



# THE FUTURE

NOVEMBER 2023

ISSN 2753-3670



The Future is a newsletter periodically published by The Future Institute from Marlyon Road, Ilford, United Kingdom.

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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## A month of Israel-Gaza war – latest updates

A surprise attack by Hamas against Israel on October 7th, 2023, which led to the death of some 1400 Israelis and the capture of hundreds of Israeli hostages, initiated the latest Israel-Gaza war, which is nearing a month now, exacting a terrible cost upon defenceless and innocent Palestinian lives, and with no clear end in sight. Israel has pounded the Gaza Strip with air strikes for the 28th day in a row as the besieged Palestinian enclave faces a growing humanitarian catastrophe. The number of Palestinian casualties is staggering- as of November 4, at least 9,488 have been directly killed by indiscriminate Israeli air strikes, including at least 3,900 children and 2,509 women, while the number of Palestinian wounded has reached at least 32,516, including at least 6,360 children and 4,891 women. Moreover, the Gazan health ministry says that over 2200 people are still believed to be stuck under the rubble of destroyed buildings. According to Hamas, more than 60 hostages are missing because of Israeli air strikes on Gaza. The shocking number of civilian deaths, especially women and children, as well as entire families, have been a result of Israeli targeting of densely populated residential complexes, UN-run schools and refugee camps, hospitals teeming with wounded civilians, and even convoys of ambulances carrying critically wounded patients.

Many Gazans flocking to hospitals and United Nations schools for safety, hoping that Israel will abide by international law and not attack those coordinates, have been victims of airstrikes. To date, 150 medical staff have been killed, 28 ambulances destroyed, 16 hospitals are out of service in Gaza, and 32 medical care facilities are out of operation as of November 4. While hospitals such as Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital, Al-Shifa Hospital, the Indonesian Hospital, etc., received repeated Israeli commands to evacuate under threats of bombing, doctors and staff refused in light of the urgent humanitarian crisis and the high amount of dead and wounded. Israel then followed up on its threats by bombing the Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital on the 17th of October, killing 500 Palestinians, and again bombing the outskirts of the Al-Shifa hospital and a medical convoy consisting of ambulances on 3rd November, killing more than 15 people amidst horrific carnage, the same day that US secretary of state Anthony Blinken was visiting Israel to showcase full US commitment and support for Israel's right to defend itself against Hamas terror.

The Israeli army in recent weeks had been warning the 1.1 million people living in northern Gaza, including Gaza City, to evacuate south as it stepped up its attacks, including attempts at a ground invasion. However, residents noted that nowhere was safe and there were no safe routes to evacuate as Israeli warplanes attacked civilian convoys

heading towards the south on multiple occasions at the Rafah border crossing, and on the al-Rashid Road on November 3 killing 14 people, as well as attacking ambulances carrying wounded. Journalists have been especially targeted by Israeli air strikes - according to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), as of November 3, at least 36 journalists have been killed, among whom 31 are Palestinians. Their families have been targeted as well – Aljazeera journalist Wael Dahdouh's entire family was wiped out, while another journalist Youmna ElSayed's family received threats from the Israeli army.

The bombardment of the Gaza Strip has also taken a heavy toll on aid workers, with at least 72 UN relief agency staff killed since the war began on October 7. Since the beginning of the fighting, a number of UNWRA facilities, which house around 700,000 people seeking safety, have also been "directly hit." UNWRA employs over 13,000 people in Gaza, where it provides food, shelter, and education to more than half of Gaza's population of over 2 million people who rely on the organization for daily survival. Among Israeli targets have been bread distribution centres, UN relief camps, and UNRWA-run schools. Israel has also closed off all water supply and electricity to Gaza, which has resulted in the closure of hospitals and disease outbreaks, and impacted critical units such as intensive care for premature babies, surgery wards, and cancer patient treatment centres, among others.

Owing to the nature of all of the above actions, many observers have been labelling Israeli actions over the past month as containing genocidal intent. For one, there is the dehumanizing rhetoric of Israeli officials such as calling Palestinians "human animals" who have to be erased. On top of that is Israel's targeting of hospitals, ambulances, civilian shelters, the use of internationally banned white phosphorus bombs, etc. Most importantly, Israel has also made collective punishment of Palestinians a priority, whether by closing down the water or the electricity supply and preventing any aid from entering Gaza. The leaking of a secret policy paper drafted by the Israeli Intelligence Ministry that proposes forcibly transferring the Gaza Strip's 2.3 million residents to Egypt's Sinai Peninsula has also raised fears of a second Nakba, and stands tantamount to planned ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people, making it clear that Israel's stated objectives of uprooting Hamas are simply excuses for a planned genocide.

In military terms, Hamas has put up formidable resistance, killing Israeli soldiers and destroying entire tank units, as well as releasing dashing and powerful footage of its resistance to Israeli incursions into Gaza, such that it has hit Israeli morale and prevented any successful ground invasion cum hostage rescue operations from the Israeli side yet. Hamas has also shown its willingness to negotiate and act on good faith by releasing several hostages through Qatari mediation channels. Despite its tough talk, Israel is wary of opening a second front towards its northern border with Lebanese militia group Hizbullah; the very spectre of fighting on two or even three fronts is frightening to not just the Israeli military, but also its neighbours, and the Gulf monarchies that were eagerly seeking normalization deals with Israel just a few months back – the threat of the breakout of a regional war gets more real with every passing day, and the rising death toll in the Palestinian side.

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## Global responses to Israeli actions – media and leaders

International diplomacy has had little or no role in halting the Israeli bombardment in Gaza. Despite millions of protestors asking for their leaders and representatives to help stop the bombardment of Gaza and call for an immediate ceasefire, all major Western governments have been steadfast in their support for Israel and its 'right to defend itself' at any cost, even if it be targeted killing of almost 10,000 Gazans, 40 per cent of them children. In fact, Western governments have actively resisted calls for a ceasefire, with some only half-heartedly admitting the need for a 'humanitarian pause.' On the international stage, a UNGA resolution calling for a humanitarian truce was dismissed by the US and Israel, while Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen cancelled his scheduled meeting with UN Secretary-General Guterres in New York after the latter made comments that the Hamas attacks did not occur in a vacuum and that the Palestinian people had been subjected to 56 years of suffocating occupation.

In terms of anti-war demonstrations, while countries such as Germany and France have worked towards banning any pro-Palestinian marches, in the US, many of the demonstrations have been led by Jewish groups protesting Israeli genocide in Gaza and calling for an immediate end to war. Major media outlets, whether BBC, CNN, or the Guardian, have been accused by experts of being complicit in the narrative demonizing Palestinians and undermining their right to defence against Israeli occupation and struggle for self-determination. They have been accused of whitewashing Israeli crimes, shutting down voices putting forward the Palestinian narrative, as well as censoring speech deemed pro-Palestine. Examples of media spin on the war included repeating unverified Israeli claims that Hamas had beheaded 40 Israeli babies, and being quick to jump on blaming Hamas for the bombing of Al-Ahli Baptist hospital which had led to the death of 500 Palestinians on the basis of falsely evidenced claims for the Israeli military trying to hide and deny its involvement in the heinous massacre.

Analysts have noted that the Hamas attack on October 7 has altered not only the course of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict but also the dynamics of the entire Middle East. It has thrown the US de-escalation strategy in the Middle East into disarray, put Arab countries and Iran in a difficult position, and opened the way for further Chinese and Russian participation. The Hamas strike significantly halted the normalization process between Israel and Saudi

Arabia, preventing the signing of a regional security agreement. They also forced the United States to reverse its policy of reduced military presence in the region by authorizing the largest military increase since the battle against Daesh. Furthermore, US efforts to de-escalate tensions with Iran have failed as a result of this development. With its current trajectory of being a willing enabler of Israeli atrocities in Gaza, at the risk of antagonizing Arab populations enraged with US bias on the issue, the US stands the risk of losing any and all legitimacy as a regional peace broker.

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## Erdogan signs bill for Sweden's inclusion into NATO

In line with his agreement on backing Sweden's membership at a Nato summit in July, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has signed off on the accession protocols for Sweden's admission into NATO. It was then submitted to the Turkish Parliament for ratification. The president's proposal must undergo approval by a parliamentary commission, after which it will then be opened up for a general vote on the main floor of the assembly where it is expected to be passed by the Turkish president and his allies, who have the majority needed to ratify Sweden's bid. The Turkish parliament's ratification of the accession protocol is one of the last steps in the process.

In exchange for Turkey's help with NATO, Sweden has agreed to help unblock Turkey's progress towards joining the European Union, which has been on hold since 2018. Moreover, since applying for membership, Sweden has also tightened its anti-terror legislation and agreed to work more closely with Turkey on its security concerns. The Turkish backing for Sweden seems to have gone ahead despite the PKK bombing incident in Ankara last month and

recent tensions between Ankara and Washington in Syria, where a US F-16 jet shot down a Turkish drone on October 5, 2023, raising the spectre of a direct military confrontation between the two NATO allies. In the event the bill passes in the Turkish parliament, it would leave Hungary to be the last NATO member to still hold out on approving Sweden's bid.

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## Deadly Afghanistan earthquakes cause huge loss of life

In early October, Afghanistan was hit by a series of powerful earthquakes, causing widespread damage and loss of life. The first earthquake, a 6.3 magnitude quake, struck on October 7th in the Zinda Jan district of Herat province and was followed by two more earthquakes, of 6.3 magnitude and 6.1 magnitude, on October 11th and October 15th respectively. The earthquakes, causing widespread damage to homes, businesses, and other infrastructure, also left thousands of people homeless and without access to food, water, and medical care. According to the Taliban government, at least 2,445 people were killed and 9,420 people were injured, among whom the majority were women and children. Many villages were completely destroyed in related incidents such as landslides and avalanches, which also blocked roads and made it difficult to reach affected areas.

The Afghan government has been struggling to respond to the earthquake crisis. Before the deadly earthquakes, the country was already in the grip of a humanitarian crisis due to conflict, shunning by the international community, and economic collapse. The ongoing Israel-Palestine war and the Ukraine-Russia conflict have also served to move the focus away from Afghanistan, as international politics and donors have tended to cause the downplaying of the

sufferings of the Afghan people on the international stage. In June 2022, a powerful earthquake struck eastern Afghanistan, flattening stone and mud-brick homes, and causing at least 1,150 deaths and 1,600 wounded.

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## Nobel prize winners announced for 2023

The winners of the 2023 Nobel Prizes were announced early in October, with scientists, writers, and activists from around the world being honoured for their outstanding contributions to science, literature, and peace. In the field of physiology or medicine, Drew Weissman and Katalin Karikó were awarded the prize for their discoveries that led to the development of effective vaccines against COVID-19. In physics, Pierre Agostini, Ferenc Krausz, and Anne L'Huillier were awarded the prize for their research on electrons which led to new insights into the behavior of electrons and has paved the way for new technologies such as attosecond lasers, while in chemistry, Alexey Ekimov, Louis E. Brus, and Moungi G. Bawendi were awarded the prize for their work on nanocrystals.

In literature, Norwegian writer Jon Fosse was awarded the prize for his work as a playwright, novelist, and poet. In the field of economics, Claudia Goldin was awarded the prize for her work on the economics of gender inequality. In the field of peace, Narges Mohammadi was awarded the prize for her work as a human rights activist in Iran, where she is currently under imprisonment for her activism as spokesperson of the Defenders of Human Rights Center



(DHRC), a non-governmental organization that advocates for the rights of prisoners of conscience and other human rights defenders in Iran. According to experts, the award for Narges is intended to be a signal of the support of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee for human rights activism in Iran.

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## Worst ever dengue outbreak in Bangladesh as worldwide mosquito-related diseases on rise

Official figures reveal that more than 1,000 people have died from dengue in Bangladesh's worst outbreak on record, with rising temperatures caused by the climate crisis fuelling the continuous spread as more cases are documented away from congested urban areas for the first time. This included more than 100 children, with infections exceeding 208,000. Scientists have noted that a protracted monsoon season with rising temperatures and unpredictable, heavy rainfall generated excellent breeding circumstances for the Aedes mosquito, which transmits dengue fever. The inflow of patients has stretched the country's healthcare infrastructure, with hospitals facing a scarcity of beds and staff to care for them.

According to WHO, the global number of dengue cases has already surged eightfold in the last two decades. In 2000, there were approximately 500,000 cases, but by 2022, there were over 4.2 million cases. As the climate crisis intensifies, mosquito-borne diseases such as dengue fever, Zika, chikungunya, and yellow fever are likely to spread more and have a greater impact on human health. This year's El Nino weather pattern, which is bringing warmer,

wetter weather to regions of the planet, is exacerbating the situation. Dengue fever has struck South America hard this year, with Peru seeing its biggest outbreak on record. Cases in Florida caused authorities to issue alerts in many counties. Cases have increased in Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Malaysia, among other Asian countries.

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## Pakistan to deport more than one million undocumented Afghan refugees

In October 2023, Pakistan's interim interior minister, Sarfaraz Bugti, issued an October 31 deadline for all "illegal" refugees and migrants to leave, citing security concerns. Among the more than four million foreigners in Pakistan, a vast majority are Afghan nationals, most of whom fled to Pakistan after the Soviet invasion in the 1980s, and also some after the Taliban regained power in 2021. According to figures from the Pakistan government, there were nearly 1.7 million undocumented Afghans living in Pakistan at the time of the announcement.

According to local media reports before the deadline, approximately 100,000 Afghan immigrants had voluntarily returned via the Torkham border crossing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Chaman crossing in Balochistan regions. The Pakistani government was also in the process of establishing deportation centres in all four provinces to house foreigners until they were deported. Pakistan's intention to deport the refugees was met with widespread condemnation from human rights groups, who argued that it was illegal and inhumane and put many of the refugees at risk.

The Pakistani government justified the deportation drive by arguing that Afghan refugees were putting a strain on the country's resources and security. The deportation order came amid a sharp increase in armed attacks in Pakistan, which the government blames on Afghan-based groups and nationals, claims that the Afghan Taliban denies. This year, Pakistan has reported over 300 incidents, primarily in the districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan neighbouring Afghanistan. The Taliban-run administration in Afghanistan meanwhile, scrambling to cope with the sudden influx, set up temporary transit camps where food and medical assistance would be provided. Taliban officials, while welcoming the return of the refugees, urged the Pakistani government not to be hasty or mistreat the returning refugees, many of whom are leaving behind everything in Pakistan after living there for decades to start afresh in Afghanistan.

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## Germany apologizes to Tanzania for past colonial crimes while cracking down on pro-Palestinian demonstrations at home

On November 1, 2023, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier apologized for colonial-era killings in Tanzania during Germany's rule, vowing to raise awareness of the crimes and work to make amends. Steinmeier's apology comes during a growing movement in Germany to confront its colonial past. His visit to Tanzania was the first by a

German president in over 30 years. In a speech, Steinmeier acknowledged the "terrible suffering" inflicted by the German colonial regime, such as at the Maji-Maji rebellion, where an estimated 300,000 people - around one-third of the indigenous population at the time - were killed. He said that the German government was committed to "facing up to our responsibility for the past" and "building a future of friendship and cooperation" with Tanzania.

Despite expressing regret for its own war crimes of the past, however, current German policy regarding Israel-Palestine blindly expresses support for Israeli war crimes against the Palestinians in the name of blind support for the maxim that Israel has the right to defend itself at any cost, as a way of atonement for German role in the Holocaust. The support has gone to the extent that not only does Germany provide arms to Israel, but also it has actively prohibited any form of pro-Palestinian solidarity in the name of preventing " Hamas activity " and " anti-Semitism " within Germany, whether street protests or cultural events. Police brutality against protestors has been recorded in major German cities such as Frankfurt, Munich, and Berlin, where riot police were stationed on Sonnenalle for days in succession as outrage over Israel's attack on Gaza spilled out onto the streets. Berlin has one of Europe's largest Palestinian diaspora groups, estimated at around 300,000. Meanwhile, cultural organizations have reported pressure to cancel events involving groups critical of the Israeli state, and the Frankfurt Book Fair has postponed an event honouring Palestinian writer Adania Shibli for her book *A Minor Detail*.

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