THE DIVIDE

On October 17, 2023, the terrorist group Hamas attacked Israel, which in the Gaza territory. This series of events has uniquely divided the world; across friends, families, and nations. Two students share their perspectives on the Israel- and its impacts on two marginalized groups.

catapulted into a immensely destructive war between Hamas and Israel political parties, and age groups, this highly-charged topic separates Hamas military conflict's manifestation in American culture and media,

story by julia perian

There is a hatred for the Jewish people simmering just beneath society's surface, and the events of Gaza just set it free. In response to increasing military conflict in Gaza, rampant anti-Semitism has been surging worldwide. Across college campuses, high schools, public gatherings, and social media platforms, people are pouncing at the chance to repeat the hostility of history.

There is conflicting dialogue surrounding this bigotry; some anti-Israel protesters believe that Israel supporters are boy-who-cried-wolfing anti-Semitism to silence criticism of the Israeli government. The preface of this argument is understandable enough. Amongst a society entangled in cancel culture, it seems that open political discourse is rapidly closing. Unarguably, anti-Semitism, or any other weighted issue, should not be weaponized against free speech or political commentary.

However, calls against anti-Semitism across the globe are not a political agenda -- anti-Semitism is an all too real and dangerous issue, and the aforementioned perspective only helps this prejudice thrive.

Since Hamas' first attack on Israel, there has been a clear increase in anti-Semitism. In protests across the nation, people raised signs adorned with blatant anti-Semtism. In Poland, one protester's sign read "Keep the world clean," with a star of David being thrown into a trash can.

The Anti-Defamation league (ADL) cites a 388% increase in acts of anti-Semitism in the U.S., including harassment, vandalism, and assault, from the same time frame last year. From October 7 (the date of Hamas' original attack), to October 23, the ADL noted 312 acts of anti-Semitism, 190 directly linked to the military conflict. One year ago, from October 7-23, 2022, 64 anti-Semitic acts were reported.

The Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) released a report on anti-Semitism on social media. They reported a 4963% increase in the total number of anti-Semitic Youtube comments from October 7-10 as compared to the three days prior to Hamas' attack. This increase translates to 15,720 comments on Youtube alone from October 7-13, amid the corresponding military events of both countries.

In case you were skimming over that cluster of statistics, that's fifteen thousand, seven hundred and twenty comments, in only one week. Only on YouTube. The almost 16,000 anti-Semitic comments don't even account for other social media platforms such as TikTok, Facebook,

Instagram, or twitter, which all reach millions of people every day.

Anyone can twist the numbers to fit their argument. So, I visited these apps myself to try to find one of these comments or posts. This was not a difficult task.

It took me less than 10 seconds to find an anti-Semitic post on Instagram after looking up a keyword such as Gaza or Palestine. I found posts referring to Israeli people as "isr*eli[s]," as if Jewish heritage is an unnameable curse.

On Tiktok, I searched the word Israel, and immediately came upon a video on the official NBC account of an "Israeli hostage speaking under duress." The comments on the video included, "Israel always playing the victim," "Zionist propaganda…they own the media," "Zionist baby killers target civilians.. evil dangers for all human beings not only in Gaza," "The media is owned by Zionists," "Don't waste food or medicine on them. Payback is a b*tch."

Zionism. This word has been dominating the Gaza conversation. The root of the debate on anti-Semitism and Israel stems from this idea of Zionism (the belief that Israel has a right to statehood and self determination) and it's intrinsicness with anti-Semitism or Judaism. Essentially, is anti-Zionism anti-Semitism?

This argument is extremely nuanced and complicated. Not supporting the current military actions of Israel -- an opinion I am of myself -- is not anti-Semitic. Recognizing the importance of a homeland to the Jews does not take away from the need for a homeland for Palestinians. Anti-Zionism in simple words is the belief that Israel should not exist, also shown in the popular protest slogan from the river to the sea. Not supporting the statehood of Israel means not supporting everything the nation stands for. To the Jewish community, Israel is a safe haven for our people after centuries of injustice, violence, and persecution. To get rid of a homeland for the people who have suffered through history's biggest regrets is to erase the millions of Jewish lives sacrificed for the right to freely and openly exist.

However, the calls of anti-Semitism in response to anti-Zionism is not only based on the importance of Israel, but on the haunting parallels anti-Zionist dialogue draws. Anti-Jew propaganda has painted the Jewish people as controllers of the banks, the allied WWI nations, Hollywood, the Russian communist movement, the economy, politics, education, and the entire world itself. During WWII, Germany released Nazi propaganda stating that

American media was controlled by the Jews. The above Tikok comments refer to Zionists as "controlling the media." The terminology may have changed, but we know exactly what they mean.

Supposed puppet masters and seekers of world domination, the Jewish people have been scapegoated and isolated throughout history since their inception. Here's a newsflash for anyone who's still not worried -- we are not as far removed from this history as Americans would like to think. We shun the fools and bystanders of WWII and blissfully paint ourselves safely past these historical monstrosities. Monstrosities that would never happen today.

Anti-Semtism does not enter nations openly. It disguises itself. It blends into anger and thrives under tense global climates. Hitler did not come to power on a platform of hating Jews; he disguised his beliefs by playing to European communist resentment. Today, the military conflict and the concept of Zionism serve as a Trojan horse for anti-Semitism to globally resurge.

The solution is not separating anti-Zionism from anti-Semitism, it's learning to separate the importance of Israel as a nation from the Israeli government's actions. In no other country would the response to unethical government action be to abolish the country itself. After Hitler's reign in Germany, the United Nations did not dissolve the country's nationhood.

Before you scorn the Jewish people for their calls against anti-Semitism, listen to the cries of all those who came before them that echo in their voices. The stakes are unfathomably high. We cannot afford to move backward. When non-Jewish people start to define anti-Semitism, the world walks a bloodstained fine line. Today, the global climate draws endless parallels to that of Nazi Germany. Today, I am fighting the same fight that my great-grandfather fought.

We see where history repeats itself, but when will this vicious pattern end? Society must wake up and end this nightmare set into motion before it is too late. The public becoming bystanders to hatred, and excusing and ignoring anti-Semitism, is how the Nazis came to power in plain sight. To not denounce anti-Semtism is to perpetuate it. For the world, ignorance is bliss. For us, it is the beginning of the end.

story by farah ahmadova

It is human nature that during a war we want to assign the "good" and the "evil" sides. Through countless news articles and reports about the war between Israel and Palestine, it is evident that this is what the media is trying to do -- to place the blame on either side, to claim an "evil." This is not the purpose of this article. Instead, it is to bring light to the sufferings of Palestinians and Palestinian Americans amidst this war.

I read a CNN article about Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan's statements about the war, and I came across a comment she made during the interview: "What we've seen in recent years is the charge of antisemitism being weaponized to silence any criticism of Israel." It intrigued me as it sparked a conversation about the fear we feel to criticize a country's actions, or anyone's actions for that matter, when they have endured something terrible. What we need to understand is that the country and government of Israel are not representative of the whole Jewish population. Being pro-Palestinian does not automatically make you antisemitic, and being pro-Israeli does not make you islamaphobic. Furthermore, being pro-Palestine does not mean that you agree with the inhumane actions of the terrorist group Hamas.

There has been over a 400% increase in antisemitism since the attacks on Gaza, according to the Anti-Defamation League. According to the Guardian, there has been a 216% rise in islamophobia since last year as a result of the war. It is worth mentioning that, though there has been a lower rise in islamophobia than antisemitism since the start of the war, islamaphobic incidents have been on the rise ever since the events of 9/11.

The rise of hate crimes shows how many are fueling their outrage in the wrong way, believing that instead of critiquing the Israeli government and Hamas, making antisemitic and islamophobic comments can get their anger across.

This rise of antisemitic comments has had an unprecedented outside effect, as it has understandably led to a defensive environment in which any critique of the actions of the Israeli government is being viewed as a form of hate crime. We need to learn how to separate the actions of a government from those of its citizens and not properly criticize these inhumane

actions without taking them out on the citizens.

This war has led to the deaths of many Palestinian Americans, their only crime being that they are Palestinian. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, there has been a spike of about 11,000 hate crimes against Palestinian Americans.

On November 25th, Hisham Awaratani, Kinnan Abel Hamid, and Tahseen Ahmed were shot in Vermont. They were wearing a Palestinian keffiyeh (a black and white scarf that is worn around the face, representing the Palestinian nationality). On October 14th, a man confronted a six-year-old Wadea Al-Fayoume and his mother, stating "he was angry at her for what was going on" with the war. The mother responded, "Let's pray for peace." Wadea Al-Fayoume died after being stabbed 26 times by this man. His mother suffered injuries but remains stable. Their crime? Being Palestinian.

Michael Herzog, Israel's ambassador to the United States, claims that Israel is doing everything in its power to protect the citizens of Gaza. He states how the Israeli Defense Force is making efforts to ensure the safety of the citizens and get them "out of harm's way."

The UN has stated that there is no safe space in Gaza for civilians to run off to.

How are over one million people, including children and older citizens, supposed to evacuate in 24 hours? That is simply impossible.

Even if these civilians could escape to "safe zones," they would still be in great harm's way as these areas are also getting targeted.

On October 9th, 2023, the Jabalia refugee camp in Gaza, which holds over 116,000 refugees, was attacked twice in less than twenty-four hours. On November 4th, there was a strike on a UN school in Gaza where over 4,000 Palestinians were taking refuge who had received no warning from the Israeli government. At least twelve people died, and about 54 were harmed, mainly women and children. Hospitals that hold thousands of patients and over 100,000 refugees are not safe during this war as well. Al-Shifa Hospital was hit by missiles five times. The hospital currently treating 5,000 patients and over 40,000 refugees.

International humanitarian law states that hospitals should have protection against any attacks unless hospitals are used to "commit, outside of their humanitarian function, acts harmful to their

enemy, and in such cases, a reasonable time limit must be given."

The Israeli government claims that they believe that they may be undergoing military operations in these hospitals, so they did warn the hospitals to evacuate.

Hamas does state that these claims are incorrect; however, it is necessary to point out that we cannot trust Hamas.

Despite this, how are you supposed to evacuate over 100,000 people, including pregnant women, in the middle of giving birth? How are people supposed to evacuate if they have no transportation, no cars, and no safe areas to go to?

It seems that the Israeli government is trying to legitimize its actions without actually caring about the well-being of Palestinian civilians.

Gilad Erdan, Israel's Ambassador to the UN, responded to the United States' request to call for "humanitarian pauses," stating that there was "no humanitarian crisis."

Yes, Israel has every right to defend itself; however, it is horrifying to not view the unfolding events as an inhumane crisis.

How many more of the over 15,000 Palestinians and 1,200 Israelis need to die for this to be considered a humanitarian crisis?

How many more innocent children, mothers, fathers, and families must die for this to be considered a crisis? When do you decide that enough is enough?