

Scholars Circle Resource Guide

Accusations of Genocide: Assessing Israel's Right to Self-Defense



DR. NORMAN J.W. GODA

Leading scholar on the Holocaust, war crimes, and 20th-century diplomacy

About Dr. Norman J.W. Goda

Dr. Norman J.W. Goda is the Norman and Irma Braman Professor of Holocaust Studies at the University of Florida. He specializes in the history of the Holocaust, war crimes trials, and twentieth century diplomacy. He is the author, co-author, or editor of ten books including: *Tales from Spandau: Nazi Criminals and the Cold War* (2007); *The Holocaust: Europe, the World, and the Jews* (2013); *US Intelligence and the Nazis* (2005) and *Rethinking Holocaust Justice: Essays Across Disciplines* (2018), as well as two books on the early history of Israel. Since October 7, he has worked on the history and argumentation of genocide accusations made against Israel.



Contact Dr. Norman J.W. Goda
Email: goda@ufl.edu

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chaimitzvah.org

Common Q&A's

Did genocide accusations against Israel begin with the 2023-25 war with Hamas?

No. There were efforts from 1946 to 1948 to write the UN Genocide Convention in such a way as to implicate the Israelis, even before there was a Jewish State. Genocide charges were made by numerous states in the UN from the moment the UN gave the Palestine Liberation Organization observer status, and they continued into the 1982 Israeli war in Lebanon. Many tried to make genocide accusations from the moment of the Israeli blockade of Gaza after the takeover of that region by Hamas in 2007.

On what are the genocide accusations based?

Today's accusations are based partly on a certain reading of the war with Hamas whereby incriminating evidence is often falsified and exculpatory evidence is often ignored. It also based on academic theories that have nothing to do with the legalities of the Genocide Convention. Chief among these is settler-colonial theory by which the settlement of westerners in a given region inevitably means the slow and steady genocide of the indigenous peoples there. This theory ignores actual historical developments.

Do experts not agree that Israel is committing genocide?

Current narratives in the media point to a scholarly consensus, but this consensus simply does not exist. Many "experts" who have labelled Israel's war in Gaza a genocide are not experts at all; academic organizations devoted to the study of genocide have misrepresented the views of their members, and UN "experts" are often charlatans who have an anti-Israel political agenda rather than serious expertise. In the meantime, there are many scholars who do not view the war in Gaza as a genocide.

Key Takeaways

- ☑ Since the writing of the UN Genocide Convention in 1948, Israel has been accused more than any other country of that crime.
- ☑ Current genocide accusations against Israel depend often on "alternative" definitions of genocide.
- ☑ Historically, the charge of genocide has been used against Israel in order to justify terror operations by the Palestine Liberation Organization and by Hamas.
- ☑ The genocide accusation has often been based on old antisemitic tropes such as those holding that the Jews gleefully murder innocents.
- ☑ Many of the experts who argue that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza are not, in fact, experts in either genocide or the law concerning it.

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