

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Don't Trust The Experts...

Don't Trust The "Experts" On the Israel-Hamas War
By Yonatan Hambourger

Echos from Sinai
"Torah for Everyone"
Rabbi Yonatan Hambourger



The flagrant misrepresentation of facts as well as outright lies against Israel, spread by many in the media, as well as in "prestigious" academic journals, are so pervasive that they are seldomly called-out. My purpose herein is to highlight two such lies currently making the rounds:

There was a confrontation last week in the State Department briefing room that highlighted the contentious differences in how Israel and Palestine are addressed.

Sam Husseini, a progressive activist who often masquerades as a reporter to intimidate public officials on his personal agenda items, brought up The Lancet's controversial report estimating that the casualties in the Israel-Hamas War could be as high as 186,000 during a briefing with State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller. When Miller declined to comment on the specific number, stating that all lives lost were tragic, Husseini provocatively and offensively accused Miller of smirking while discussing Palestinian victims. The accusation took Miller by surprise, prompting him to quickly recognize the nature of the interaction and move on to the next topic of conversation.

Sure, the whole episode was a ridiculous pre-planned attention-seeking ploy by Husseini to further stir resentment against the Biden Administration for not being overtly pro-Hamas, but it afforded the world the opportunity to see how supposedly objective institutions and fact checkers have been hijacked and misused as weapons by propagandists and pro-terror apologists against Israel.

To begin with the newest blood libel against Israel: If one was to believe the Hamas-run Gaza Ministry of Health's numbers, by war 19, 2024, 37,396 deaths resulted from the Israel-Hamas war that began in October 2023.

Before we continue, it is important to note that Hamas doesn't differentiate between terror operatives and civilians, counting them all as casualties in the same category to inflate the number for propaganda purposes. Additionally, multiple examinations of the statistics shared by Hamas and taken for granted as fact around the world have revealed them to be scientifically impossible, with an unnaturally consistent increase that suggests fabrication and manipulation. Their claim that 70% of casualties are women and children is inconsistent with previous conflicts and statistical expectations, and contrary to documented evidence. In June, The Associated Press released a report undercutting its own parroting of Hamas' claim that more than two-thirds of the Palestinian casualties in Gaza have been women and children, saying far less civilians than Hamas claimed are likely to have been killed.

Knowing all this, The Lancet published a report in July based on the June 19 casualty figures published by Hamas mouthpieces, saying that on top of the 37,396 deaths they accepted as fact, the total death toll could plausibly reach up to 186,000 (and growing day by day) due to the bodies missing under the rubble and deaths caused indirectly by war (starvation, interruption in accessibility to healthcare providers, etc.). This is not science. It is propaganda created specifically to be laundered by once-credible organizations, spread by complicit media outlets, and shared further to poison the discourse around Israel.

The Lancet didn't have the ability to independently verify the death count, instead choosing to take a literal terror organization's word for it. They then constructed a fantastical and totally hypothetical report based on complete guesswork that landed them with the perfectly right exaggerated number to have another tool with which to besmirch Israel.

The Lancet is not the only organization to expose themselves as either outright antisemitic, credulous, and gullible, or willfully complicit in seeking to harm the world's only Jewish state over the past nine months.

For months, the World Food Programme (WFP) of the United Nations – which has a long history of antisemitism and antagonism towards Israel – claimed Gaza was being starved by Israel and was in a full-blown famine. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres led the international outrage and incitement against Israel, while EU Foreign Policy Chief and noted antisemite Josep Borrell said, "Israel is provoking famine." The New York Times, The Washington Post, and many "venerable" media outlets across the world dutifully repeated the claim.

Obviously, they were lying. In its report published on June 4, the UN's Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (ICP) concluded that famine was no longer "plausible" and had no "supporting evidence." The UN admitted that there had been only 32 deaths in Gaza from malnutrition, 28 of which were among children under 5 years old. Most certainly tragic, but hardly the famine that was being claimed. Despite this, neither the UN, the ICJ, NGOs, nor media outlets that spread these claims have admitted any error. The report concluded that the food supply to Gaza had actually increased in recent months, with Israel continuing its unprecedented practice of facilitating aid to an enemy population, despite knowing that Hamas would hijack most of it.

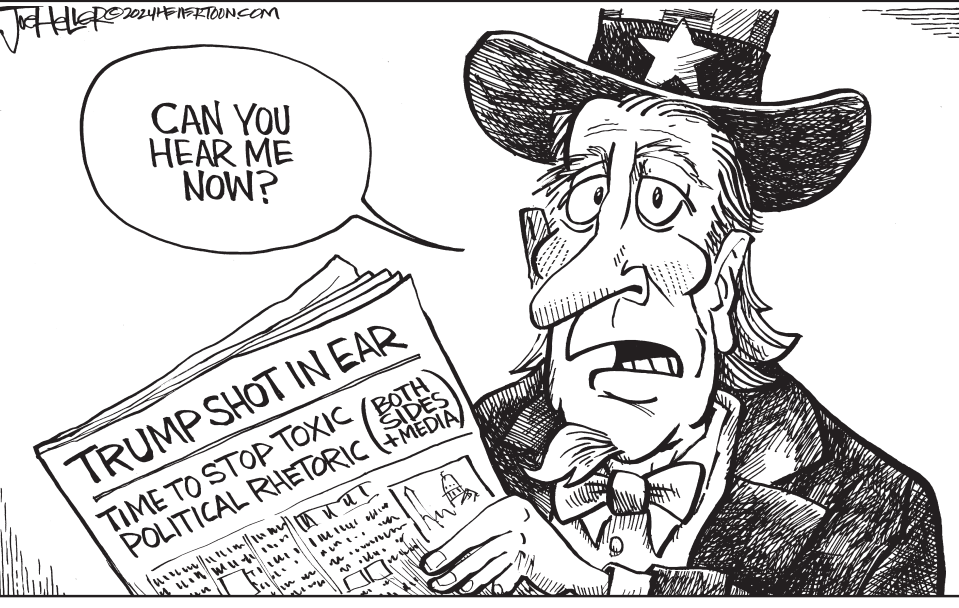
These are only two examples of the bias and lies Israel faces in its daily battles against "humanitarian" and "objective" organizations that only seek to further fan the flames of hate against Israel in support of an internationally recognized terror organization.

Israel has been accused of deliberately targeting civilians in Rafah, Gaza (they didn't, Israel hit their target but Hamas had stored explosives in a civilians area that led to the deaths of their own supporters), targeting aid workers (their trucks had been purposely placed in the crosshairs by Hamas in a successful bid to set them as bait and cause an international furor), and killing 500 people in a hospital in a strike at the beginning of the conflict (Hamas misfired a rocket aimed for Israel and hit the back of the hospital, killing around and at most 50 of their own citizenry).

If the last decade didn't cause you to already mistrust the supposed experts, their own efforts to tarnish and destroy their own credibility during this war ought to do it. The more we push back, speak up, and expose their bias and complicity, the sooner the world can move forward and build new institutions free from hatred, antisemitism, and division that promote peace, connection, and truth among all people.

I would love to hear your comments. You can reach me at y@tasteoftorah.org.

Yonatan Hambourger is a rabbi and writer serving communities throughout the regional South.



I Am Not On Vacation

What did you do during that long holiday weekend?"

"We stayed home," the young woman said with a laugh. "It's not just us then," I replied, and she said, "No, a lot of our friends do the same now. It's not worth the traffic and the trouble to go out. If we do need groceries or something, we try to go very early or very late."

"Tracey and I needed some groceries on the Friday after the Fourth. The shelves were picked over, and the employees were working as fast as they could to restock them. They looked exhausted, and a couple of them told us things like, 'I'm so over this,' and 'These people are so rude.'"

"We got an unusual call from Emergency Services that evening. They were asking people to conserve water because they were having trouble meeting the demand."

We were discussing a conundrum faced by many who live in an area which, by accident or design, has become a tourist destination. An extreme example is the frustration of the residents of Barcelona, Spain, who have gathered by the thousand to protest against mass tourism. They have taken to squirting visitors with water in popular dining areas and chanting "tourists go home." The mayor of Barcelona has even pledged to eliminate short-term rentals in the city within five years.

Of course, there is a huge difference between a city like Barcelona and the small but rapidly growing towns in the tourist/part-time resident belt of North Georgia. Barcelona's economy is built on information and communication technology, research and retail business. It can still prosper without mass tourism. Can the same be said for our mountain counties?

I suppose it depends on what we mean by "prosper." Quality of life issues for someone who retired here to enjoy peace and tranquility are different than those whose quality of life derives from casting a net into the river of traffic to catch sales, rental income, or tax revenue. Unfortunately for the long term, the peace and tranquility which attracts retirees erodes rapidly in a flood of "tourons," (which, if you didn't already know, is a merger of tourist and moron).

Tourism is the low hanging fruit which is almost as hard for a small town to resist as the forbidden fruit was for Eve and Adam. It didn't have to be this way. There have been and still are efforts on the part of a few wiser heads to attract the information and communications technology to this area which can sustain a growing economy at a lesser cost to peace and tranquility.

In the meantime, we improvise and adapt. If you are a business owner with employees, I urge you to give them time off during the week to do the shopping and run the errands that have become so much more onerous on the weekends. As for the rest of us, I once saw a bumper sticker in a little town overwhelmed by tourists which, short of hosing them down as in Barcelona, can become our rallying cry. The sticker said, "I AM NOT ON VACATION."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BE E-MAILED OR MAILED TO:

Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor
P.O. Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546
Our email address: tcherald@windstream.net

Letters should be limited to 200 words or less, signed, dated and include a phone number for verification purposes. This paper reserves the right to edit letters to conform with Editorial page policy or refuse to print letters deemed pointless, potentially defamatory or in poor taste. Letters should address issues of general interest, such as politics, the community, environment, school issues, etc. Letters opposing the views of previous comments are welcomed; however, letters cannot be directed at, nor name or ridicule previous writers. Letters that recognize good deeds of others will be considered for publication.*

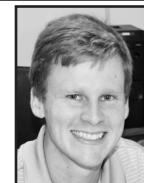
*Note: All letters must be signed, and contain the first and last name and phone number for verification.

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

Drought

This growing season has been warmer and drier than normal and that has caused some issues with plants and animals so far this year. Let's talk about what some of those issues are and what you can do about them.

UGA Extension
Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



Drought in the US is tracked through the US Drought Monitor. You can view their website to look at a map of drought in the US. You can zoom all the way in to county level to see what the drought rating is here. For Union county as of July 9, 93% of the county is in a D0 level drought which means it is abnormally dry. 7% of Union is D1 or moderate drought. In Towns county 90% of the county is D0 while 10% is D1 or moderate drought. As the year goes on these ratings become important for crop insurance. You can also submit a report on the website. You can include pictures to show how the drought is affecting you. These reports are important for those ends of the year crop insurance payments. Most of Georgia is under some level of drought conditions.

The drought and heat that we have has caused some unsightly damage on trees, especially Leyland cypress. Many of those trees are turning brown from the inside out. Most trees should be able to recover if the drought does not become too severe. Other plants have struggled to grow or produce the way that they normally would because of the heat and lack of water. Watering plants deeply and infrequently where possible is the best solution. Some plants like trees will require a good bit of water each week. Even in a drought it is possible to go overboard and water your plants too much. For potted plants water them until you see water flowing out of the bottom.

If you planted tall fescue for a lawn this past spring, this drought will make it tough for the grass to survive. You may need to replant in the fall to fill in any dead spots that appear.

Some people have seen some more deer damage in their yards this year. This is in part due to the drought. There has not been as much plant growth because of the lack of rain. Less plant growth means that deer move to where they can find more food, which may be your yard. The solution in this case is not to feed deer. I strongly discourage anyone from putting out food for deer. Feeding deer takes them out of their natural diet, encourages them to leave their natural habitat, and encourages them to be a nuisance. Creating plantings for deer would be a good alternative to feeding them directly.

Livestock need shade and water during a drought. As the temperature increases they need more water. Pasture availability will shrink as a drought stretches on because grass will struggle to grow back. Cattle are more likely to consume plants and weeds that they otherwise would not have eaten, some of which may be toxic. All of this means that the carrying cost of livestock is higher during a drought. At the same time cattle prices are high right now.

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

Letters To The Editor

Editor's Note:

The Towns County Herald published a letter to the editor in last week's newspaper, which stated: "The Mountain Emergency Animal Center in Blue Ridge has been unable to keep a vet on staff and therefore has had to close its doors."

Following publication of this letter, the practice manager of the Mountain Emergency Animal Center, Tonya Shinholster, contacted the newspaper to say that "this is not true."

Shinholster wants people to know that MEAC "is fully staffed and is open for business," noting that "we may experience a closure such as any other facility but we are open to help fill the need for emergency vet care."

For more information on the Mountain Emergency Animal Center, visit <https://meacenter.com/>.

Response to Nuclear Winter Naysayers

Dear Editor,

It's downright time we consider the salubrious effects of nuclear war on the climate crisis.

Number one, a full-on thermonuclear war will have a multitude of positive climate-warming remedies by introducing nuclear winter just in time to stop further greenhouse gas carbonization, whereby CO2 gases pumped into the atmosphere will be severely curtailed.

Not only will the Earth be covered in a darkened radioactive cloud resulting in a life-ending nuclear winter, but secondly, millions of gas-burning vehicles will be taken out of service by roadway destruction and by millions of polluting transport units being rendered inoperable. So be it that tens of thousands of years will be required to dissipate deadly radioactive waste before a livable planet, needed for human survival, is restored.

Continuing this look on the bright side, the man-made polluting particles in our atmosphere, which cause existential damage by heating the planet, will have had time to remediate, allowing cooling temperatures and thereby preventing further global ice melt.

Another favorable outcome from an all-out nuclear war will result from a severe reduction in the human population. An estimated population reduction in the billions vaporized instantly in the nuclear blast zones across the Earth means welcome relief from decades of destructive human climate policies.

All things considered, man needs to come to terms with thermonuclear war as a viable response to climate change, which equally threatens human survival. And because, sometimes continued human survival is just not that important in the larger scheme of things.

Lance G. Jobson

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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