



[The Effect of October 7th](#)

This past Monday marked the one-year milestone since the October 7th, 2023 Hamas attacks. While the attacks were rightly denounced for their killing of innocent civilians, Israel's disproportionate military offensive that has ensued during the preceding 12 months also warrants strong condemnation. The destructive assault on Gaza has been rife with Israeli war crimes and human rights violations, as it has decimated the enclave, killed tens of thousands of innocent civilians, created a dire humanitarian crisis, and displaced more than 90% of the surviving inhabitants. The perpetuation of the conflict has also fueled additional regional hostilities and escalations that severely risk spiraling the Middle East into all-out war. As has been pointed out by human rights activists, various United Nations officials, and other fair-minded observers, it is important to note that the October 7th attack by Hamas did not happen in a vacuum. The brutal manner in which it was carried out certainly deserves criticism, but one must also not lose sight of the decades of oppressive Israeli occupation, human rights abuses, war crimes, and societal injustices that Palestinians have been subjected to which have stoked this type of animosity and cycle of tit-for-tat violence.

In the preceding year, more than 42,000 Palestinians have been killed since the onset of the Gaza War, an extremely troubling number of which have been women and children. It has been estimated that at least 69% of those killed have been these types of civilians, and humanitarian agencies recently released new data findings which show that more women and children have been killed at the hands of Israeli military forces in Gaza over the past year than the equivalent period of any other conflict in the 21st century. Equally as disturbing, there are still at least 10,000 civilians that are unaccounted for in the rubble, many of whom have been likely killed but yet undiscovered due to the debris and destruction as a result of Israel's relentless bombardment. A reprehensible 80% of Gaza has been destroyed, with footage from throughout the war demonstrating [the leveling of entire cities within the region](#). These represent only some of the examples of the suffering and mass destruction that the people of Gaza have endured during the course of the past year, with [much more being well-documented](#). Yet, all of this, even in conjunction with growing criticism regarding the manner in which they have waged their military operations, has not stopped Israeli forces from continuing to inflict mass devastation on the besieged territory.

The Gaza War has remained a divisive issue across the United States since the outbreak of the conflict, and has stayed a primary foreign policy issue for many Americans. The country has seen a wide range of debate and activism from various entities, often in the forms of student activism, protests and demonstrations, social movements, and everyday discussion. Throughout the course of the past year, public opinion within the United States has increasingly become more critical of Israel's military actions. According to data from [a recent Pew Research poll](#), a larger number of Americans now want the U.S. to help diplomatically resolve the conflict. Furthermore, there has been a widening divide in the American Jewish community over support of Israel and its leadership. The war has led many, particularly young Jewish-Americans, to question the United States' support of the Israeli government and military in light of the latter's policies and behavior. As such, the notable anti-war movement within the United States has gained a lot of traction since late 2023, with a growing number of citizens expressing concern with unconditional U.S. arms sales to Israel which they legitimately point out have been used to commit grave war crimes and human rights violations.

Since Israel began its military operations in Gaza, officials in the country have been criticized for an absence of achievable objectives and instead seem intent on waging endless war. Their bellicose actions have fostered devastation across Gaza and been harmful to the prospects for regional peace and stability, as hostilities in Lebanon and with Iran are on the brink of flaring into potentially wider-scale conflict that could drag in other actors such as the United States. Additionally, the families of hostages taken during the October 7th Hamas attacks and much of the Israeli public at-large have even expressed [skepticism](#) at the Netanyahu government's tactics going as far back as last December, and this has only grown with the perpetuation of the war and bloodshed. Ultimately, the region is more volatile and turbulent now than it was a year ago, as the world waits on a knife-edge and can only hope that the ongoing Israel-Iran tit-for-tat does not deteriorate into more direct and deadly violence. Israel's War on Gaza has come at the expense of the lives of tens of thousands of innocent civilians, left the territory in ruins, and made the Middle East less safe.