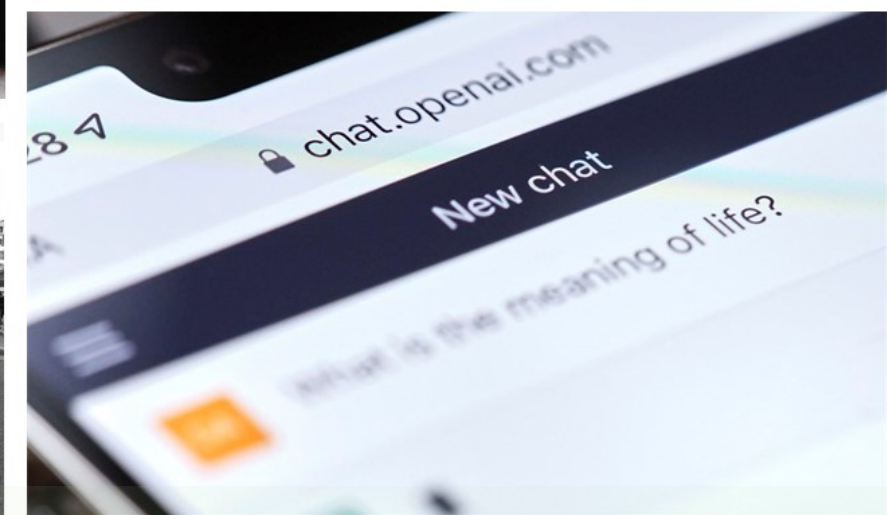




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This newsletter aims to chronicle the major events and developments in the societies of the emerging nations with the potential of impacting their future. This publication offers snippets of news analysis that might be advantageous to the academics, policymakers, social and political workers, students and various organisations.

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Israel-Gaza war over past month

There was little respite for the besieged Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip, as Israel prolonged its devastating ground and air military operations over a second month that has killed tens of thousands of innocent Palestinian civilians and prolonged the suffering of residents as they grapple with a humanitarian disaster that seems to have no end in sight. Moreover, while large-scale demonstrations calling for an immediate ceasefire have continued to rock major cities in Europe and the US, little has transpired on the part of the international community due to the unequivocal diplomatic and military support that the Biden administration continues to display for Israeli actions in Gaza. For instance, in the most recent vote at the UN on December 8, 13 of the Security Council's 15 members backed a resolution calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. However, it was blocked by US veto, while Britain abstained.

The number of Palestinian casualties in Gaza as of December 10 is at least 17,700 dead, including at least 7,729 children and 5,153 women, while the number of Palestinians wounded has reached at least 48,780, including at least 8,663 children and 6,327 women. The number of missing people is at least 7,780. In the Occupied West Bank, there have been at least 273 deaths, of whom at least 63 are children, while more than 3,365 are injured. In Israel, officials revised the earlier death toll from 1,405 to "around 1,200" and then to "1,147 civilians." According to the latest data from the UN, WHO and the Palestinian government, 305,000 residential units (over half of Gaza homes) have been destroyed or damaged, 339 educational facilities damaged, 26 out of 35 hospitals left not functioning, 87 ambulances damaged, while 167 places of worship have been damaged.

On November 22, Israel and Palestinian resistance group Hamas signed a temporary cease-fire agreement that called for a four-day "pause" in hostilities in order to free 50 hostages held in Gaza. Israel agreed to release roughly 150 Palestinian women and children prisoners held in Israeli jails as part of the agreement. The truce was later extended by three more days after which Israeli military operations in Gaza resumed from December 1. Since then, Israeli forces have attempted military operations in southern Gaza in Khan Yunis, demolishing hospitals, shelters and entire neighbourhoods, though this has come at the cost of a significant number of Israeli soldier deaths, as well as loss of military vehicles and equipment at the hands of Palestinian resistance fighters - at least 420 Israeli

soldiers have been killed while another 5000 have been wounded or injured since October 7 in Gaza, according to the Israeli military.

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Israel and Biden sued for unfolding genocide in Gaza

Palestinian human rights organisations, Gaza residents, and American citizens whose relatives are suffering as a result of the ongoing conflict are suing President Joe Biden over what they claim is his administration's "failure to prevent an unfolding genocide." The lawsuit was filed mid-November by the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) and the law firm, Van Der Hout, LLP, on behalf of Palestinians as well as the Palestinian human rights organisations, Al-Haq and Defense for Children International in a California federal district court. It accuses Biden, Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin of complicity in genocide. It argues that the Biden administration's unwavering support for Israel, including the provision of \$3.8 billion in annual military aid, has enabled the Israeli government to carry out its alleged genocide against the Palestinian people in Gaza.

The US lawsuit against Biden comes at a time when another group of lawyers, led by veteran French lawyer Gilles Devers, representing Palestinian victims of Israeli attacks on Gaza have filed a complaint to the International Criminal Court (ICC), arguing that Israel's actions amount to the crime of genocide. The civil society initiative could result in arrest warrants being issued against top Israeli politicians, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The group argued that Israel has not attempted to hide any of the hallmarks of genocide by cutting food and electricity to Gaza, attacking civilians, and using dehumanizing language. The group collected witness accounts of Palestinian victims they represent in court. Although Israel does not recognize the International Criminal Court (ICC), Devers said that it does not render the court ineffective, since in 2021 the ICC ruled that it has jurisdiction over grave crimes committed in occupied Palestinian territories, including potential war crimes committed by any party on the ground.

Legal experts, UN officials and more than 800 scholars have warned that Israel is potentially committing genocide against Palestinians. However, the US lawsuit against Biden is likely to face significant legal hurdles, seeing that the United States has long maintained a strong alliance with Israel, and the Biden administration has repeatedly affirmed its commitment to Israel's security. Despite that, the lawsuit has garnered significant attention and support from human rights groups and activists around the globe and corresponds with falling levels of support for the Biden administration from American Muslims at home. It is seen as a groundbreaking legal challenge to the United States' long-standing policy of unwavering support for Israel, and it raises important questions about the role of the United States in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and world politics.

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Party of anti-Islam Geert Wilders wins most seats in Dutch election

In a stunning upset, Geert Wilders' Party for Freedom (PVV) emerged victorious in the Dutch general elections held on November 22, 2023. The PVV, which is known for its anti-immigrant and anti-Islam platform, secured 37 seats in the 150-seat parliament, making it the largest party, well ahead of 25 for a joint Labour/Green ticket and 24 for the conservative People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) of outgoing Prime Minister Mark Rutte, the partial results showed on Thursday. This marks a significant gain for the PVV, which had previously held 12 seats.

The victory of the PVV makes it the first right-wing populist party to ever win parliamentary elections in the Netherlands, has sent shockwaves through Dutch politics, and has raised concerns about the country's direction. Wilders, a controversial figure who has been convicted of inciting discrimination, has promised to take a hard line on immigration and Islam. He has also called for the Netherlands to leave the European Union. Despite the electoral triumph, a total victory through the necessary support for a broad enough coalition to form a stable government may prove elusive, but not impossible. The leaders of the three other top parties had previously ruled out serving in a PVV-led coalition, and none of the parties he could form a government with share his anti-European Union ideas.



Concerns were aired by Islamic and Moroccan organisations about Wilders' victory. In the Netherlands, Muslims account for around 5% of the population. The PVV manifesto called for the closure of Islamic schools, Qurans, and mosques. Headscarves would be prohibited in government buildings. A "binding referendum" on a "Nexit" - the idea of the Netherlands leaving the EU - would be held. The PVV also demanded an "immediate halt" on development funding and a "Netherlands first" foreign policy.

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Death of Henry Kissinger – an advocate of warmongering and destruction

Henry Kissinger, a highly influential former US Secretary of State and National Security Advisor, died on November 29, 2023, at the age of 100. He was a man of immense power and influence, responsible for shaping American foreign policy for decades. However, his legacy is rather tainted—not one of peace and diplomacy, but of violence and warmongering. According to Yale University historian Greg Grandin's book *Kissinger's Shadow*, he was directly responsible for the murders of between three and four million people during his eight years in government between 1969 and 1977. His bloodthirsty policies prepared the way for America's never-ending wars in later years.

Kissinger was widely regarded as the architect of US efforts to control the Soviet Union and communist influence around the world. To do this, he pioneered the "bombs over diplomacy" strategy, advocating for some of the most heinous bombing campaigns in contemporary history. While he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1973 for his role in ending the Vietnam War, it was a moment of disgrace to the concept of peace itself, for in 1969 it was Kissinger, as President Richard Nixon's national security adviser at the time, who advocated for carpet bombing not only Vietnam but also neighbouring Cambodia. According to declassified Pentagon data from the time, Kissinger personally approved 3,875 air raids that dropped over 540,000 tons of explosives in Cambodia within the first year of the campaign while keeping Congress in the dark.

In 1975, Kissinger gave the green light to the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in order to topple the communist-leaning Fretilin government, which eventually resulted in more than 200,000 deaths. Moreover, Kissinger's unwavering support for authoritarian regimes in Chile and Argentina remains a major stain on his legacy. He also served as a close advisor to the Shah of Iran, whose oppressive regime eventually collapsed in 1979. Kissinger was also a detriment to peace in the Middle East. He was a staunch supporter of Israel - not only did he undercut Moscow's suggestions for a settlement between Israel and Arab governments, but he also undermined those from within Washington. Kissinger continued to advocate for murder and devastation in books, interviews, articles, and advice to US authorities after leaving office as Secretary of State.

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Putin revokes Russian ratification of nuclear test ban treaty

On November 2, 2023, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a law revoking Russia's ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The CTBT is an international treaty that bans all nuclear explosions, including both civilian and military tests. Russia ratified the CTBT in 1996, but the treaty has never entered into force because it has not been ratified by all of the nuclear-weapon states, including the United States. As of October 2023, 174 states had ratified the treaty, but only 35 of them were nuclear-weapon states; the CTBT will only formally enter into force after 44 designated "nuclear-capable states" have deposited their instruments of ratification with the UN Secretary-General. Although the United States signed the treaty back in 1996, the US Senate did not ratify the CTBT, which proved to be a major hindrance for the treaty to come into force.

Earlier, back in October 2023, Russian President Vladimir Putin had stated that since the United States had not ratified the CTBT, his government was considering withdrawing Russia's ratification of the treaty. Later that month, a law revoking ratification of the CTBT was passed by the Russian parliament, after which Putin signed it into law. The decision to revoke Russia's ratification of the CTBT was met with condemnation from the United States and other countries. The United States Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, said that the decision was a "step in the wrong direction" and that it would "set back confidence in the international arms control regime." The head of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, Robert Floyd, said that the decision was "deeply regrettable" and that it would "undermine the CTBT and its verification regime."

The revocation of Russia's ratification of the CTBT, a significant setback for nuclear non-proliferation efforts, is also a sign of the deteriorating relations between Russia and the United States, particularly over the war in Ukraine and the expansion of NATO. The revocation is likely to further strain relations between the two countries.

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Christian Zionists' major support for Israeli genocide, but why?

In the article "Why Do Evangelical Christians Support Israel's Genocide against Palestinians?" by Ibrahim Karatas on Politics Today, the author explores the reasons behind the strong support for Israel among Evangelical Christians, also known as Christian Zionists, particularly in the United States. The author argues that this support is rooted in a complex interplay of religious beliefs, political interests, and historical narratives. One of the primary factors is the belief among many Evangelical Christians that Israel's existence and strength are essential for the fulfilment of Biblical prophecies. They view the return of Jews to Israel and the establishment of a Jewish state as a sign of the end times and the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Evangelical Christians are known to provide substantial political and financial support to Israel. According to a Pew Research Centre poll, 67% of Evangelicals have a favourable impression of Israel, 80% feel that the state of Israel is the fulfilment of Biblical prophecy, and 45% believe that the Bible influences their views on Israel. This is important to keep in mind because they are the largest political bloc in the United States and have strong relationships among themselves and with political parties, particularly Republicans. They lobby the U.S. government to maintain strong ties with Israel and provide it with military and financial aid. This support stems from the belief that Israel is a key ally in the fight against terrorism and a bulwark against anti-Semitism. Therefore, Jewish lobbying organisations often work closely with them to mobilise and exert pressure on governmental policy.

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Gaza has become graveyard of women and children: UN

Almost 2 months into Israel's war on Gaza, attacks on hospitals have virtually become a recurring theme, despite the fact that refugee camps, schools, and churches have also been targeted. At least 21 of Gaza's 35 hospitals, including the sole cancer centre, are entirely closed, and others have been damaged by airstrikes, and have been deprived of essential supplies. While Israel has claimed that it has targeted the hospitals to flush out Hamas militants, according to Omar Rahman, a fellow at the Doha-based Middle East Council on Global Affairs, the real reason behind targeting of hospitals is psychological warfare, to strike fear into the heart of the Palestinian population and intimidate. Israel also attacks civilian structures such as hospitals because it can get away with it. According to Trita Parsi, executive vice president of the Washington-based Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, Israel believes that international uproar is irrelevant as long as the US refuses to curb Israeli operations. In the lack of US pressure, paired with the "most extremist" and right-wing government Israel has ever had, "Israelis are taking the opportunity to do things they otherwise could not do," Parsi stated.

The United Nations declared the Gaza Strip a graveyard for thousands of children, warning of the possibility of more dehydration deaths due to Israel's war on the besieged enclave. As per a UN rapid gender analysis, an estimated 50,000 pregnant women and girls in Gaza risk missing ante-natal care and giving birth without electricity or medical supplies. It has predicted increased maternal and infant mortality and morbidity, undermining health gains made in Palestine. As Gaza struggles to treat thousands of injured people, the UN experts noted that women's needs, including comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, as well as psychosocial support, remain largely unmet. Families are rationing water due to Israel's cut-off of water supplies and electricity to Gaza's civilian population, which amounts to collective punishment and a war crime. Access to water and safe sanitation facilities is essential for women and girls managing menstrual hygiene, failure of which can lead to serious disease and infections. The experts said that women and girls in shelters face particular difficulties accessing supplies and facilities, and lack of awareness about menstrual health likely compounds their difficulties.

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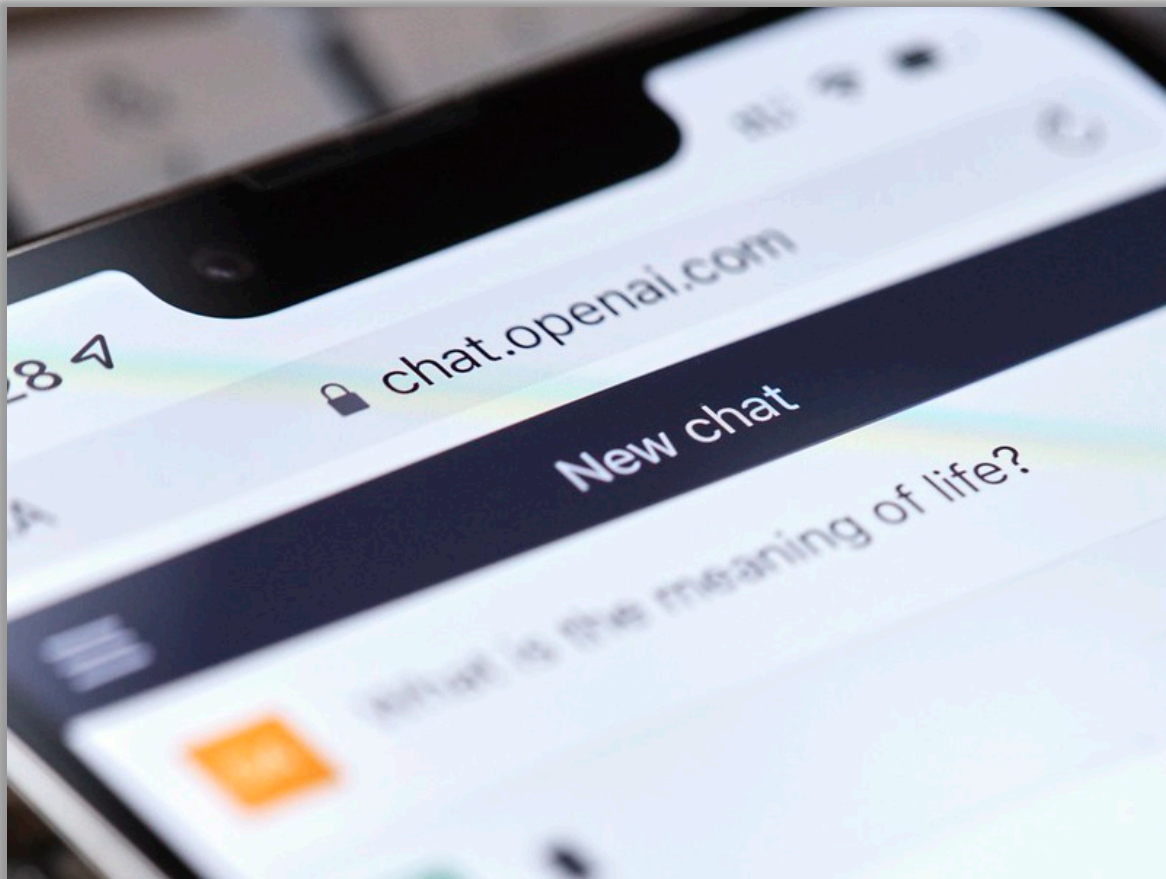
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OpenAI CEO Sam Altman fired, rehired days later

Sam Altman, the former CEO of OpenAI, has been re-hired by the company just days after his surprise ouster as chief executive. According to news reports, his re-appointment sparked an employee revolt that threatened to undermine OpenAI, which has been a leading company in the fledgling artificial intelligence industry with products like ChatGPT. The company has reached an agreement in principle for Sam Altman to return to OpenAI as CEO with a new initial board, which will be chaired by Bret Taylor, a former co-CEO of Salesforce. Former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers will also join the board, alongside existing director, Quora CEO Adam D'Angelo.

The details of Altman's firing and re-hiring remain murky. In its initial announcement, OpenAI claimed that Altman had been insufficiently "candid" with the board. However, according to a CNN source, a key factor in Altman's ouster had been tensions between Altman, who favoured pushing AI development more aggressively, and members of the original OpenAI board, who wanted to move more cautiously. However, just three days after Altman's firing, the OpenAI board announced that it had rehired him as CEO. The board said that it had "reached a unanimous decision" to bring Altman back after "careful consideration." According to CNN reports, the board took this decision amidst the threat of resignation by hundreds of OpenAI employees, nearly the company's entire staff, potentially for Microsoft, if the company's board didn't resign and reinstate Altman as CEO.

Although events surrounding Altman's firing and rehiring have left many questions unanswered, observers say that Microsoft and Altman appear to be the big winners from the dust-up. On the one hand, Altman is poised to confidently lead OpenAI with a board presumably more sympathetic to his vision. On the other hand, with this move, Microsoft is seen to have wrested more control over OpenAI, a company it invested billions in to help bolster its ambitions in developing AI as the next great technological advancement.

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Oppression and authoritarianism rampant as Bangladesh nears elections

Although Bangladesh's National Poll Commission has stated that parliamentary elections would be place on January 7, opposition parties, rights activists, and political analysts claim the country's situation is unfit for elections. With a large crackdown on opposition political parties still ongoing, with party leaders and activists being unjustly arrested around the nation, rights activists say the election cannot be free and fair. Noting that the government has been rapidly filling Bangladesh's prisons with her detractors ahead of the January general election, Human Rights Watch said that they recorded many instances of enforced disappearances, torture, extrajudicial killings, and widespread arbitrary arrests of political opponents in the previous month alone. Another media outlet, Netra News, has shared documentation of 2,597 people killed over the last 13 years of Awami League rule, showcasing data that captures the staggering scale of extrajudicial executions, fatal shootings and custodial torture across Bangladesh from 2009 to 2022.

Elections in Bangladesh over the past decade have been mired in controversy, calling into serious question the state of democracy in the country. The Bangladesh National Party (BNP), the main opposition party, boycotted the 2014 general elections. In 2018, Hasina's ruling Awami League (AL) was accused of rampant vote-rigging in the general elections. This time around, the US and other countries have been urging the Hasina government since last year to organize the upcoming general election in a free and fair manner. The United States said in September that it has begun "taking steps to impose visa restrictions" on Bangladeshi persons deemed engaged in "undermining the democratic electoral process" in Bangladesh. Following the announcement of the next general election date, the BNP and its supporters have continued to call for Hasina's resignation, followed by a handover of power to a caretaker government which would then be responsible for organizing free and fair elections. Human rights activists have noted that every day, hundreds of opposition leaders and activists are arrested as a result of the government's anti-opposition crackdown.

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