

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## Mythbusting the Israel-Hamas War

By Yonatan  
Hambourger and  
Tzali Reicher

**Myth 1: Israel exists on the land of the State of Palestine.**

There has never been an independent state of Palestine that the Jewish people usurped.

Israel, the scientifically and biblically undisputed ancestral homeland of the Jewish people until their violent exile 2,000 years ago, was occupied by the Ottomans and British for 500 years before the re-establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. During this time the land was continually inhabited by indigenous Jews who weren't exiled, and various disjointed clans of Arabs hailing originally from Egypt and Transjordan, who never claimed any state-like ownership or historical relationship to the land.

Once Israel agreed to the United Nations partition plan of 1947 and accepted a sliver of their ancient land for a state, five neighboring Arab countries launched a war one day after Israel's rebirth in May of 1948. Miraculously, Israel won the battle, but lost East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza to the marauding invaders for the ensuing 19 years.

For those nearly two decades under Jordanian and Egyptian control, there were no calls for an independent state of Palestine in the region, yet as soon as Israel regained access to the historically Jewish areas during the Six-Day War of 1967, the cause of Palestinian nationalism was reborn, with the genocidal rallying cry "from the (Jordan) river to the (Mediterranean) sea, Palestine will be free"; in other words, no Israel anywhere.

Despite all the disinformation spread in the five decades since, there has never been a State of Palestine with any government or history on the land of Israel. Instead, the history of Palestine is a legacy of the ancient and brutal colonization Romans perpetuated on Israel millennia ago, that has been misappropriated by many who wish to do the same today.

**Myth 2: Israel is an apartheid state.**

Israel is a democratic country with Palestinian and Israeli-Arab members of parliament, Arab justices on the Supreme Court, a judicial system that charges those convicted of crimes regardless of faith or station, and the high quality of life and income for all Arabs (especially when compared to neighboring countries). Israel cannot be called an apartheid state. Those who do because of the measures Israel is forced to employ to protect its civilians from terrorist activity are peddling misinformation, and a disservice to those that truly suffered under real apartheid regimes.

**Myth 3: Israel occupies Gaza.**

There is no territorial dispute between Gaza and Israel and the borders are recognized by the U.N. Israel unilaterally and completely withdrew not only its military presence from Gaza in 2005, but the thousands of Jewish people that lived there as well, to give the Palestinians the opportunity to self-govern and grow a society for themselves. But the citizens of Gaza promptly elected Hamas which proceeded to embed tens of thousands of missile-launching pads and military installations within highly concentrated urban areas and cynically used its own citizens as human shields for thousands of rockets and terror attacks into Israel for the next 18 years.

October 7 proved why Israel needs to maintain air and maritime control of Gaza, to ensure even more weapons and tools to attack Israel aren't smuggled into the trigger-happy arms of Hamas. But even as Israel faces calls that this is still an occupation (it's not), no one bothers to call out or expect any assistance from Egypt, which maintains a much more hardline stance against the Palestinian people along their own shared border.

**Myth 4: Gaza is the most densely populated area on Earth, and an open-air concentration camp.**

Encouraged by extremist leaders and facilitated by massive United Nations funding, millions of Palestinians have been incentivized to adopt refugee status, and live in overcrowded but permanent cities, mischaracterized as "refugee camps."

Many generations live with each other, partly because of the density, but also for cultural reasons, while the wide boulevards, plentiful groceries, high-end luxury stores, and beautiful beach resorts that filled Gaza pre-war disprove the notion that Gaza was ever anything remotely comparable to a concentration camp.

Additionally, Palestinians have an average life expectancy of 75 years, tenth out of 22 Arab countries, with the third lowest infant mortality rate in the Arab world, highlighting its high level of health care. Palestine was named the third happiest Arab country and the 30th happiest in the world in a recent survey and is one of the largest recipients of international aid in the world. All this data significantly undermines the shallow and uninformed talking points many employ when discussing this conflict.

**Myth 5: Israel is withholding aid, starving Gaza, and indiscriminately bombing civilians.**

Never has any country in history, when defending its land after an invasion and massacre, provided its enemy's population with food and resources. Never before has a country routinely worked and engaged with a hostile enemy, warning them where they were going to attack and when, to ensure minimal civilian harm.

Hundreds of trucks flood into Gaza every day, supplying food and aid to a population that participated in Hamas' brutal assault in Israel, all facilitated by the very same country they attacked. While claiming for months that famine is looming, the price of food in Gaza has dropped faster than a rock, as supply far outpaces demand. Israel has lost over 500 soldiers in this war, as they proceed house by house in Gaza to eliminate Hamas terrorists, rather than indiscriminately harnessing its world-leading air force to strike Hamas without any danger to Israeli lives.

Feel free to share any misconceptions you've heard about Israel, Palestine, and the ongoing war, and we'll look to address those in upcoming weeks! You can reach us at y@tasteoftorah.org. We love your feedback!

Yonatan Hambourger is a rabbi with Chabad of Georgia. Tzali Reicher is a rabbi and writer currently based in Florida.



**Echos from Sinai**  
"Torah for Everyone"  
Rabbi  
Yonatan  
Hambourger



Joel Heller

## Blooming Trees

Oftentimes when we talk about pollinator plants we think of annual flowers or shrubs that produce a lot of blooms, but if you have the space there are some trees that have spectacular blooms and are beneficial to pollinators. A lot of these trees bloom early in the year, which is a good thing. Many of the other pollinator plants are not flowering yet early in the spring and these trees provide a crucial food source for our pollinators.

Let's start with poplar trees. They are not always thought of as pollinator plants, but they contain a lot of nectar and pollen. The blooms are high up in the tree. They also have green petals with an orange band. This makes the flowers blend in with the rest of the tree and hard to see. Poplars are usually among the first hardwoods to start growing after an area has been cleared. Because of this you'll sometimes see a lot of them growing together. Some people don't care for them, because they are so abundant, but don't forget about their value to pollinators.

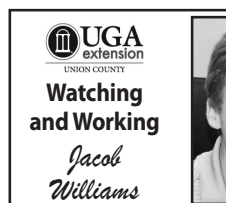
Dogwoods are very common, but there are several different species of them. *Cornus florida* is one of our native dogwoods. The wild ones tend to have smaller blooms than cultivars you buy commercially. Kousa dogwoods have large attractive flowers, and they tend to bloom a bit later than our native dogwoods. Silky dogwood is a beautiful native dogwood that has small blooms, but in large clusters. They also make great trees for planting along streambank or wet spots because they like wet soil. You may hear old timers talk about dogwood winter. This refers to when we have a cold snap while dogwoods are blooming. Blackberry winter comes after dogwood winter, if you have a cold snap while blackberries are blooming.

Redbuds are another common flowering tree. Their blooms are a bit more lavender than red in my opinion. I think that redbuds blooming in conjunction with dogwoods are beautiful. The parking lot at the Mountain Fairgrounds are a great example of that. Some people don't like redbuds because they do tend to drop a lot of branches. But when they are in full bloom you can hear the tree buzzing with bees.

Black Cherry is our wild cherry tree. These blooms are small and white. They produce small fruit in the summer that wildlife can use, but they are so small they are not great for human consumption. It is a host plant for the tiger swallowtail, which is our Georgia state butterfly.

American fringetree is not nearly as common as any of these other trees but it is one of my favorites. The flowers have long lace like petals. This tree does have male and female plants. Both male and female have flowers, but the males tend to be showier. When the tree is in full bloom the white flowers almost look like little clouds caught in the tree. They are not large trees, as they don't grow more than 20 feet. There is also a Chinese fringetree that looks very similar.

If you have questions about blooming trees contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.



**UGA extension**  
UNION COUNTY  
**Watching and Working**  
Jacob Williams

## Artificial Intelligence

We're traveling today, but I'll take a moment to share with you one of the many hurdles we face in our tech-laden society when it comes to getting out the door in a timely fashion.

I think Artificial Intelligence has been with us longer than anyone knew. Consider your printer. It knows when you need to print something in a hurry and it resents being rushed. It has evolved a variety of ways to sabotage your efforts.

For example, if you have offended your printer, even though you just loaded paper yesterday, suddenly it pretends that you're out of paper. It was there when you clicked "print," but now it's gone. Where did it go?

So you remove the paper you can see and reinsert it, and the printer tells you you're still out of paper. You repeat this process several times and tap on the printer impatiently. Still "out of paper." You attempt to shutdown and restart the printer, so the printer, which always takes 10 seconds to power down, suddenly begins to flash and refuses to shut down. So you unplug the power.

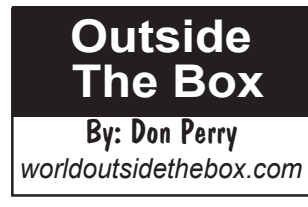
The printer boots back up, and with flashing lights and begins to print six other print jobs that you thought were completed and had long forgotten.

The computer plays dumb and shows no print jobs in the queue at all. By the time the printer finishes every ghost print job from the spool, plus a dozen pages with a single letter printed on each, you really are out of paper.

You load more paper, start the print job again, and windows tell you that you're out of ink. Ten minutes later you've filled up the ink reservoir and you're ready to start again. That's when you get a paper jam. Yes, now the printer sees the paper. There must be paper for a paper jam to occur, right?

All of this bother is because your printer is now a sentient being. It has feelings, and it is easily offended. You must approach such a printer respectfully. Be careful not to misgender it. Ask it nicely that, if it's not too busy, would it mind printing a page or two. Remain calm. Don't make any sudden movements or give any indication that you are under a deadline. Under no circumstances mention out loud that you're planning on going somewhere soon.

Start the print job and yawn, stretch your arms and lean back in the chair. Leave the room and get a cup of coffee. If you're lucky, have plenty of paper and ink, and haven't somehow offended the Windows operating system as well, you may return to find your print job completed, thought it overshot the tray and wedged itself behind the desk.



**Outside The Box**  
By: Don Perry  
worldoutsidethebox.com

## Get A Warrant

Did you know that the federal government can spy on U.S. citizens without a warrant?



United States Congressman  
Representative Andrew Clyde

Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) authorizes the intelligence community to collect and analyze electronic communications of non-citizens outside of the United States. However, data and communications of American citizens are often captured during this process. This warrantless surveillance has been happening for decades, allowing FISA to become ripe for abuse.

In fact, the FBI improperly used FISA authorities more than 278,000 times in 2021 alone to spy on Americans - including January 6th protesters, political donors, and even a U.S. Congressman.

Notably, FISA is also the same law the FBI abused to illegally spy on President Trump's 2016 campaign, triggering the sham Russia collusion scandal.

Clearly, Congress must protect Americans' Fourth Amendment rights and eliminate the intelligence community's corruption by prohibiting unconstitutional, warrantless surveillance of U.S. citizens before Section 702 is reauthorized this month.

Thankfully, my conservative colleagues and I are fighting to do just that.

Last week, the House was expected to consider legislation to reauthorize the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. Given the intelligence community's nefarious motives and shameless scare tactics, some lawmakers may attempt to secretly craft legislation behind closed doors and defeat commonsense reforms. Yet, as with any bill, it's imperative that members openly debate and vote on both bill text and amendments.

My conservative colleagues and I are fighting for a transparent process in order to ensure FISA reauthorization is handled properly and lawfully. Please know that I refuse to support any measure that fails to include necessary reforms - such as requiring the federal government to obtain a warrant for all U.S. person searches.

After all, the Fourth Amendment is not a suggestion; it is the law of the land.

The Towns County Herald is an independent and non-partisan publication. As such, third-party views contained herein are not necessarily the opinions or positions of this newspaper, e.g. advertising, press releases, editorial content, perspectives expressed in articles covering local events, etc.

## Letters To The Editor

**Got Mail?**

**Dear Editor,**  
If you are one of the many in our area having trouble getting your U.S. mail on time like I am, I suggest you call our State Representative Stan Gunter. His office number in Atlanta is 404-656-5125.

**Joan Moody**

## Hiawassee Brew's Best Beer

**Dear Editor,**  
Movers & Shakers is known for letting the community know what is happening in the local mountain area. Well, what is happening in Hiawassee is that Hiawassee Brew, located at 616 S. Main Street in Hiawassee, is selling a premium pilsner and donating to Animal Rescue Financial Support (ARFS) at the same time.

I tried the new ARFS beer last week, and it is truly the best beer I have ever had. With every purchase of an ARFS beer, Hiawassee Brew will donate 50 cents to help needy animals in Towns, Clay, Cherokee, and Union counties.

ARFS especially helps animals that need medical care, but their owners cannot afford the vet expenses. If you are not familiar with Animal Rescue Financial Support, you need to check out its website at arfs-inc.org.

And if you haven't tried the very exceptional ARFS beer, you need to head to Hiawassee Brew and ask for an "ARFS beer." Purchasing an ARFS beer is a win-win for both you and for homeless, hungry and hurting animals.

**William "Scotty" Scott**  
**Movers & Shakers**

## Towns County Community Calendar

<b>First Monday of each month:</b> School Board... HS/MS Media Center	6:45 pm
<b>Every Tuesday:</b> Storytime for Children... TC Library	10:30 am
<b>First Tuesday of each month:</b> Hiaw. City Council... City Hall YH City Council... YH City Hall	6 pm 6:30 pm
<b>Second Wednesday of each month:</b> Board of Elections... Elections Office	4 pm
<b>Third Monday of each month:</b> Planning Commission... Temporary Courthouse	6 pm
<b>Third Tuesday of each month:</b> Commissioner's Mtg... Courthouse City of Young Harris Planning Commission... Meeting Room in City Hall TC Water Authority Board Meeting	5:30 pm 5 pm 6 pm

## Guest Columns

From time to time, people in the community have a grand slant on an issue that would make a great guest editorial. Those who feel they have an issue of great importance should call our editor and talk with him about the idea. Others have a strong opinion after reading one of the many columns that appear throughout the paper. If so, please write. Please remember that publication of submitted editorials is not guaranteed.

## Towns County Herald

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