substantial shift of military resources to Eastern Europe or the Indo-Pacific will never be fully realised since the defence of Israel will remain the number one American and global preoccupation.

Netanyahu is not only embattled on the battlefield, but also in the courts and on the streets today. In November 2024, the International Criminal Court formally issued an arrest warrant for him and his defence minister, Yoav Gallant. The charges are stark: war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the use of starvation as a method of warfare in Gaza. In theory, every ICC member state is obliged to arrest them if they set foot on their soil. In practice, enforcement has been patchy, but the warrant places Netanyahu in a precarious position internationally — a sitting prime minister with the stigma of a wanted man.

Nor do his troubles end there.

In what has come to be known as “Qatargate,” a major scandal erupted over allegations that some of Netanyahu’s closest advisors were paid by representatives of Qatar to promote Qatari interests inside Israel.

Several aides have been arrested, and serious questions hang over whether lobbying, influence, and security interests were compromised at the very heart of government.

To make matters worse, in November 2024, reports surfaced that aides close to the prime minister had leaked classified documents related to war objectives. This “secret-document scandal” triggered arrests and an ongoing Shin Bet investigation, raising fears that the machinery of government itself had been corroded by political gamesmanship.

The political fallout from October 7 has only sharpened these pressures. Netanyahu faces relentless demands for an inquiry into the security failures that allowed the Hamas assault to succeed.

Critics accuse his government of ignoring warnings, mishandling intelligence, and failing to prepare.

The resignation of IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzl Halevi in early 2025 underscored the gravity of these failures and added to the calls for Netanyahu to accept accountability.

Instead, the prime minister has lashed out at his own security services.

His attempt to dismiss Shin Bet director Ronen Bar has become a legal and political battle, with the Supreme Court now involved. Bar himself has accused Netanyahu of trying to co-

opt intelligence agencies for political ends — from surveilling anti-government protesters to shielding Netanyahu's ongoing corruption trial.

All of this has eroded public trust to a dangerous degree.

Polls show Netanyahu's popularity collapsing after October 7, with Israelis viewing him as unprepared and mismanaging the crisis.

Protests led by hostage families, anti-government campaigners, and anti-war activists have filled Israel's streets in unprecedented numbers.

They demand accountability, transparency, and a state commission of inquiry into the failures of October 7.

Instead of projecting strength, Netanyahu now governs under a cloud of scandal, legal jeopardy, and declining legitimacy, a leader fighting wars abroad while losing the confidence of his people at home.

These polls make clear a deep tension in Israeli public opinion: while many still see Netanyahu as the leader for now, there is also overwhelming criticism of his performance and a strong desire for accountability. The fact that over **70%** of Israelis believe he should resign (immediately or after the war) indicates that the October 7 failures have eroded much of his legitimacy. At the same time, his political base has not fully deserted him — leadership matchups still favour him, and his party retains significant parliamentary strength in some polls.

The disconnect between Netanyahu's electoral strength and his public standing is particularly striking. His coalition may hold together in votes, but the mood among Israelis is not one of confidence. Many are angry. Many feel misled or unsafe. The demand for inquiries, for oversight, for someone to be held responsible for security lapses is urgent and persistent. These are not isolated complaints; they are widespread across political lines, though more intense among opposition parties, Arab citizens, and those on the centre or left.

Netanyahu's power is no longer being underpinned by broad popular consent, but by fear, momentum, and institutional inertia.

The swelling demand for resignation and responsibility reflects not just dissatisfaction, but disillusionment.

And unless the international community not only criticises but imposes real consequences — including pressure on those who fund or arm the IDF — this disillusionment may spiral into more profound instability.

Could things have been handled differently?

Perhaps.

But that would require a level of political commitment and skill at statecraft that we have not seen from our countries in generations.

All we can do now is wait this out.

Victory for Israel now isn't about reaching a negotiated settlement with Hamas.

That was recently tried, and the Hamas senior leadership was struck by the IDF in Qatar, a key American ally. Admittedly, the IDF strike happened as a consequence of an 08/09 Hamas attack in East Jerusalem at Ramot Junction, which killed 6 Israelis. But the question here is, had this Hamas attack not occurred, would Netanyahu have committed to a negotiation with Hamas?

With no Western country or group of countries likely to go up against Israel, besides rhetorically, and without having the appetite to go up against its supporter in the mercurial Trump administration, the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank is the likely conclusion to this war.
