

# How propaganda masquerades as scholarship in the debate over Palestine

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**WORLDS INTO WORDS**

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Palestinian children react as they inspect the rubble and debris at the site of Israeli strikes the night before at the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip on March 23, 2025. (Photo by Eyad BABA / AFP)

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TO invoke the horrors of Nazism as a cudgel against Palestinian liberation is not merely poor scholarship; it is profound moral cowardice.

Recently, figures like Dr Micah Ben David Naziri have revived the dangerous trope of Palestinian resistance having “Nazi roots”.

Naziri adopts the trappings of scholarly authority – footnotes, citations, and dense historical references, but nowhere does he explicitly identify himself as a historian. Though his title and academic tone imply expertise, his omission of disciplinary alignment is telling.

True historians grapple with nuance and complexity; propagandists traffic in simplistic absolutes. Naziri is the latter, cherry-picking historical fragments to serve a narrative that conflates Palestinian aspirations with Nazism, an argument as ahistorical as it is morally reckless.

Such individuals resurrect the spectre of Hitler not to enlighten but to erase.

At a time when Israel’s occupation has been condemned as apartheid by leading human rights organisations, when Palestinian children are handcuffed in military courts and settlers torch olive groves with impunity, the narrative Naziri and his ilk propagate is grotesquely cynical.

Such distortions do not arise from ignorance – they are deliberate tools of dehumanisation, wielded to absolve an oppressive regime by painting its victims as heirs to fascism.

Let us be clear: the attempt to tether Palestinian resistance to Nazism is a deliberate perversion of history.

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Yes, Hajj Amin al-Husayni, the former Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, may have collaborated briefly with Nazi Germany. But to portray al-Husayni as representative of all Palestinian aspirations is as absurd as blaming all Jews for the extremism of the Stern Gang, a Zionist militia that also proposed an alliance with Hitler against the British.

Such selective equivalences are not serious analysis; they constitute intellectual arson, designed to incite rather than inform.

Al-Husayni's fleeting alliance with Nazism tells us nothing meaningful about contemporary Palestinian resistance, just as the Stern Gang's extremism reveals nothing essential about Jewish ethics.

To insist otherwise is to reduce entire peoples to their worst individuals, a logic that would condemn every nation on Earth. The deeper deceit lies in weaponising the Holocaust to justify the Nakba. Indeed, Jewish refugees sought safety after unspeakable genocide, but safety for some cannot justify the erasure of others.

When Zionist militias expelled 700,000 Palestinians in 1948 – destroying over 500 villages and committing massacres in Deir Yassin and Tantura – they did not act purely in self defense. They enacted a colonial project.

Even Benny Morris, the Israeli historian frequently cited to legitimise Israel's founding, acknowledges that this was ethnic cleansing. Morris controversially argued, "There are circumstances in history that justify ethnic cleansing", tacitly admitting the Nakba's brutality while rationalising it as a necessity.

But necessity for whom? For European Jewish refugees, perhaps. For Palestinians, it was catastrophe.

To reframe that violence as merely a “fight for survival” is to demand Palestinians forfeit their history so Israelis can sanitise theirs. It claims a monopoly on trauma, asserting implicitly, “Our suffering cancels yours”.

This is not academic debate – it is raw power masquerading as principle.

Consider the settlements: sprawling colonies on stolen land, guarded by soldiers, bisecting Palestinian towns with checkpoints.

Naziri’s defense of settlements as a return to “legally purchased” historical sites such as Gush Etzion ignores a fundamental truth: under international law, an occupier cannot seize land, period.

International courts have condemned these settlements for decades, yet apologists spin myths of ancient deeds, as if 19th-century land sales could nullify 21st-century war crimes.

This is not law; it is lore. The moral rot here is staggering.

In 2024, as Israel bombs neighbourhoods populated by refugees displaced since 1948 and blocks food trucks while lecturing the world about “human shields”, the continued invocation of Nazi comparisons cannot be mistaken for ignorance.

It is malice. It is watching a child dig through rubble for her parents and sneering, “Your grandfather admired Hitler”.



Palestinians fleeing Israeli bombardment drive vehicles carrying their belongings on a main axis in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip on March 25, 2025. (Photo by Bashar TALEB / AFP)

This exemplifies the moral bankruptcy of those who, faced with Palestinian suffering, cynically weaponise Jewish trauma to silence it.

The Nakba is not metaphorical. It is mass graves, inheritance laws crafted to strip refugees of property, and the reason Palestinians today need permits to pray in Jerusalem, while Brooklyn-born settlers vote in their place.

To dismiss this catastrophe as Arab “humiliation” over lost wars is to deny the humanity of millions. Imagine telling a Jewish Holocaust survivor that their trauma was mere embarrassment at defeat.

The Nakba is the grandmother in Ein el-Hilweh clutching a rusted key to her Haifa home, the Gaza poet writing about Jaffa’s oranges – fruit he has never



tasted and the unmarked graves in Deir Yassin, where paramilitaries slaughtered over a hundred Palestinians, including women and children.

The Nakba did not end in 1948 – it continues today.

When Israel denies Palestinians the right of return enshrined in UN Resolution 194 yet grants automatic citizenship to any Jew worldwide, it perpetuates displacement.

When it demolishes Bedouin villages to plant tourist forests or imprisons children like Ahmed Manasra for alleged stone-throwing at age 13, it repeats the Nakba's logic: land for Jews, not Arabs.

To erase this reality is to embrace what historian Patrick Wolfe called 'the logic of elimination', the belief Indigenous suffering must be invisible for colonial states to legitimise themselves. Israel's founders understood this explicitly.

David Ben-Gurion wrote in 1948: "We must do everything to ensure they never return". General Moshe Dayan later admitted: "Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages. You do not even know the names of these Arab villages, and I do not blame you because geography books no longer exist, not only do the books not exist, the Arab villages are not there either...There is not one single place built in this country that did not have a former Arab Population".

Settlements are not about historical continuity; they are about power.

Since 1967, Israel has transferred over 700,000 settlers into occupied territories, violating the Fourth Geneva Convention. Settlements are modern cities with malls, universities, and industrial zones, built on stolen land.

In East Jerusalem, settlers march through Palestinian neighbourhoods chanting "Death to Arabs", protected by soldiers.

Legal pretexts are farcical; even Israel's strongest ally, the United States, historically considered settlements illegal until a 2019 reversal under Trump, denounced by Amnesty International as a "gift to settlers".

Accusing Palestinians of Nazi sympathies is part of a broader tactic: conflating anti-Zionism with antisemitism to silence dissent. This tactic insults both Jews and Palestinians.

For Jews, it trivialises the Holocaust. For Palestinians, it denies the legitimacy of resistance.

Criticism of Israeli policy is not anti-semitism, a distinction affirmed even by the IHRA definition widely used to police speech. Yet figures like Naziri obscure this nuance, branding Palestinian rights advocacy as antisemitic – a stance that echoes the very tropes they claim to oppose.

Peace demands confronting uncomfortable truths: that Israel's founding involved ethnic cleansing, settlements constitute war crimes, and Palestinian resistance, though imperfect, is rooted in liberation, not fascism.

Trauma cannot be monopolised. To those parroting Naziri's distortions: history will judge you – not for your politics, but for your refusal to recognise Palestinian humanity.

The Nakba is no footnote; occupation is no mere debate.

No Hitler analogies can cleanse these facts. The truth is simple and undeniable: Palestine exists. Palestinians exist. No lie, however loud or cruel, will erase them.

In Khan Younis, a boy named Yusuf asked, "Why does the world hate us?" after losing his sister to an airstrike. His question haunts every distortion, every deflective analogy. It demands honesty, accountability, and justice.

We owe Yusuf – and all Palestinian children – more than lies.

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