

COMMENTARY

By LYNDA BEN-MENASHE

How Hamas colonised our national conversation



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Two years ago, in October 2023, I stood in Vergina, Greece, looking at “The Rape of Persephone”, a fresco that depicts a red-haired woman being carried off by Hades, ruler of Hell.

A week before, the whole world had watched dozens of Israeli women carried off by terrorists from Hamas hell. Women abducted bundled in blankets, like Amit Soussana, 40, who was held for 55 days. Others stolen on motorbikes, like Noa Argamani, 26, who was held for 245 days. Or forced into jeeps, like Na’ama Levy, 19, who was held for 477 days. And one red-haired woman cowering as she was led away shielding her two red-haired babies: Shiri Bibas, who was returned in a coffin after 505 days, her babies strangled by bare hands.

Last week in Tel Aviv’s Hostage Square, along with 400,000 other people, I stood in front of a TV screen and looked at the face of Inbar Haiman, 27, the last woman left out of 251 hostages taken. She too has now been returned in a coffin, after 740 days.

Women have always been the soft targets of conquerors and colonisers, because possessing, violating or impregnating them is so symbolic of total dominion.

The video of Naama Levy and four other bloodied young women taken captive on October 7 showed the terrorists threatening to kill them and complimenting their looks. They call the women sabaya, an Arabic term which was revived a decade ago by Islamic State, and which appeared ominously in the video’s Hebrew subtitles as “women who can become pregnant”.

Yazidi (Ezidi) women know what sabaya means. Last week, while watching testimony from an Ethiopian-Israeli October 7 survivor, one wrote to me: “It is the same thing that ISIS did to us, and seeing how people [in Australia] can support those criminals like Hamas it broke my heart ... as an Ezidi it makes me so angry and frustrated.”

Local Assyrian, Armenian, Coptic, Sudanese and Iranian women also understand what’s happening in the Middle East and Africa and what it means for the West. Dissident Iranian Sydney University academic Saba Vasefi wrote recently: “Some voices, under the banner of defending Palestinian rights, continue to endorse Hamas, an Iranian-funded proxy. Without thought or compunction they amplify the regime’s narrative ... framed by wilful blindness to state terror or distorted by Orientalist views.”

Unlike these Middle Eastern women, few Australians know that the name Hamas is an acronym for “Islamic Resistance Movement” and that its charter sets out a clear agenda of colonisation.

How many of the Australian justice warriors who've marched for ceasefires and the "decolonisation" of Palestine have read that charter, which asserts: "Initiatives, and so-called peaceful solutions and international conferences are in contradiction to the principles of the Islamic Resistance Movement ...[they] are all a waste of time and vain endeavours. There is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad."

Or its helpful explanation that "Jihad is not confined to the carrying of arms ... It is necessary that scientists, educators and teachers, information and media people, as well as the educated ... should take part in the operation ... The book, the article, the bulletin, the sermon, the thesis, the popular poem, the poetic ode, the song, the play and others ... these are among the requirements of ideological mobilisation."

Those whose understanding of colonialism comes from Wikipedia, which in 2023 was reportedly the 6th most visited website in Australia, would also be well advised to do some wider reading.

Because Wikipedia lists dozens of colonisers, including ancient Egyptians, Phoenicians, Greeks, and Romans; medieval Vikings and Crusaders; modern Europeans, and more lately Russians, Chinese and Zionists (oddly, since the re-establishment of Jewish sovereignty in the ancestral Jewish homeland is the only true example of decolonisation known to history).

But not a whisper about the Islamic project of conquest, subjugation, and coercive integration which began in the 7th century. Like most colonisers, Muslims also enriched the societies they conquered. Islam was a beacon of science, learning and enlightenment during the Golden Age of Spain.

But recently we've seen a resurrection by its many radical streams, including al-Qaeda, ISIS, Boko Haram and Hamas, of the original project, which offered people three choices: convert, pay a protection tax called the jizya, or die. Islamists target not only non-believers, but also other Muslims. Their morally inverted narrative around Israel/Palestine now pervades Western progressive spaces, mostly due to ignorance. There are none so blind as those who absolutely will not see.

To be fair to the merely ignorant, it's now becoming clear that Wikipedia itself has been colonised. As founder Larry Sanger wrote earlier this month: "It's been captured by anonymous editors who manipulate articles to fit their ideological biases." The US Anti-Defamation League published a report in March asserting at least 30 editors working in concert circumvent Wikipedia's policies to introduce antisemitic and anti-Zionist narratives, bias, and misinformation. It states "these edits have ramped up since the October 7 2023 Hamas attacks and include the systematic removal of citations to reputable sources and tandem voting to keep content critical of Israel, but remove coverage of Palestinian violence and terrorism."

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What this reflects is the decades-long, relentless and hugely successful colonisation of Western intellectual discourse. Certainly in Australia, white post-colonial guilt and the exploitation of that guilt drive today's national conversation through academia, media and the arts.

In local academia, we have activist educators infamously refusing to call Hamas a terrorist organisation, denying the sexual violence they perpetrated on October 7,

and cheering toddlers as they chant 'Intifada' on university campuses.

In local media, we have activist journalists broadcasting a steady stream of tropes about Jewish money and influence and wild blood libels about IDF organ harvesting and "genocide".

In the arts, we have taxpayer-funded poets spewing "Mate, yes, we actually do hate Australia" after protesting for Palestine on Anzac Day, and sharing on January 26 "The only day that will be celebrated in this colony is the day it burns".

It's noteworthy that when pro-Palestine leaders justify the massacres, rapes and abductions of October 7 as legitimate resistance against "settler colonialism", the logical conclusion is that they would justify the same against all non-Indigenous Australians, too.

Canadian human rights activist Yasmine Mohammed, who escaped from an abusive forced marriage to an al-Qaeda operative, wrote a book in 2019 with the instructive title 'Unveiled: How Western Liberals Empower Radical Islam'. It should be required reading for all Australian opinion leaders and decision-makers. So too the manifestos of all the Islamist groups operating in this country.

Hamas' charter makes crystal clear the global religious war that it and other offshoots of the Muslim Brotherhood are waging: "Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it ... Our struggle against the Jews is very great and very serious. It is a step that inevitably should be followed by other steps."

It is a truism that somehow still seems to be ignored that Israel is the vanguard of the West and what starts with the Jews never ends with the Jews. All Australians should be deeply worried about those "other steps," which Israeli hostage Eli Sharabi describes in his own book just released. Eli was held for 491 days, finding out on his release that his wife, two daughters and brother had all been murdered on October 7.

Of Yemenite-Jewish heritage, Eli speaks Arabic. He spoke often with his Hamas captors and relates, "They are brainwashed ... they know really, really little about what's around them. Every conversation ends by [them saying] they are going to come in the next year and in the day after that and the next day after that to finish their job [of October 7] on the Israelis on the Jews and then they expand that to there's no way but Islam in the world, so they're going to occupy Britain and United States and France and Germany. That's what they said in every conversation."

Let us pray in the name of all those massacred, raped and hostaged on October 7 that the world will ensure that Trump's peace plan holds and that all people, including Palestinians, will be spared the fate that Hamas has planned.

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