

# A Century Marked by Cultural Trauma: The Enduring Memory of the Holocaust that Intertwined with Terrorism in Israel

YARON KATZ

*HIT – Holon Institute of Technology, Israel*

## **Abstract:**

*Trauma is a profound psychological response to distressing events that impact individuals and communities alike. Cultural trauma is an extension of individual trauma and deeply affects collective identity and societal structures. This paper explores the concept of cultural trauma and collective memory while using Israeli society as a case study to examine how historical events shape cultural identity and narratives. The study explores the cultural trauma of the Jewish people, focusing on the profound impact of the Holocaust on collective memory. It further examines how the traumatic events of the October 7, 2023, terrorist attack on Israel have evoked memories of persecution and violence, shaping identity and underscoring the imperative of remembrance of the Holocaust. The events of October 7 trigger memories of persecution, highlighting the collective trauma experienced by Jewish communities. Research suggests that the brutal rampage of murder, rape, and assault by terrorists and Gazans in Israel prompts comparisons to the Holocaust. Victims relive experiences reminiscent of their ancestors' suffering, evoking widespread trauma and existential questions. Emergency passports echo past rescue efforts, highlighting parallels with historic Jewish persecution. The Holocaust's legacy profoundly shapes Israeli identity, fostering a collective sense of trauma. Despite being seen as a refuge, Israel faces ongoing threats and violence, magnifying historical wounds. The study found that the recent terrorist attack by Hamas is reminiscent of Holocaust atrocities and exacerbates mental health challenges, with a quarter of Israeli Jews experiencing insecurity. Intergenerational trauma, memorialization, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict further compound the nation's collective anguish. The profound impact of multiple sources of trauma related to a continuance military struggle and terror attacks underscores the enduring legacy of historical atrocities on Israeli society.*

**Keywords:** Trauma Holocaust; October Attack; Anti-Semitism; Israel

## **INTRODUCTION**

Trauma refers to a psychological and emotional reaction triggered by an event or experience, which can significantly affect an individual's feelings of security, overall mental health, and capacity to deal with life's difficulties. The effects of trauma include various ways, including intrusive memories or flashbacks of the event, serving as reminders of the trauma, emotional numbness, heightened arousal, and intense emotional reactions. Trauma can be cumulative, including exposure to stressful or traumatic events that can have a compounding effect on a community. Such experiences of loss, tragedy, or violence identify the majority of people experiencing distressing events, which may be conceptualized as "traumatic" and contribute to adverse changes in the mental health of a community and are related to a more significant effect of cultural trauma (Eyerman, 2020).

Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways (Alexander, 2016). It is defined and interpreted as a shock to the cultural tissue of society of a traumatic sequence, describing typical conditions under which cultural trauma emerges and evolves (Sztompka, 2000). Cultural trauma refers to the collective psychological and emotional wounds experienced by a group of people due to a deeply disturbing or catastrophic event that affects their shared identity, beliefs, values, and way of life (Alexander, 2004). Cultural trauma affects entire communities, societies, or even nations and results from issues such as genocides and wars. The profound and lasting effects of collective trauma disrupt social structures, erode trust in institutions, and challenge established narratives and beliefs about identity. Gailiené (2019) found that overcoming cultural trauma indicates that society gradually integrates historical traumatic experiences, although a healthy cultural identity has not yet been restored.

Cultural trauma is a public discourse in which the foundations of collective identity are brought up for reflection (Eyerman, 2011). It includes collective memory, where the traumatic event becomes a central part of the group's identity and is passed down through generations via storytelling, rituals, memorials, and cultural symbols. Traumatic events can shape how a group interprets its history, shaping collective narratives of victimhood, resilience, or oppression. Trauma experienced by one generation can be transmitted to subsequent generations through familial and cultural dynamics, impacting individuals' behaviors, beliefs, and coping mechanisms, and these feelings are a result of the way that the collectivity narrates its action and identity (Eyerman, 2019).

In the case of the cultural trauma of Israeli society, cultural trauma is mainly experienced in two critical periods. The Holocaust during the Second World War and the attack on Israeli settlements from the Gaza Strip on October 7, 2023. The Holocaust was a systematic, state-sponsored persecution and genocide of six million Jews during the Second World War. It was a dark chapter in human history characterized by unparalleled brutality, cruelty, and mass murder. It was rooted in anti-Semitic Ideology, with centuries-old anti-Semitic beliefs and prejudices that portrayed Jews as inferior, dangerous, and scapegoats for societal problems. The Nazi regime, led by Adolf Hitler, exploited these sentiments to justify their policies of persecution and extermination. On October 7, 2023, Hamas, a Palestinian terrorist organization, launched a violent attack against Israel. Hamas directed its members to target Israeli civilians, including women and children, resulting in devastating consequences: the death of 1,139 Israelis, the kidnapping of 240 individuals in Gaza, and over 12,900 injured (Stenzler-Koblentz & Chavez, 2024).

The study explores the cultural trauma of collective memory that is common to the two catastrophic periods of the Jewish people. The Holocaust left an indelible mark on Jewish collective memory, shaping the identity, consciousness, and worldview of subsequent generations. The events in Israel on October 7, 2023, triggered traumatic memories and associations with the Holocaust, particularly for survivors, their descendants, and those with familial connections to the Holocaust. The repetition of violence and persecution against Jews acts as a poignant reminder of the horrors endured during the Holocaust, emphasizing the importance of remembrance and constant vigilance. These events serve as a reminder of the Holocaust due to their resonance with themes of persecution, violence, and existential threats faced by the

Jewish people. The events of October 7 have brought back old memories of the Holocaust as hundreds of thousands of Israelis had been forced to leave their homes in a hurry and move to a different place for an unknown length of time (The Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs, 2024). Lazar and Litvak-Hirsch (2008) found that young Jewish Israeli adults perceive the impacts of the Holocaust on themselves, their families, and Israel society, while the experience from the October events shows that collective trauma has a mental and economic price since communities far from the front lines have entirely suspended their fabric of life (Gundar-Goshen, 2023). Yair and Odom-Weiss (2014) that the more that Israel's strategic interests are threatened, the more locked it becomes to its post-traumatic habitus.

## **THE HOLOCAUST CULTURAL TRAUMA**

The trauma of the Holocaust refers to the profound psychological and emotional impact experienced by the individuals who endured the atrocities committed by Nazi Germany during World War II. Due to its radical anti-human ideology and geographic scope, the events, actions, and experiences of the Holocaust stand out as the paradigmatic genocide in world consciousness. The trauma experienced by Holocaust survivors is multifaceted and deeply ingrained, lasting throughout their lifetimes and affecting subsequent generations (Assmann, 2010).

The Holocaust was the most dramatic demonstration of the murderous potential of race hatred and an ultimate expression of the genocidal tendency present in ethnic hatred. From its inception, the social exclusion, confinement, and annihilation of European Jews were linked with movements across space. Actions such as expulsion, escape, and emigration, alongside deportation, the assembly of victims in transit camps, and their transfer to sites of exploitation and extermination, involved traversing numerous national borders. The Nazi regime sought to "outsource" their atrocities and conceal them in distant locations. Given the transnational scope of the genocide, which not only centralized millions of victims within the bureaucratic machinery of death but also triggered a dispersal of victims' families across five continents, it is unsurprising that this monumental event would reverberate in transnational memory.

Upon coming to power in 1933, the Nazis implemented a series of discriminatory laws aimed at marginalizing and isolating Jews from German society. These laws restricted their rights, confiscated their property, and segregated them from the rest of the population. Jews in Nazi-occupied territories were forcibly relocated to overcrowded, segregated areas known as ghettos. Conditions in the ghettos were deplorable, with inadequate food, sanitation, and medical care. Many Jews died from starvation, disease, and maltreatment. The Nazis established concentration camps to imprison, torture, and exploit their perceived enemies, including Jews, political dissidents, homosexuals, and others. Conditions in the camps were horrific, with forced labor, starvation, and rampant abuse. As Nazi Germany expanded its control across Europe, the regime implemented the "Final Solution," a euphemism for the systematic extermination of European Jewry. This involved the establishment of death camps equipped with gas chambers and crematoria, where millions of Jews were murdered in mass killings. Jews were rounded up from ghettos and deported to concentration camps to be murdered or go through forced labor, starvation, and medical experimentation. The scale and efficiency of the killings were staggering, with millions of lives lost in a coordinated campaign of genocide.

The Holocaust ended with the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945. Allied forces liberated the surviving prisoners from the concentration camps, bearing witness to the horrors of the Holocaust. In the aftermath of the war, efforts were made to document the atrocities, seek justice for the perpetrators, and ensure that the memory of the Holocaust is preserved as a solemn reminder of the consequences of hatred, bigotry, and indifference. Nevertheless, the Holocaust remains one of the darkest chapters in human history, serving as a memory of genocide. Its legacy continues to shape discussions on human rights, genocide prevention, and the importance of remembering victims and survivors of the Holocaust (Bauman, 2008).

The Holocaust resulted in the loss of millions of lives, as well as the destruction of families, communities, and cultural heritage. Survivors often experience profound grief and mourning for their loved ones who were killed, as well as for the loss of their pre-war lives and identities. Holocaust survivors usually face unique challenges related to their experiences, including difficulty forming relationships, coping with daily stressors, and navigating societal attitudes toward survivors. They may also exhibit symptoms of survivor syndrome, such as hypervigilance, survivor guilt, and difficulty expressing emotions. The trauma of the Holocaust can be transmitted to subsequent generations through familial and cultural dynamics, impacting the mental and emotional well-being of descendants. Second and third-generation Holocaust survivors may experience feelings of inherited trauma, identity confusion, and a sense of responsibility to remember and honor their family's history. Holocaust survivors often feel a profound responsibility to bear witness to the atrocities they endured and ensure that the memory of the Holocaust is preserved for future generations. They may participate in commemorative events, educational initiatives, and advocacy efforts to promote Holocaust education, remembrance, and genocide prevention (Scharf, 2007).

The trauma of the Holocaust continues to shape the lives of survivors, their families, and Israeli society as a whole. As of early 2024, 136,500 Holocaust survivors live in Israel today. 2,500 Holocaust survivors experienced the events of October 7, and many of them liken them to their experiences in World War II and other pogroms from Jewish history. Additionally, around 2,000 Holocaust survivors were forced to evacuate their homes to safe areas as a result of the war, while others elected to remain at home. Holocaust survivors from the Gaza envelope area and the north were evacuated to hotels across Israel. Most survivors were evacuated from townships on the confrontation line in the north (1,100). In contrast, 860 Holocaust survivors were evacuated from townships in the Gaza envelope and other southern townships by five authorities.

Many survivors feel the continuous guilt for having survived. In contrast, millions of others perished, questioning why they survived when so many others did not, leading to feelings of shame, anguish, and existential questioning. Hunter (2021) found that cultural memory of the Holocaust serves as an engagement with the Holocaust. Lazar, Litvak-Hirsch, and Chaitinound (2008) further found that sociocultural mechanisms impact the third generation of Holocaust survivors as a cultural trauma; Reupert and Jacobs (2023) explored the experience of intergenerational transmission of trauma in the grandchildren of Holocaust survivors and found that impacts of mass and collective trauma impact the survivor's extended family and families for generations to come. Lazar, Litvak-Hirsch, and Chaitinn (2008) found that Jewish Israeli young adults perceive the effects of the Holocaust on themselves, their families, and Israeli society. Sociocultural mechanisms are in

operation that influence how the third generation of Holocaust survivors perceive the Holocaust as a form of cultural trauma.

## **TERRORISM CULTURAL TRAUMA**

The attack by Hamas had critical traumatic implications. Parallels have even been drawn between residents of the Warsaw Ghetto, who, after nearly a month of resistance against the Nazis, were finally crushed by the use of flamethrowers. Similarly, many residents of the 20 communities attacked in October burned or suffocated to death, as entire communities were erased (Schneider, 2024).

The violence began when armed men from the Palestinian Islamist movement broke through the militarized border with Gaza on Shabbat, the last day of a Jewish holiday. Under the cover of thousands of rockets fired from Gaza, they killed indiscriminately in streets, houses, kibbutz communities, and at a rave music festival. It took more than three days of heavy fighting for the Israeli army to regain control and left the country deeply traumatized by violence unseen since the country's formation in 1948.

On Saturday, October 7th, 2023, southern Israel experienced the most significant terror attack in the history of the country and one of the most substantial terror attacks in human history, considering the number of casualties. According to the National Institute, the final death toll from the attack is now thought to be 695 Israeli civilians, including 36 children, as well as 373 security forces and 71 foreigners, giving a total of 1,139. With many of the bodies mutilated or burned beyond recognition -- including entire families in their homes - it has taken forensic doctors weeks to identify them all.

In the fighting to regain control of southern Israel, 58 police, ten members of the Internal Security Service, and 305 soldiers were killed, including several dozen unarmed soldiers guarding the border with Gaza. Three hundred sixty-four people were killed at the Supernova music festival. Israel counts both soldiers killed in action and off-duty soldiers in its military casualties. These figures include those who died at the Supernova festival or while visiting their family in the South. The data does not distinguish between those killed by Hamas and civilians killed by Israeli forces in the fighting to retake control of southern Israel - an operation in which the army used shells and rockets on inhabited areas. Israel also faces the ongoing trauma of hostages who were dragged back to Gaza in the attack. Data from Israel's National Insurance Institute revealed the high number of victims who were shot and then burned in their cars while attempting to flee.

The most painful and traumatic loss has to be that of losing children. 20 under 15 years old, and ten killed by rockets. The youngest victim was ten months old. An entire family, including three children aged between two and six, were killed in their home. Two brothers, aged five and eight, were shot dead in their car with their parents. According to the data of the annual report of the Council for the Peace of the Child, which reviews the situation of children in Israel, 38 children were murdered, of which three were between the ages of birth and three and four were between the ages of three and six. Forty-two children were kidnapped to the Gaza Strip by Hamas and other terrorist organizations, of which nine are between the ages of birth and five, and nine are over the age of 18. The data also shows that 19,407 children were physically and mentally injured in hostilities, approximately 37% of them (7,257 children) under the age of 6. Following the terrorist attack on October 7, 116 children were orphaned by

their parents - 20 children were left without parents, and one parent orphaned another  
96

The trauma inflicted by the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust has not faded, and society has been rocked to its core by the attacks. Which carries memories of a long history of persecution; much of the public feels war is the only way to restore safety and security. The events of the brutal attack of the terror organization Hamas on southern Israel shocked Israel and its allies from civilized communities all over the world. The unprecedented breach of the border sent terrorists inside Israeli communities and military installations and left mass graves of Israeli soldiers and civilians, including infants and elderly grandparents, after being tortured and burned (Sanz, 2023).

Security concerns identify Israel as different from any other country. Israel's ongoing security challenges, including conflicts with neighboring states and internal security threats, have overshadowed efforts to draft a constitution. National security concerns have often preceded policy discussions, diverting attention and resources from constitutional matters. Nevertheless, the assault by Hamas represents the most significant intelligence and operational failure since the Yom Kippur War. It also means the inability of the tolerant conception of containing religious violence and Islamic terror organizations – and as a result, the adoption of an updated strategic purpose of destroying Hamas and other terrorist organizations must become clear (Harel, 2023).

The trauma of terror in Israel refers to the collective psychological and emotional impact experienced by the Israeli population as a result of ongoing terrorist attacks and violence perpetrated against civilians by extremist groups, particularly the Palestinian militant organizations of Hamas and Islamic Jihad (Plotkin-Amrami & Brunner, 2015). Israelis live with a pervasive sense of threat and insecurity due to the constant risk of terrorist attacks. These attacks can occur anytime and anywhere, including crowded public areas, buses, cafes, markets, and schools. The unpredictability of terrorism contributes to heightened levels of anxiety and fear among the population. Terrorist attacks result in loss of life, injuries, and profound grief for the victims and their families. Israelis mourn the loss of loved ones who are killed or injured in attacks, as well as the loss of a sense of safety and normalcy in their daily lives. Each attack leaves a lasting impact on the affected individuals and communities (Marsden, 2023).

The continuous sense of trauma of terror in Israel can be transmitted to subsequent generations through familial and cultural dynamics. Children growing up in Israel are exposed to the pervasive threat of terrorism from a young age, leading to feelings of anxiety, vulnerability, and insecurity. They may inherit their parents' fears and worries about safety and develop coping mechanisms to deal with the ongoing threat of violence. The trauma of terror has a profound impact on Israeli society as a whole, shaping attitudes, behaviors, and public discourse. Israelis grapple with questions of security, national identity, and the moral and ethical dilemmas posed by terrorism. There is often a sense of solidarity and resilience in the face of adversity and a commitment to defending the country against terrorist threats.

Despite the trauma of terror, Israelis demonstrate remarkable resilience and determination in the face of adversity. They refuse to be paralyzed by fear and continue to live their lives as normally as possible despite the ongoing threat of violence. There is a strong sense of communal support and solidarity and a commitment to rebuilding and moving forward in the aftermath of attacks. However, the surprise attack on Israel demonstrates a shocking failure of intelligence agencies. Even though Israel's

intelligence services are recognized as one of the world's most effective agencies, Hamas capitalized on critical vulnerabilities of a policy that was based on tolerance and a defensive strategy supported by military technological supremacy. Israel was not prepared for a ground attack. While it was led to believe it was containing a war-weary Hamas by providing economic incentives to Gazan workers in Israel, it invested extensively in cyber-capabilities and air defenses. It neglected its terrestrial border defenses (Franz-Stefan, 2023).

## **GLOBAL IMPLICATIONS**

Israel is experiencing the intensity of terrorism daily, particularly during wartimes and intense military and political events. Israel's wars and military operations have been "no option wars," which means that violent acts by terrorist organizations such as Hamas from Gaza and Hezbollah from Lebanon, as well as military attacks by hostile neighboring Arab Countries, were imposed on Israel. The perception of the permanent security alert of Israel was described by US President Joe Biden in an emotional speech following the brutal attack of Hamas on southern Israel. He described his meeting with Israel's Prime Minister, Golda Meir, 50 years earlier, just before the start of the Yom Kippur War. As he said, after the Prime Minister saw his worries about a military threat to Israel, she told him that Israel has a secret weapon – "We have no place else to go." As stated by President Biden, "For 75 years, Israel has stood as the ultimate guarantor of security of Jewish people around the world" (Biden, 2023).

As explained by President Joe Biden in a 15-minute televised speech to the American people, the stated purpose for the existence of Hamas is the destruction of the State of Israel and the murder of Jewish people. Following the brutal attack, Israel is at war with Hamas with the aim of a complete siege of the Gaza Strip and eliminating the terrorist organization. Warning against the danger of religious radicalism to the world, Biden said: "We are facing an inflection point in history - one of those moments where the decisions we make today are going to determine the future for decades to come" (The White House, 2023). Biden further argues that the attack on a Jewish holiday became the deadliest day for the Jewish people since the Holocaust, which has brought to the surface painful memories and scars left by millennia of antisemitism and the genocide of the Jewish people. He said: "The world watched then, it knew, and the world did nothing. We will not stand by and do nothing again. Not today, not tomorrow, not ever" (The White House, 2023a).

As history tells us, Jews have been oppressed from without, the Holocaust being a gargantuan event of recent memory. However, they have also suffered harmful dissension from within. The essay suggests that the perpetuation of internal conflict has been as disastrous for Jews in history as external persecution and supports the commitment, internally and externally, to the empathetic justice-seeking side of Jewish history. It concludes that the fundamental Jewish values are Dignity, Equality, Justice, Responsibility, and Unity of Jews as part of our shared humanity. As the American Jewish Democrats write, "We believe that all people are created in the image of the divine and that it is incumbent upon us to treat each other as we would like to be treated. We work towards a more equitable world in which the basic human dignity of all people is realized, and where government works equally for all people to achieve their potential and aspirations." The Council further explains, "Throughout history, the Jewish people have thrived in pluralistic democracies that guaranteed the rights and freedoms of all. We believe that only a vibrant democracy can ensure freedom and

protect against tyranny, and we support measures that strengthen and safeguard our democratic institutions".

A central feature of the Nazi treatment of the Jews was gratuitous humiliation before execution, something that was for many of the murders by Hamas marauders on October 7. Survivors have disclosed incidents of slow torture, rape, and sexual violence in front of children and spouses, as well as mocking and using hostages as decoys. Unlike the Nazis, who tried to cover up their crimes, Hamas terrorists were proud to brag live on social media as they relished the atrocities. The October 7 Hamas terrorist attack is among the most well-documented in history. A crush of evidence from smartphone cameras and GoPros captured Hamas's breach of the border and the strike that left the deadliest onslaught in the country's history.

In recent decades, cultural trauma has become a widely accepted form of collective identity in images and narratives transmitted through mass media and information networks (Meek, 2016). After Hamas launched its attack, the events were shown on the news, and social media channels were flooded with images of the gruesome conflict. Those photos, often depicting injuries, sexual violence, and destruction, are considered critical to illustrate the severity of the war but also contribute to the trauma that viewers at the scene and from afar experience. The events led to a pervasive sense of insecurity and vulnerability among Israelis, as well as profound moral and existential dilemmas regarding the use of force, territorial disputes, and the quest for peace. Since the horrifying events of October 7th and the subsequent war, the entire population of Israel has been struggling to cope with the emotional, physical, and social ramifications of the situation. A special report sent to the Ministry of Health and other government offices found that "The Israeli population is at risk of experiencing mass post-trauma, and swift intervention is required to prevent it." The report concludes that almost a quarter of Jewish adults are now sleeping less, moving less, and have far more stress, confirming fears of an emerging mental health crisis in Israel.

The events of last October in Israel started a new era of global fight against terrorism. Even though Hamas has vowed to eradicate Israel and has been responsible for many suicide bombings and deadly attacks on Israeli soldiers as well as civilians in Israel and around the world, and even though the U.S. State Department designated Hamas a terrorist group and the European Union and other Western countries also considered it as a terrorist organization – the concept of tolerance against religious violence and terrorism dominated the policies of governments and intelligence agencies of the Western world. The perception adopted by world leaders was that economic support and allowing a dual policy of religious extremism with semi-democratic governance could restrain terrorism and even mobilize radical movements to participate in political activity peacefully.

As part of the new and aggressive policy to dismantle Hamas, supported by the United States, Israel has declared war on Hamas and countered with intensifying air strikes on targets in Gaza and ground operations to destroy the terrorist organization, its leaders and infrastructure, and push its militants out of the Gaza Strip. The government has ordered the evacuation of all civilians from Israeli communities bordering Gaza, and the government warned of a long and brutal war against Hamas, in which Israel's military response is expected to be extraordinary, if not unprecedented since Hamas is the new Nazis and the new ISIS.



## THE RISE OF ANTI-SEMITISM

Despite the horrors of the Holocaust, Jews have demonstrated remarkable resilience against adversity. At the same time, the October events raised similar themes of resilience and solidarity as the Jewish community rallies to respond to threats and challenges. Just as Jews resisted persecution and sought to rebuild their lives in the aftermath of the Holocaust, the events of the Hamas attack inspired acts of bravery, heroism, and unity among Israelis and Jews worldwide. However, the magnitude of the October events provides parallels with the Holocaust first and almost due to the rise of Anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism refers to prejudice, discrimination, and hostility towards Jewish people based on their ethnicity, religion, or cultural identity.

The Holocaust was characterized by virulent anti-Semitism propagated by the Nazi regime, leading to systematic persecution, discrimination, and, ultimately, the genocide of six million Jews. Similarly, the events on October 7 involved manifestations of anti-Semitism, whether in the form of targeted attacks against Jewish individuals or communities. The rise of anti-Semitism against Israel refers to the increase in hostility, prejudice, and discrimination directed explicitly towards the Jewish state of Israel, particularly about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the war in Gaza, launched by the Israeli military after the Hamas Attack (Dwoskin, 2024).

For Israelis, acts of anti-Semitism serve as a reminder of the enduring threat posed by hatred and prejudice towards Jews. Levanon (2021) demonstrated the significant influence of the Holocaust on the intractable nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The events of October 7 provide a substantial reminder of the Holocaust, which lies in their resonance with themes of anti-Semitism, insecurity, trauma, and resilience faced by the Jewish people throughout history. These events remind the ongoing imperative to combat hatred, prejudice, and violence in all its forms and to uphold the values of tolerance, justice, and remembrance.

While Holocaust denial existed even during the Holocaust itself, this phenomenon has substantially expanded and diversified over the past decades. This ranged from the advent of technologies that shifted the debate to new platforms and forums to Israel's comparison to Nazi Germany to Islamist-driven Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism on European streets. Paradoxically, concurrently with the intensification of Holocaust denial by Arabs and Muslims, they have made massive use of Holocaust symbols, language, and discourse in their national struggle (Davidovitch & Dana, 2017).

The Holocaust was a period of extreme insecurity and vulnerability for Jews, who faced persecution and violence at the hands of state authorities and paramilitary groups. The October 7 events evoked similar feelings of insecurity and fear among the Jewish population, mainly if they involved acts of terrorism, warfare, or other forms of violence targeting Israeli civilians. These events underscore the ongoing security challenges faced by the Jewish people, both historically and in contemporary times, and have damaged the sense of security provided by the military of the Jewish state – the IDF (Israel et al.). The day of terror that Hamas launched a brutal attack on Israel challenged the resilience of Israel and sent shockwaves across the globe, redefining the landscape of modern terrorism and its repercussions. While the immediate aftermath of October 7th redefined terrorism, its ripple effects extended far beyond, leading to a disturbing global phenomenon of a surge in antisemitism (Blauchs, 2024).

Like the Nazis, Hamas seeks the annihilation of the Jews, as clearly stated in its founding charter. Like the Nazis who targeted the Jewish organizations in

Germany, the Hamas terrorists murdered Jews indiscriminately on October 7. Like the Nazis, Hamas and its affiliated terrorist organizations indoctrinate their entire society from infancy in murderous hatred toward Jews. This can be found in television programming, school books, summer camps, and the glorification of murderers in the naming of schools, squares, and public buildings. In the aftermath of Hamas's violent assault on Israel on October 7, 2023, and the ensuing conflict, global antisemitism surged dramatically. The Israeli Diaspora Office's report revealed a 235% increase in anti-Semitic events in 2023 compared to 2022, with significant incidents reported in the U.S. and Europe. Notably, there was a 33% rise in violent anti-Semitic events, of which 48% were directly linked to the Israel-Hamas conflict. This highlights the severity of the issue, emphasizing the significant impact of the conflict on the increase in violent anti-Semitic incidents. Similarly, the October 7 denial is spreading as a growing group denies the basic facts of the attacks, pushing a spectrum of falsehoods and misleading narratives that minimize the violence or dispute its origins. Some argue that the Israeli military staged the ambush to justify an invasion of Gaza. Others say that Israel kidnaped some 240 hostages Hamas took into Gaza. Some contend that the United States is behind the plot (Dwoskin, 2024).

Like the Nazis, Hamas and other terror groups have expressed a clear intent to annihilate the Jewish people. This shared genocidal goal is evident in their actions and propaganda. The global response to the events also mirrors past attitudes. Just as Nazi symbols and rhetoric found their way into pro-Palestinian demonstrations, today's responses to the conflict often contain disturbing elements of antisemitism. This indicates a worrying trend of historical distortion and hate. The indoctrination of hate is another parallel. Hamas's strategies of instilling anti-Jewish sentiments from a young age bear a striking resemblance to the Nazi education system. Additionally, the tactics employed during the October 7th attacks, including the forced removal of Jews from hiding, are reminiscent of Nazi operations in the Warsaw Ghetto (Blauch, 2024). Cultural trauma has become a widely accepted form of collective identity in images and narratives transmitted through mass media and information networks (Meek, 2016). It includes the performance of a social role, which involves articulating ideas communicated to a broad audience (Eiermann, 2011).

## CONCLUSION

One of the main questions for many is how to define the brutal rampage of murder, rape, and assault by thousands of seasoned terrorists and average Gazans who streamed into Israel on that fateful day. One term frequently used by victims, observers, and the general public is that this was a Holocaust - or at least a Holocaust-like event. Many of the victims describe reliving the Holocaust-era experiences of their parents and The terrorists hunted, hid from them in closets, played dead in ravines, were brutalized, and suffered feelings of helplessness and abandonment. Holocaust comparisons have been rife. The issuance of emergency foreign passports to some hostages, aiming to enhance their chances of release, evokes memories of the foreign documents - both genuine and forged - used to rescue Jews during the Holocaust.

The October 7 massacre is a traumatic event unprecedented in Israeli history and may lead to post-trauma on an equally massive scale. This collective post-trauma will not just involve masses of victims but also various post-traumas from specific triggers - trauma from shootings and missiles, from physical and sexual violence stemming from the destruction of homes and communities, and trauma experienced by

IDF soldiers fighting the war against Hamas in Gaza (Shoham & Golan, 2023). Long seen as a catastrophe so horrific nothing else should be compared to it, Israelis are now drawing direct parallels between the murder of six million Jews in Europe eight decades ago and their most recent tragedy, underscoring how traumatic the attack has been for a country that rose from the ashes of World War II and was created as a haven for Jews. Many survivors experienced a crisis of faith and trust in humanity as a result of the horrors they witnessed and endured during the Holocaust. They may struggle to reconcile their beliefs with the existence of such widespread evil and suffering, leading to feelings of betrayal and spiritual distress.

In the Holocaust, Nazis led a campaign of genocide, rounding up and murdering many of Europe's Jews while sending others on trains to death or labor camps. Israelis see their country as a refuge, a nation with a strong army that could protect Jews despite regional threats. Many Jews in the diaspora share that feeling, seeing Israel as a haven should Jews be persecuted again. However, although the Hamas attack did not nearly approach the Holocaust's scale, it marked the deadliest day for Jews since then, and its well-planned slaughter reopened a wound that remains fresh for many in Israel. Nearly a quarter of Israeli Jews experience Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, according to a study from Tel Aviv University. CNN reported that Israeli mental health services are struggling to deal with the mass trauma of October 7. Hundreds of volunteers are filling in to support the families of those killed, injured, or taken hostage as the mental health situation of everyone is getting worse (Gillott, 2024).

The collective trauma in Israel is deeply rooted in the historical event of the Holocaust. The traumatic events led to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, which was accompanied by wars and displacement. Additionally, the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, regional hostilities, and sporadic outbreaks of violence contribute to the collective trauma experienced by Israelis. On October 7, 2023, Hamas terrorists waged the deadliest attack on Jews since the Holocaust - slaughtering babies, raping women, burning whole families alive, and taking hundreds of innocent civilians as hostages. The attack by Hamas led to a heightened sense of fear, insecurity, and trauma within the Israeli population.

The collective trauma in Israel is also perpetuated by the intergenerational transmission of trauma, where memories of past conflicts and traumatic events are passed down through families and communities. The commemoration of national tragedies and the memorialization of victims play a significant role in shaping collective memory and identity in Israel. Despite the resilience and determination of the Israeli people, the collective trauma resulting from decades of conflict and violence continues to impact individuals, families, and society as a whole. A significant source of cultural trauma is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has resulted in decades of violence, terrorism, and political instability.

The uniqueness of trauma in Israel is because there are multiple sources of trauma affecting society at the same time. These traumatic experiences have profoundly impacted the collective consciousness, identity, and narratives of the Israeli people. The Holocaust left an indelible mark on Jewish collective memory, shaping the identity, consciousness, and worldview of subsequent generations. The trauma of the Holocaust is deeply ingrained in Israeli society, influencing cultural practices, educational curricula, and national commemorations. All of Israel has been experiencing mental trauma since October 7, the most devastating day in the country's

76-year history and the most murderous single day for global Jewry since the Holocaust.

## REFERENCES

1. Alexander, J. C. (2002). 'On the Social Construction of Moral Universals: The "Holocaust" from Mass Murder to Trauma Drama,' *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5 (1): 5–86
2. Alexander, Jeffrey C. (2004). 'Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma,' in Jeffrey Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser and Piotr Sztompka, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley: The University of California Press), 196–263
3. Alexander, Jeffrey C. (2016). Culture trauma, morality, and solidarity: The social construction of 'Holocaust' and other mass murders. Thesis Eleven. Volume 132, Issue 1
4. Assmann, A. (2010). The Holocaust - a Global Memory? Extensions and Limits of a New Memory Community. Pp 97–117. In: Assmann, A., Conrad, S. (eds.) *Memory in a Global Age*. Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies. Palgrave Macmillan, London
5. Bauman, Zygmunt ((2008). *A Companion to Racial and Ethnic Studies*. Holocaust. Chapter 4. Book Editor(s): David Theo Goldberg, John Solomon
6. Biden, Joe (2023). Remarks by President Biden on the Terrorist Attacks in Israel. The White House. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2023/10/10/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-terrorist-attacks-in-israel-2/>
7. Blauchs, Eva (2024). International Holocaust Remembrance Day in the shadow of Oct. 7<sup>th</sup>. The Jerusalem Post. January 25. <https://www.jpost.com/judaism/article-783642>
8. Danutė Gailienė (2019). When culture fails: coping with cultural trauma. *Analytical Psychology*. Volume 64, Issue 4. Pages 530-547
9. Davidovitch, Niza; and Dana, Nissim (2017) The Holocaust paradox: Holocaust denial and its use in the Arab world, *Israel Affairs*, 23:2, 411-426
10. Dvoskin, Elizabeth (2024). Growing Oct. 7 'truther' groups say Hamas massacre was a false flag. The Washington Post. January 21. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2024/01/21/hamas-attack-october-7-conspiracy-israel/>
11. Eyerman, Ron (2011). Intellectuals and cultural trauma. *European Journal of Social Theory*. Volume 14, Issue 4
12. Eyerman, R. (2019). Perpetrator Trauma and Collective Guilt: The My Lai Massacre. In: *Memory, Trauma, and Identity*. Cultural Sociology. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham
13. Eyerman, Ron (2020). Cultural Trauma and the Transmission of Traumatic Experience. *Social Research: An International Quarterly*. Volume 87, Number 3. pp. 679-705
14. Franz-Stefan, Gady (2023). Israel's Military Tech Fetish Is a Failed Strategy. *Foreign Policy*. October 26, 2023. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/10/26/israel-hamas-gaza-military-idf-technology-surveillance-fence-strategy-ground-war/>
15. Gundar-Goshen, Ayelet (2023). Israelis grapple with the collective trauma of October 7. *Financial Times*. <https://www.ft.com/content/41b4f29a-f4d1-4a4d-8f66-f8e06cbf5745>
16. Gillott, Hannah (2024). Nearly a quarter of Israeli Jews reportedly had PTSD after October 7. *The Jewish Chronicle*, January 8. <https://www.thejc.com/news/israel/biden-announces-us-to-airdrop-humanitarian-aid-into-gaza-iiq7hihc>
17. Greenfeld, Daliya; Reupert, Andrea; and Jacobs, Nicky (2023). Living alongside past trauma: Lived experiences of Australian grandchildren of Holocaust survivors. *Family Relations*. Volume 72, Issue 3. Pages 876-890
18. Halbwachs, Maurice (1992). *On Collective Memory* (ed. and transl. by Lewis A. Coser) (Chicago: University Press)
19. Harel, Amos (2023). Failures Leading Up to the Hamas Attack That Changed Israel Forever. *Haaretz*. October 20, 2023. <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-10-20/ty-article/premium/underprepared-and-overconfident-israel-failed-to-spot-the-signs-of-impending-disaster/0000018b-4976-d03a-afcb-697edb020000>
20. Hunter, Anna Clare (2021). 'To tell the story': Cultural trauma and holocaust metanarrative. In: *Trauma & Memory*. Routledge
21. Lazar, Alon; and Litvak-Hirsch, Tal (2008). Between Culture and Family: Jewish-Israeli Young Adults' Relation to the Holocaust as a Cultural Trauma. *Traumatology*. Volume 14, Issue 4
22. Lazar, Alon; Litvak-Hirsch, Tal; and Chaitin, Julia (2008). Between Culture and Family: Jewish-Israeli Young Adults' Relation to the Holocaust as a Cultural Trauma. *Traumatology*. Volume 14, Issue 4
23. Levanon, O. S. (2021). Under a constant shadow: The Israeli–Palestinian conflict and the traumatic memory of the Holocaust. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 27(1), 58–66
24. Marsden, Ariella (2023). Who is taking responsibility for Hamas's attack on Israel? The Jerusalem Post. October 18, 2023. <https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/article-769008>

**Yaron Katz– A Century Marked by Cultural Trauma: The Enduring Memory of the Holocaust that Intertwined with Terrorism in Israel**

---

25. Meek, Allen (2016). Cultural Trauma and the Media. *Interdisciplinary Handbook of Trauma and Culture* pp 27–37
26. Plotkin-Amrami, Galia; and Brunner, José Brunner (2015). Making up 'national trauma' in Israel: From collective identity to collective vulnerability. *Social Studies of Science*. Volume 45, Issue 4
27. Sanz, Juan Carlos (2023). Elite Hamas unit that led massacre hit as Israel prepares Gaza invasion. *International*. October 12, 2023. <https://english.elpais.com/international/2023-10-12/elite-hamas-unit-that-led-massacre-hit-as-israel-prepares-gaza-invasion.html>
28. Scharf, Miri (2007). Long-term effects of trauma: Psychosocial functioning of the second and third generation of Holocaust survivors. *Development and Psychopathology*>Volume 19 Issue 2
29. Shoham, Mirit; and Golan, Shahar (2023). Israel to be hit by a tsunami of depression in wake of Hamas massacre. *The Jerusalem Post*. December 6. <https://www.jpost.com/health-and-wellness/mind-and-spirit/article-776686>
30. Schneider, Allen (2024). Was Oct. 7th a Holocaust? B'nai B'rith International. <https://www.bnaibrith.org/was-oct-7th-a-holocaust/>
31. Stenzler-Koblentz, Liran; and Chavez, Kate (2024). Conspiracy Theories and Antisemitism: Unveiling Trends Post-October 7<sup>th</sup>. Published by Far-Right Extremism, February 28. <https://ict.org.il/conspiracy-theories-and-antisemitism-unveiling-trends-post-october-7th/>
32. Sztompka, Piotr (2000). Cultural Trauma: The Other Face of Social Change. *European Journal of Social Theory*. Volume 3, Issue 4
33. The Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs (2024). <https://jewishdems.org/what-are-our-jewish-and-democratic-values/>
35. The White House (2023). President Biden on the United States' Response to Hamas's Terrorist Attacks Against Israel and Russia's Ongoing Brutal War Against Ukraine. <https://it.usembassy.gov/president-biden-on-the-unites-states-response-to-hamass-terrorist-attacks-against-israel-and-russias-ongoing-brutal-war-against-ukraine/>
36. The White House (2023a). Remarks by President Biden on the October 7th Terrorist Attacks and the Resilience of the State of Israel and its People. October 18. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2023/10/18/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-october-7th-terrorist-attacks-and-the-resilience-of-the-state-of-israel-and-its-people-tel-aviv-israel/>
37. Yair, Gad; and Odom-Weiss, Sharona (2014). Israeli Diplomacy: The Effects of Cultural Trauma. *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*. 9(1), 1-23