



By Jan Kapusnak [i](#)

Summary:

- Comparing Israel to Nazi Germany is not legitimate criticism but a modern form of antisemitism. Holocaust inversion recasts Israelis as Nazis and Palestinians as Jews, distorting history and trivializing the Holocaust.
- Claims of Israeli “genocide” are legally and morally false. Israel is fighting Hamas, not seeking to destroy the Palestinian people, and civilian casualties are not proof of genocidal intent.
- Hamas uses civilian suffering, media imagery, and propaganda to portray Israel as absolute evil and gain moral advantage in an asymmetrical war.
- Criticism of Israeli policy is legitimate, but Nazi analogies cross into demonization. Jews are being judged by standards applied to no other people or state.
- This rhetoric reflects an older pattern in new form: antisemitism adapts, Israel becomes “the Jew among the nations,” and Holocaust inversion also helps relativize Europe’s historical guilt.
- These comparisons do not advance peace or understanding. They corrupt historical memory, degrade public language, and recycle antisemitism in modern terms.



The Nazification of Israel: Antisemitism in Its Most Perverse Form

Since Hamas's assault on Israel, antisemitic distortions of history and Holocaust relativization have become increasingly common all around the world. Israel is accused of treating Palestinians as Nazi Germany treated the Jews. Gaza is described as the Auschwitz of the twenty-first century, Israeli leaders are compared to Adolf Hitler, the Star of David is equated with the swastika, and the language of "genocide" is used as a political slogan against the Jewish state.

These claims are not merely exaggerated. They are grotesque falsehoods and one of the clearest contemporary forms of antisemitism.

In academic terms, this phenomenon is known as "Holocaust inversion": Israelis are cast as the new Nazis, Palestinians as the new Jews. This distorts both history and morality. It turns the Holocaust into a rhetorical weapon against the Jewish state and suggests that Jews have somehow become perpetrators of the very crime once committed against them.

Such comparisons are obscene. Nazi Germany was a genocidal regime that sought the industrial annihilation of an entire people. Israel, by contrast, is a democracy engaged in a war against terrorist organizations that openly seek its destruction. To equate the two is not moral seriousness. It is historical falsification.

Yet this rhetoric has spread far beyond extremist fringes. It has surfaced at the United Nations, in European parliaments, on university campuses, and on the streets of Western capitals. At anti-Israel demonstrations, Israeli leaders are routinely depicted with swastikas and the Star of David is presented as a Nazi symbol. The purpose is clear: not to criticize particular Israeli policies, but to place Israel outside the boundaries of moral legitimacy altogether.

That is precisely what makes Holocaust inversion so dangerous. It creates a false moral equivalence between a state defending itself against terrorism and a regime that industrialized mass murder. It trivializes the uniquely genocidal character of Nazism while demonizing Jews. The Holocaust is stripped of its historical specificity and reduced to a political insult.

The roots of this rhetoric are not new. The nazification of Israel can be traced back to Soviet propaganda and anti-Zionist campaigns of the 1970s. It reappeared with force at the 2001 UN Conference against Racism in Durban, where Israel was accused of "apartheid" and "genocide" while material portraying Israelis as Nazis circulated freely. Under the banner of anti-racism, antisemitic demonization was



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normalized.

The result is a collapse of historical judgment. The Holocaust — the systematic attempt to exterminate the Jewish people — is casually equated with a territorial and military conflict, however tragic and violent that conflict may be. There is no serious factual or historical basis for such a comparison. Yet repetition has given the lie cultural power. Once every war becomes “genocide” and every enemy becomes “Hitler,” the words themselves lose meaning.

This abuse of language matters because genocide is not a metaphor. Under international law, it has a specific meaning. The 1948 Genocide Convention requires intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group as such. That standard does not fit Israeli military operations in Gaza. Israel is fighting Hamas and other terrorist groups, not seeking the extermination of the Palestinian people.

Civilian casualties, however tragic, are not proof of genocide. They are the terrible consequence of warfare against an enemy that systematically embeds itself among civilians. In genocide, civilians are targeted because of who they are. In war against Hamas, civilians are not the intended target, even if they are caught in the violence. Ignoring that difference collapses all categories of war, atrocity, and intent into propaganda.

The Gaza conflict is a brutal example of asymmetrical warfare, but not in the simplistic sense often presented in Western discourse, where “powerless Palestinians” confront an all-powerful Israel. Israel does possess military superiority in conventional terms: advanced weapons, intelligence capabilities, missile defense, and air power. But military superiority does not automatically produce narrative superiority.

Hamas, though weaker militarily, has developed another form of power. It understands that images of destruction and high casualty figures can shape international opinion more effectively than battlefield achievements. In this sense, propaganda is not secondary to its strategy. It is central to it.

That is why the language of “genocide” and Nazi analogy is so important to Hamas and to those who echo its framing abroad. It transforms a war launched and sustained by a terrorist movement into a morality play in which Israel becomes absolute evil. The stronger military power is recast as the ultimate criminal,



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regardless of intent, context, or the conduct of the other side.

This is the paradox of asymmetrical conflict: the weaker side can enjoy disproportionate influence over global opinion precisely because weakness is mistaken for innocence. Hamas has repeatedly used the humanitarian crisis it helps create to present itself as the victim of extermination. Large parts of Western media and politics then reinforce this picture, often stripping events of military context and reducing them to emotionally charged images and slogans.

Criticism of Israeli policy is, of course, legitimate, just as criticism of any democratic state is legitimate. But comparing Israel to Nazi Germany crosses a clear line. The IHRA definition of antisemitism rightly identifies such comparisons as antisemitic because they are not arguments but instruments of demonization.

The claim that “the victims became oppressors” lies at the heart of this rhetoric. On the surface, it sounds like a harsh moral judgment. In reality, it is a cynical inversion designed to delegitimize Israel by presenting Jews as uniquely corrupted by their own history. The Holocaust is turned into a test that Jews are permanently accused of failing.

That demand is itself dehumanizing. The Holocaust was not a moral curriculum for Jews. Auschwitz was not a school. The extermination of European Jewry was not a lesson meant to produce morally superior descendants. It was an attempt to annihilate an entire people. To suggest that Jews, because of that history, must now live under impossible moral expectations or else be compared to their murderers is grotesque. They are expected not merely to act justly, but to prove that they have “learned” from their victimhood. If they fail in the eyes of their critics, they are recast as the new embodiment of evil.

This is not accidental exaggeration. It fits a long historical pattern. Antisemitism has always adapted to the dominant language of its age. In earlier centuries, Jews were accused of killing Christ or of ritual murder. In the nineteenth century, they were blamed for capitalism, revolution, and social decay. In the twentieth century, Nazi racial ideology depicted them as a biological threat. After 1945, openly antisemitic language became less acceptable in Europe and much of the West. But the hatred did not disappear. It changed form.

The accusation that Israel is doing to the Palestinians “the same” thing the Nazis did to the Jews serves another purpose, especially in Europe. Holocaust inversion



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can function as a way of lightening Europe's own burden of guilt. If Israelis can be portrayed as Nazis, then the singularity of Europe's crime begins to blur. The Holocaust appears less unique, less morally shattering, less defining. The burden of shame shifts away from Europe and toward Israel.

This mechanism is visible in slogans such as "Free Gaza from German guilt." Behind such rhetoric lies a profound moral evasion. If Israelis are cast as perpetrators equivalent to the Nazis, then Europe's failure to save the Jews appears less exceptional and less damning. The comparison does not merely attack Israel. It also helps relativize European culpability.

At the same time, Holocaust inversion assigns collective guilt to Jews. It implies that Jews, as a people, once suffered and now inflict suffering in turn. The Jewish state is condemned not only for specific policies, but as inherently corrupted and morally suspect. In older forms of antisemitism, Jews were demonized as conspirators or poisoners. In the new form, they are demonized as Nazis.

The memory of the Holocaust must not be turned into a political weapon against the Jewish state. Equating Israel with Nazi Germany is not principled criticism. It is historical falsehood, moral obscenity, and one of the clearest forms of contemporary antisemitism.

Never again means never again – including when antisemitism reappears in the language of anti-Zionism.

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