

JewishCurrents

The Intentional Cruelty of “Conflict Management” in Gaza

Successive Israeli governments have embraced a paradigm that all but guarantees perpetual war.

Joshua Leifer / May 16, 2023

Last Tuesday, the IDF announced “Operation Arrow and Shield,” Israel’s latest round of airstrikes in the Gaza Strip, which targeted the militant group Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). Over the next five days, Israeli missiles killed 33 Palestinians, many of them civilians; Israel claims that 18 of those killed were PIJ operatives. PIJ responded by firing rockets that killed one Israeli woman in the city of Rehovot and one Palestinian agricultural laborer working inside Israel.

[...]

Under this paradigm, the regular aerial bombardment of Gaza—what right-wing Israeli military strategists Efraim Inbar and Eitan Shamir infamously called “mowing the grass”—remains the Israeli government’s preferred approach to the besieged territory, especially given what it perceives as the alternatives, explained **Kobi Michael**, a senior researcher at the **Institute for National Security Studies (INSS)**—a think tank with close ties to Israel’s military and intelligence agencies. Michael told Jewish Currents that entirely eliminating the threat posed by Palestinian militant groups like PIJ would require a ground invasion of the Gaza Strip, and consequently risk a war with Hamas, the Palestinian militant group that governs the territory. A full-scale war with Hamas could not only result in heavy Israeli casualties but also require Israel’s reoccupation of Gaza. “It would force [Israel] to remain directly in Gaza and control two million people,” Michael said. Outside the precincts of the hardline settler right, there is no appetite for the Israeli toll that invading and reoccupying Gaza would demand.

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