

A modern pogrom through history's lens

By Phyllis Chesler

(Sep. 25, 2024 / JNS) Can anyone really evaluate Oct. 7—the genocidal pogrom that took place barely a year ago and is not yet over?

After all, scholars are still analyzing pogroms that took place thousands of years ago all over the pagan, Christian and Muslim worlds. Only recently has the scholar Irina Astashkevich documented, in her 2018 work *Gendered Violence: Jewish Women in Pogroms: 1917-1921*, the terrifying but typical details of the rape and femicide of Jewish women during pogroms that took place more than a century ago.



Demonstrators protest against the sexual violence against women by Hamas during the Oct. 7 terrorist attacks in southern Israel, outside U.N. headquarters in New York City, Dec. 4, 2023. Credit: Yakov Binyamin/Flash90.

More than 1,000 pogroms took place in 500 locales. Lives, as

well as minds, were lost. Entire communities were erased. In the aftermath, some women attempted suicide, others succeeded, some women stopped menstruating and others had to be psychiatrically hospitalized, most were afraid to go outside forever afterward.

In Astashkevich's words: "The carnival of violence, complete with scenes of torture, rape and murder, played out on the second day of the pogrom as 'celebratory street theater.' Pogrom perpetrators purposefully drove Jews into the streets and hunted down their victims ... acts of torture took place in front of an audience of pogrom perpetrators, the local population and frightened Jews. The ritualized violence reiterated the previous pogroms, but often in a more grotesque and horrifying form *Pogromschiki* bayoneted their victims, careful not to kill them, but to leave the wounded to suffer and bleed to death in agony that sometimes lasted for several days *Pogromschiki* made sure that all the apothecaries were wrecked, and there was no medical assistance."

Even now, decades later, original and important analyses are still emerging about the Holocaust.

Just this year, my friend and colleague, Shulamit Reinharz, published an extraordinary book, *Hiding in Holland: A Resistance Memoir*, which breaks new ground about how some Jews may have survived the Nazis by hiding and by being hidden. Reinharz's work, which relied upon her father's "hidden" memoirs letters and conversations, required her considerable academic skills and access to a vast and still-growing literature on the Holocaust and the perspective that more than 80 years in the future can provide.

I immediately knew that Oct. 7 was a pogrom, yet my understanding of what was unique about this particular Iranian-funded crime against the Jewish people and humanity overall has evolved in the months since the initial attack. As we approach the first anniversary of that horrific event, a

number of items stand out.

First: Hamas terrorists recorded live video footage of their atrocities and released it on social media. They even sent it to the families of those who were tortured, raped, murdered or kidnapped.

Second: The attacks unleashed an ugly and increasingly ominous global firestorm that has cheered on Hamas's sadism as "resistance" and condemned all Israeli civilians—be they Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Druze or Buddhist. It has also led to a seemingly unstoppable, propaganda-driven, worldwide siege against the Jews.

Third: The alleged "progressives" in the West, including the feminists who have, at the very least, paid lip service in vocalizing their opposition to the torture, gang rapes and murders of women, children and dissidents in countries like Afghanistan, Algeria, Bosnia, Iran, Nigeria, Rwanda and Sudan, have remained silent. They refuse to condemn Hamas's brutality against women on Oct. 7 despite myriad video evidence of the atrocities.

Fourth: Many governments and international organizations keep demanding more and more proof of Hamas's actions and continue to deny the Oct. 7 atrocities. Yet these same actors have not denied any other 21st-century genocides.

Fifth: More people now know that the raging, masked, keffiyeh-wearing demonstrators who have been flooding American and European cities and campuses since Oct. 7 have been bought and paid for by Russia, Iran, Arab oil money, and woke American philanthropists and foundations. It is also now clear that these same groups have been preparing for this moment for 60 years.

Sixth: As some have suggested, Hamas's behavior on Oct. 7 seems to have been influenced by the most sadistic pornography, as well as by mood-altering drugs. This sadism

rivals and may even exceed the horror of other pogroms or war zones.

Seventh: Many hundreds, perhaps thousands, of so-called civilians in Gaza joined in this “carnival of violence.” They surged into Israel right along with the armed paragliders and fiends on motorbikes. Just as some Palestinian Arabs celebrated Sept. 11 by cheering and handing out candies, so, too, did Gazan civilians happily, perhaps even joyfully, sit down, eat, drink and loot Israeli homes, even as Israelis were being tortured, raped and murdered in the next room or very nearby.

This suggests that there are no or very few “innocent” Gazans. These heavily indoctrinated Arabs are barbarians, and the Westerners who support them are not merely bystanders but collaborators.

I am now and forever an Oct. 8 Jew and an Oct. 8 American.

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