

An October 7th “Holocaust” : Analysis of Online News Coverage of the Hamas Attack and Israeli Retaliation Using the NOW Corpus

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An October 7th “Holocaust”: Analysis of Online News Coverage of the Hamas Attack and Israeli Retaliation Using the NOW Corpus

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Abstract:

Rhetoric invoking “Hitler,” “Nazis,” and the “Holocaust” to justify Western military intervention in the Middle East has been a demonstrable aspect of political discourse since at least the First Iraq War. Because a Jewish nation with a large number of Holocaust survivors was attacked on October 7th, 2023, the potential extent and nature of Holocaust references in subsequent news coverage must be explored in further detail. The present study is the first systematic investigation of the search node *Holocaust* in online news articles with *Hamas* in the title, sourced from the News on the Web (NOW) Corpus in a roughly 16-week period following October 7th. Results seem to confirm that news coverage of current events is similarly rife with comparisons to the Holocaust of European Jews in terms of the human suffering having recently been endured by *Israelis*, not by Palestinians.

1. Introduction

I think Ambassador Danon put it well in a context that Americans can understand, 9/11, the evil that was perpetrated here. But the scale, ... the right comparison is *Nagasaki* [emphasis added]. This was like an atomic bomb. And as 40,000 people were killed in Japan, when they dropped that bomb on Nagasaki, so too were the hundreds upon hundreds upon hundreds of people who were killed in Israel.

This unexpected comparison was made by the CEO and National Director of the (Jewish) Anti-Defamation League, Jonathan Greenblatt, on MSNBC’s *Morning Joe* program (2023, 0:51) just days after the events of October 7th, 2023 in which Hamas fighters conducted a widescale, orchestrated attack on Israeli military bases and settlements. Even though hyperbolic invocations of World War II in public discourse have admittedly become something of a cliché, it is nonetheless surprising that this quote seemed to be completely ignored in Japan by the Japanese online press at the time of this writing. Perhaps this can be partially attributed to the ongoing ubiquity and commonplace nature of World War II references in the context of modern-day geopolitics. And arguably, no theme is repeated more often than that of the “Holocaust” of European Jews by Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (i.e., the “Nazis”), usually to garner American public and international support for military intervention somewhere in the Middle East.

Both the First and Second Iraq Wars are said to have been waged under a “Saddam as Hitler” metaphor, with Hussein’s occupation of Kuwait likened to Hitler’s invasion of Czechoslovakia, and his brutality, first towards the Kuwaitis and then towards his own people and ethnic minorities inside of Iraq, being akin to Hitler and the Nazis’ treatment of European Jews (Berman, 2004, p. 98). As a representative example, in the lead up to the First Iraq War in 1990, American President George H.W. Bush alluded to the Führer when making public the deployment of American forces to Saudi Arabia: “Appeasement does not work. As was the case in the 1930s, we see in Saddam Hussein an aggressive dictator threatening his neighbors” (Bush, 1990, para. 17). Bush also made this comparison explicit, saying that Hussein was “Hitler revisited, a totalitarianism and a brutality that is naked and unprecedented in modern times” (Bush, 1991, p. 1449).

The Iraqi dictator was not the only one to receive the “Hitler treatment”: So has ex-Syrian President and neocon archnemesis Bashar al-Assad. In 2017, then White House Press Secretary, Sean Spicer, when attempting to justify an American missile strike on Syria as retaliation for al-Assad’s alleged use of sarin gas against Syrian rebels in which civilians were also claimed to be killed, Spicer stated “You know, you had someone as despicable as Hitler who didn’t even sink to using chemical weapons” (Fandos & Landler, 2017). Shortly after, then US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson addressed Spicer’s original comments saying that “I think the characterization [of him being worse than Hitler] is one that President Assad has brought upon himself” (Engel, 2017, para. 4). Hitler comparisons are not limited to Western leaders, with then Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu stating “There’s no difference between shaking hands with Assad, or with Hitler, Saddam, Karadzic, Milosevic” (Reuters, 2015).

Finally, as might be expected, to ensure ongoing US / NATO financial and military support for their proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, American politicians such as former Speaker of the House of Representatives Kevin McCarthy have invoked the specter of Hitler when referring to the current *despot du jour*, Russian President Vladimir Putin (NBC News, 2023, 0:39). Similar comparisons have likewise been made countless times in American newspapers and thinktank pieces to demonize Putin and Russia’s Special Military Operation in Ukraine (e.g., Ruane, 2022; Simms, 2023). To make matters even more complicated, Putin has himself designated the “denazification” of Ukraine as one of the goals of the Russian campaign (e.g., Faulconbridge & Soldatkin, 2023).

Specifically, it is unquestionably the Holocaust – the persecution of European Jews by the Nazis preceding and during World War II – which is the crime for which Hitler and the Nazi Party are most infamous. And it is no surprise that public figures and politicians have frequently warned that enemies of the West and/or Israel are sure to carry out another *Shoah* if they are not pre-emptively dealt a military blow. Then British Prime Minister David Cameron stated that those opposed to military intervention against al-Assad for the purported gas attacks would feel “shame” in retrospect: “The horror of the Holocaust is unique but the lessons we learn from it are absolutely applicable right across our society at home and abroad. In particular, the lesson of not standing by” (Shaviv, 2013). Concerning the events of the Syrian civil war, then Sephardic chief rabbi of Israel Yitzhak Yosef referred to it as a “small Holocaust” (Ettinger, 2016), and former Israeli chief rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau later said that “This is certainly a *Shoah* of the Syrian people and it did not start today. For the past six years they have been living in a Holocaust” (Samuel, 2017). In a 2020 speech by U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jim Risch (R-Idaho) during a virtual

event hosted by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, he referenced the *Shoah* as an ongoing pretext for regime change in Syria: “This museum is dedicated to ensuring that the atrocities of the Holocaust never happen again. ‘Never again’ has become our watchword. Unfortunately, Syria confronts us with the horrific reality that mass murder and torture are not just things of the past.”

In light of the fact that a nation containing numerous “Holocaust survivors” was attacked on October 7th, with many news reports singling out such individuals (e.g., Staff, 2023), and in light of the fact that Hamas’ surprise military operation would seem to have provided a *casus belli* for the US-sponsored Israeli military to invade Gaza in order to deal with a long-standing and intractable political problem, invoking the memory of the Holocaust to justify a controversial or unpopular war in Palestine would not seem entirely surprising. Indeed, a preliminary English-language Google search of “Hamas Holocaust” provided 15.4 million hits in 0.24 seconds, with all the top results representing news sites. The Prime Minister of Israel himself, Benjamin Netanyahu, tweeted a video of an October 11th phone call with U.S. President Joe Biden in which he referred to the Hamas assault as “an attack whose savagery I can say we have not seen *since the Holocaust* (Prime Minister of Israel, 2023, 0:48)” (emphasis added). To what extent, and in what other contexts, is this discourse represented in internet news articles about the October 7th Hamas attack and subsequent Israeli invasion and occupation of Gaza?

In the present mixed methods, qualitative and quantitative study (e.g., Biber et al., 1998; Baker, et al. 2008), the News on the Web (NOW) Corpus was used to identify, quantify, and characterize the use of *Holocaust* in coverage from online news websites in a roughly 16-week period following October 7th to test the hypothesis that the *Shoah* is a significant thread woven throughout the narrative of events and that the events of that fateful day constituted “another Holocaust” in a significant portion of news coverage. In short, the present study will attempt to identify whether coverage of the human suffering following the initial Hamas attack is rife with comparisons to the Holocaust of European Jewry under Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party, specifically in the context of the hardships having recently been endured by *Israelis*, not by Palestinians.

2. Methods

A survey of English-language internet news articles was conducted for the period October 7th, 2023 to January 25th, 2024 – the date of data collection for the present study – using the News on the Web Corpus (Davies, 2016-). According to the English-Corpora.org search portal, at the time of writing, the NOW Corpus contained “18.6 billion words of data from web-based newspapers and magazines from 2010 to the present time . . . More importantly, the corpus grows by about 120-140 million words of data each month (from about 250,000 new articles), or about 1.5 billion words each year” (Davies, 2016-). The NOW Corpus was chosen because it is constantly being updated with new articles and enables more or less real-time monitoring of news coverage of recent and ongoing world events. In addition, unlike some other corpus software, English-Corpora.org is able to create sub-corpora and keyword lists from billions of words of text in seconds, simplifying a once labor-intensive task that can now be accomplished “probably hundreds or thousands of times faster” than alternative methods (Davies, 2023, p. 90). Finally, the fact that it is freely available means that the findings of the present study are easily replicable.

Thus, a specialized *virtual corpus* (Davies, 2023) was created using NOW's "Create corpus" feature, sourcing articles with the lemma *Hamas* in the title and containing the lemma *Holocaust* (see Fig. 1). The number of unique texts that included the search node was recorded, and the top ten keywords were identified by part of speech. Keyword rankings, or "frequency lists" allow for the implementation of a quantitative means of analysis in addition to qualitative methods for identifying "the occurrences of particular linguistic phenomena" (Baker,

2006, p.1). Adverbs were excluded from the analysis to focus on lexical items more likely to indicate relevant discourses. Keywords were ranked by relative frequency rather than by raw frequency in order to focus on words specific to the virtual corpus but not to the NOW Corpus in general (Davies, 2023, p. 92). NOW's default "specificity" setting for ranking each list of keywords was not altered. Ranking keywords by specificity simultaneously cleaned the list removing high frequency grammatical words such as articles unlikely to reveal relevant discourses. For collocation analysis (see Fig. 2), span range before and after the search node was set to 4, the default setting in both cases. The top collocations were also recorded, and the minimum mutual information (MI) score was set to 3 (Balance, 2022, p. 2) to filter out any word combinations that were not "collocations" strictly speaking. Collocates were ranked by raw frequency (Davies, n.d.). A concordance analysis was then performed to identify patterns of usage and characterize the contexts for each. Methodologies based on the theoretical notions of keyness and collocation, as well as careful inspection of concordance lines, are techniques that are widely utilized and recognized in corpus linguistics studies (Baker et al., 2008).

Though initially employing a *corpus-based* approach to answer the present research question, in order to achieve an even more granular analysis, data extracted from the initial corpus searches led to formulation of additional research questions as part of the analytical process in a hybrid *corpus-driven* / corpus-based approach (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). Accordingly, the Results section of the current study include initial interpretations as well as trends in the data. For that reason, contrary to the norm, in-text citations are sometimes included there as well.

Fig. 1 Screenshot of NOW's "Create corpus" feature employed in the current study to find articles with *Hamas*¹ in the title and containing the word *Holocaust*¹

Fig. 2 Screenshot of search parameters to extract collocates² of *Holocaust* from articles with *Hamas* in the title

3. Results

3.1 Number of texts and words comprising “Holocaust Corpus”

There were 488 distinct texts with the lemma *Hamas* in the title and containing the lemma *Holocaust* at the time of initial data collection³. For utility’s sake, this virtual corpus (779, 577 words total) will be referred to as “Holocaust Corpus (HC)” going forward.

3.2 Frequencies

Lists of the top ten keywords for each part of speech can be seen in Appendix 1.

The top-ranked noun in HC was *kibbutz* (N=192), referring to any one of approximately 270 small settlements of 100–1000 people “historically centered around collective farms” in “a communal living situation unique to Israel,” of which several near Gaza were scenes of violence and hostage-taking on October 7th (Sullivan, 2023, para. 4–5). Subsequently, as one possible line of discourse based on initial interpretation of keywords, the *incursion* (9th, N=106) of armed Hamas militants into Israeli villages, taking *hostages* (2nd, N=1954) and *captives* (8th, N=154) from among the *civilian* (10th, N=1059) population is also reminiscent of the indiscriminate Nazi violence and terror reported by European Jews in pogroms during the Holocaust, in both cases, arguably motivated by *anti-semitism* (5th, N=402). Concurrently, calls for a *cease-fire* (6th, N=643) for humanitarian aid to Gaza have been described by some Israel apologists as a form of anti-semitism, because Israelis are said to have a right to defend themselves from another genocide, the Holocaust being the first (e.g., Mazzig, 2023). Taken together, top noun keywords in HC suggest a putative discourse in which Hamas may echo the Nazis, and the October 7th attack hearkens back to the pogroms conducted by the Nazis against peaceful European Jews.

A similar narrative evolves when examining HC’s top ten verbs. In one possible interpretation of narrative patterns, not only were Israelis taken hostage, they were, more evocatively, *kidnapped* (1st, N=218) or *abducted* (3rd, N=96), and many were not only *killed* (9th, N=1812) during the attack, but *murdered* (10th, N=154) with malice, premeditation, and intent by Hamas just as European Jews were “murdered” by the Nazis (e.g., United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d.). Hamas’ actions have been almost universally *condemned* (2nd, N=442) by the civilized, rules-based world (e.g., Waldo, Epstein, Hilbush, & Zelin, 2023), much as the Nazis’ were.

In terms of adjectives, the presence of *anti-semitic* (3rd, N=263) may reinforce the interpretation mentioned above: Just as Hitler and the Nazis were motivated to commit atrocities due to an unreasonable, pathological hatred of *innocent* (10th, N=221) Jewish people based on conspiracies and tropes (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, n.d.) the *terrorist* (6th; N=628) organization Hamas was not necessarily motivated simply by political goals or historical grievances, but by anti-semitism. Nevertheless, at this point in the analysis, it is still not completely clear in what direction the “anti-semitism” accusation is being hurled. The most frequently (1st, N=183) occurring adjective in HC is *pro-Palestinian*, when in combination with *anti-semitic*, may suggest a possible discourse in which protesters decrying the Israeli treatment of the Palestinian people are written off and delegitimized as anti-semites (e.g., Patel & Betts, 2023) like the Nazis. Finally, the *horrific* (9th, N=109) atrocities allegedly perpetrated by Hamas may be likened to Holocaust literature in which the Nazis were said to have performed all

manner of sadistic torture and inventive methods of extermination (e.g., Halioua & Halioua, 2021).

As mentioned previously, all of the texts in HC have the lemma *Hamas* in the title and contain the lemma *Holocaust* in the text. Nevertheless, while the frequency rankings above are indeed potentially suggestive of discourses in which the October 7th attack is likened to a second Jewish Holocaust, there are however, many instances in which an interpretation of keyword patterns could just as easily point to a discourse in which an ethnic cleansing / genocide of Palestinians has been occurring, this time, ironically, by Israelis themselves. For example, a discourse in which Israeli citizens were being forced to *evacuate* (5th verb, N=183) or being *displaced* (6th verb, N=103) from their homes during the initial Hamas attack could just as easily apply to the situations facing Palestinian civilians following the Israeli Defense Force’s (IDF) invasion and occupation of Gaza. For this reason, it is crucial to look more closely at the immediate context in which the search node *Holocaust* occurs, first by identifying its most common collocates and then by examining the concordance lines in which the collocations occur.

3.3 Collocates of *Holocaust* in context

A list of the top thirty collocates of *Holocaust* in HC can be seen in Appendix 2.

The most frequent collocate is *since* (N=196). Extracting a random sample of concordance lines – which can be seen in *Keyword in Context (KWIC)* format in Fig. 3 – this collocate appears as either the cluster *since the Holocaust* or *since the Nazi Holocaust* in all but a handful of cases. This cluster is closely preceded or followed in each concordance line by either “Jews,” “the Jewish people,” “Jewish life,” or an analogous term in almost every single case. Examples include, when referring to the initial Hamas attack: “the worst one-day mass killing of Jews since the Holocaust,” “the worst barbaric aggression towards

who glorifies as' resistance' the largest single-day mass murder of Jews since the Holocaust. " Torres said in a statement. " It is reprehensible and repulsive.
of hostages in a video statement issued late Monday. # " Not since the Holocaust have so many Jews been killed in one day, " he said. "
and slaughtered over 1,200 civilians, marking the deadliest day for Jews worldwide since the Holocaust. Israel's retaliatory strikes on Gaza over the last six
had said that my Instagram post about the worst terrorist attack on Jews since the Holocaust would reach hundreds of millions of people, get translated in
" outreach. " If, after the greatest single-day murder of Jews since the Holocaust, the United States was still so eager to restrain Israel from retaliating that it
believes Saturday's attack appeared to be the single deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust. # The rabbi sees larger implications for how U.S. cultural le
the worst campaign of murder, torture and abuse of the Jewish People since the Holocaust. # In the past decades, there have been numerous conflicts init
power to shine a light on the greatest evil committed against our people since the Holocaust. " " The Supernova Music Festival must be seen and understo
" It's the deadliest day of the history of the Jewish people since the Holocaust, and I promise you there's not going to be a retaliation. This
speakers remarked that the toll was the greatest single loss of Jewish civilians since the Holocaust. # Two Canadians, Alexandre Look of Montreal, and Ben
that they're harboring and supporting terrorists who have killed more Jewish people since the Holocaust is absolutely unacceptable and these people do n
was the deadliest attack in Israel's history and the deadliest for Jews since the Holocaust. # March organizers had said the Palestinian children would accor
when, on October 7, it witnessed the greatest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. # There are many fewer Palestinian Canadians, about 50,000, but the
hate manifest in another way: in the worst massacre of Jewish people since the Holocaust. " Biden said near the end of his speech at the Human Rights Cou
mankind. " # Ali noted that this was the worst antisemitic attack since the Holocaust -- and that President Biden recently urged: " This is a moment for the
at once. The October 7 massacre was the largest slaughter of Jews since the holocaust. And the Israeli response to that massacre is leaving thousands of in
what U.S. and Israeli officials say was the most lethal assault against Jews since the Holocaust. # Advertisement # Biden is looking to send the strongest me
been killed in one day, " he said. " And not since the Holocaust have we witnessed scenes of Jewish women and children, grandparents and even Holocaust
WASHINGTON -- With Israel reeling from the worst daily death toll of Jews since the Holocaust, Texans in Congress raced to declare support Monday -- and
measures that Israelis have taken in response to the deadliest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. It seems neither right nor smart for Israel to cut off w

Fig. 3 Screenshot of randomized sample of twenty concordance lines from HC in KWIC format containing the cluster *since the Holocaust*

innocent Jewish people since the Holocaust,” and “the *single* (24th, N=10) largest loss of life since the Holocaust.”

Knowing that *since the Holocaust* was uttered by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu quite early on (see the Introduction), it begs the question: can the prevalence of this cluster be attributed simply to the act of a quotation by a public figure being repeated over and over again through news reporting? For this reason, a secondary collocation search was performed for instances in which a quotation mark collocated within four words before or after *since the Holocaust*. Indeed, there were 70 entries in which the cluster originated from a quotation by a public figure, such as Netanyahu, or an Israeli representative at the International Court of Justice, or Joe Biden, who was American President at the time. Nevertheless, this means that almost two-thirds of the entries containing *since the Holocaust* did not directly originate from a quotation but were present as what could be described as a “talking point.”

The second most frequent collocate is, perhaps not surprisingly based on the data above, *Jews* (N=104). Third and fourth are *survivors* (N=78) and *survivor* (N=47), respectively. A sample of the concordance lines (Fig. 4) demonstrates that these collocate almost exclusively as the two-word cluster *Holocaust survivor(s)*. This suggests a possible discourse in which many of Hamas’ initial victims suffered a “double calamity,” portraying them in an even more pitiful and sympathetic light. As an example, there are accounts of “infants in their mothers’ arms, grandparents in wheelchairs, Holocaust survivors abducted and held hostage.” Similarly, Hamas is said to have “killed over 1, 300 people, beheaded babies, raped women, and kidnapped Holocaust survivors.” The reference to a “Holocaust survivor in a wheelchair,” first mentioned by U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, himself the stepson (Cohen, 2023) of someone who *survived* (19th, N=11) the Holocaust, occurred at least 8 times, with *wheelchair* (N=12) itself

as hostages on motorcycles and golf carts. Some of the dead and captured were Holocaust survivors. # Advertisement # " This is a massacre. This is a po
" Each of us watched in horror as children, the elderly, even Holocaust survivors were stolen, beaten and slaughtered at the hands of Hamas, " Ford
on insects, " he said. " Grandparents and the elderly, among them Holocaust survivors who endured the Nazis, were violently dragged from their homes,
the Holocaust have we witnessed scenes of Jewish women and children, grandparents and even Holocaust survivors being herded into trucks and taken i
and abused civilian women, desecrated their bodies, terrorized screaming children, lined up Holocaust survivors, and dragged them off as captives. The h
on. # " Infants in their mothers' arms, grandparents in wheelchairs, Holocaust survivors abducted and held hostage -- hostages who Hamas has now thre
and infants, as young as baby age and as old as 80, including Holocaust survivors, " IDF international spokesperson Lt. Col. (Res.) Jonathan Conricus said
dead or hostages. Infants in their mothers' arms, grandparents in wheelchairs, Holocaust survivors abducted and held hostage. Hostages whom Hamas h
the well being of our hostages, young children, babies, women and elderly Holocaust survivors who were kidnapped from their homes. We pray for the s
for rape, kidnapping, and murder of toddlers, women, and even elderly Holocaust survivors. # The campaign cites the Quran's repeated expressions of a
. Hamas' barbaric behavior -- the brutal taking of life -- including babies, Holocaust survivors and the disabled elderly -- and the humiliation of hostages, t
keep his staff and patrons safe. # Igel, who is the grandson of Holocaust survivors, said he never imagined he would see another massacre of Jewish peo
citizens hostage, among them infants, toddlers, entire families, the elderly and Holocaust survivors, " they said. # The notion of fasting for deliverance in t
Israel, killed over 1300 people, beheaded babies, raped women, and kidnapped Holocaust survivors? " it said on X. # Author Rabbi Shmuley Boteach also
bringing back the hostages, who include " babies, children, old people and Holocaust survivors. # " This is a crime against humanity and we should all gat
taken by Hamas attackers. # " As a father, grandfather and son to Holocaust survivors, I understand that very high price that the fallen paid. I'm
Among those who have been abducted are babies, children and orphans. Grandparents, holocaust survivors, people who are sick and in urgent need of r
to parents and elderly people, Azoulay stressed. # For some survivors of the Holocaust, " it brings back childhood traumas they thought they'd never see
the Middle East to parents anxious about their children's reaction to the conflict and Holocaust survivors. # Since it was launched a few days after the dea
, from teenagers to parents and elderly people, Azoulay stressed. For some survivors of the Holocaust, " it brings back childhood traumas they thought th

Fig. 4 Screenshot of randomized sample of twenty concordance lines from HC in KWIC format containing the cluster *Holocaust survivors*

being the seventeenth most frequent collocate. The concurrent presence of *elderly* (N=16) as the eighth would seem to support evidence for a potential discourse in which Hamas showed no pity, even upon Israel’s weakest and most vulnerable, whose victimhood is most likely to incite a particular kind of outrage in the reader. Another reoccurring feature of the corpus concerns the fact that many of the selected texts are written by or contain interviews with “descendants of Holocaust survivors.” An examination of concordance lines demonstrates that this occurs in at least 21 of the entries, often emphasizing the trauma they have also experienced. This suggests a discourse in which media priority may be given, at least in part, to said descendants, whether or not they be experts on the topic, perhaps to give a “face” to the calamity or as a way to amplify voices that would no doubt support a firm hand being used to militarily deal with Hamas/Palestine.

Memorial (5th, N=29; Fig. 5) and *museum* (6th, N=16), often themselves found in combination, refer specifically to the many Holocaust memorial museums, plazas, and *remembrance* (16th, N=13) days that are so ubiquitous, especially in the United States – such as the one in *Miami* (23rd, N=10) *Beach* (22nd, N=10) – as well as the individuals associated with them, and how they have been featured in the news following the Hamas attack. Specifically, the *Yad* (18th, N=12) *Veshem* (12th, N=14) World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem figures prominently. These references, in a corpus of texts from late 2023 into early 2024, suggest a discourse in which October 7th represented a “little Holocaust” and that the original must never be forgotten, lest another occur, this time in Israel. Calls for enhanced Holocaust *education* (27th, N=8) seem to have been a feature of discourse during this period as well.

The ninth most frequent collocate is *ethnic* (N=15), and in the current context, its representation seems to center mainly around the case of a young American actress who appeared to imply on social

<p>in a ski mask painting the symbol about 1:30 this morning next to the Horwitz-Wasserman Holocaust Memorial Plaza, said Eszter Kutas, the executive c current crisis to the Holocaust. Yad Vashem, the official Israeli memorial for the Holocaust, described the act as dishonorable. # Israel's U.N. Ambassa to a kibbutz on the Gaza border and a new agreement with the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial are also planned, the state chancellery in Munich saik said at least 212 people were taken captive. # Leaders of Israel's national Holocaust memorial have criticized U.N. Secretary-General Ant? nio Guterres . Foreign Minister Eli Cohen cancelled his planned meeting with Guterres, while Israel's Holocaust memorial, Yad Vashem, claimed that the UN chief " f Hall of Names on September 3, 2018 during his visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial museum in Jerusalem commemorating the six million Jew rules against bullying or harassment. # Speaking through a microphone outside the New England Holocaust memorial in Boston, Liyam Chitayat, a doc on the war. # But his action was criticised by Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial, which said Erdan's gesture " disgraces the victims of the Holoca minute of silence marked the start of memorial ceremonies across the country, but unlike Holocaust Remembrance Day and Memorial Day, it was not on Israel. # AP # 2/9 ? Floral display? # At the Holocaust Memorial in Miami Beach, Florida, a striking display of flowers adorned the edge , on LinkedIn wrote that the Walmart Foundation will donate \$1M to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to support outreach programs to and for emergency vehicles. # Yad Vashem criticizes UN envoy for wearing starIsrael's Holocaust memorial, Yad Vashem, has criticized Israel's UN amb BBYO, a Jewish teen movement, where he visited Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust memorial and remembrance centre. # Israeli media has reported tha become furious when comparisons are made. # In a 2016 speech marking Israel's Holocaust memorial day, Yair Golan, then deputy military chief, said the death camps in Europe. And visiting dignitaries are taken to the country's Holocaust memorial. # Israeli historian Tom Segev said it was natural for country where so many Jews had perished. Having been to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial in Israel, I believed there was no need to see Auschw : The Holy See, Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust research institute, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the U.S. and Israeli embassies to the Holy See . as they wait for a rally in support of Israel to start, at the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach, Oct. 10, 2023, in Miami Beach, Fla. an Israeli flag as he attends a rally in support of Israel, at the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach, Oct. 10, 2023, in Miami Beach, Fla. as they wait for a rally in support of Israel to start, at the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach, Oct. 10, 2023, in Miami Beach, Fla.</p>

Fig. 5 Screenshot of randomized sample of twenty concordance lines from HC in KWIC format containing the collocate *Memorial*

media that Palestinians were experiencing Holocaust-like conditions (McIntosh, 2023). This was conflated with “hate” against Jews – “false references to genocide, ethnic *cleansing* (13th, N=14), Holocaust *distortion* (11th, N=14)” – and she subsequently lost an acting role under accusations of anti-semitism. The tenth most frequently occurring collocate was *phenomenon* (N=14). This similarly appears to refer to news reporting on Israel’s public release of bodycam footage taken by Hamas fighters as a means to counteract a “Holocaust *denial-like* (15th, N=13) phenomenon *evolving* (20th, N=10) in real time,” probably aimed to dismiss criticisms that many of Israel’s claims of Hamas atrocities were not backed up by any tangible proof (e.g., Sudilovsky, 2023; Al Jazeera English, 2024). *Denial* (21st, N=10) is also featured similarly. Together, these suggest a discourse in which scrutiny of Israeli conduct in Gaza, like the details of the Holocaust, is off limits, with social consequences for anyone questioning either.

As might be expected, *Nazi* (25th, N=9), *Nazis* (26th, N=8; Fig. 6), and *Hitler* (30th, N=7) are also included. Except for one case in which Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan compared Benjamin Netanyahu to Hitler in wake of questionable Israeli treatment of prisoners in Gaza, all other concordance lines referring to the Nazi Party and / or the Führer seem to appear in one of two contexts: 1) references to the Nazi Holocaust vis-à-vis the suffering of Israelis on and around October 7th or 2) references to the story of a freelance Gaza journalist hired by the New York Times to cover the current conflict despite calls to “cancel” him for past social media posts that seemed to speak favorably of Hitler (Greyman-Kennard, 2023).

-- and Jewish men had to learn to fight and kill. # In the Holocaust, Nazis and their collaborators killed an estimated 1.5 million Jewish children. # It
23 lakhs Palestine residents are not Hamas members, bombing them is equal to holocaust by Nazis. There is no difference. **26;111;TOOLONG
the Holocaust, when six million Jews were murdered by the Nazis. # The Holocaust was unparalleled in its scale and evil, but it stands in a long line
the besieged villages, referring to historic massacres of European Jews. # In the Holocaust, Nazis led a campaign of genocide, rounding up and murdering
can compare these monsters, these inhuman beings to, are the Nazis during the Holocaust. # Hannie Ricardo, mother of 26-year-old Oriya Ricardo, killed
I can compare these monsters, these inhuman beings, are the Nazis during the Holocaust. " # " The same kind of people and the world needs to know
terrorist group Hamas, the deadliest day for Jews since the genocide perpetrated during the Holocaust by the Nazis. # The Empire State Building is lit in b
left, reckless politicians and overheated pundits have invoked Hitler, the Nazis or the Holocaust in order to score rhetorical points -- and historians like m

Fig. 6 Screenshot of concordance lines from HC in KWIC format containing the collocate *Nazis*

In summary, HC contains several persistent and potentially noteworthy discourses. There is a significant narrative throughout that October 7th was the worst calamity to befall Jewish people since World War II, drawing attention to the terrible events of the Holocaust and ostensibly subjecting readers to its associated horrific imagery over and over again every time it is mentioned. Particularly, the repeating narrative that the Hamas attack was the single greatest loss of Jewish lives “since the Holocaust” appears to be a phrase that is so highly-conserved as to possibly exist as a talking point. Also, the October 7th attack seems to have disproportionately affected elderly and physically-challenged Holocaust survivors – the most vulnerable and unluckiest victims of all – based on the fact that articles singling them out are quite numerous. Their descendants also feature prominently in news coverage surrounding these events. Not only that, but institutions and individuals responsible for eternally preserving the memory of the Holocaust – the end of which occurred almost 80 years in the past – appear to feature prominently in current day internet news discourse about the recent Hamas attack on Israelis. Another common thread appears to be the conflation of skepticism over claims of Hamas atrocities with “Holocaust denial.” Finally, as

might be expected with any mention of the Holocaust, references to Hitler and the Nazis are relatively common.

4. Discussion

The present study, using free, user-friendly yet robust corpus software, able to search billions of words from online news sources and create specialized virtual corpora in seconds, thus allowing easy replicability of its findings, is the first to identify, quantify, and characterize references to the *Holocaust* in English-language online news articles about the October 7th Hamas attack and Israel's subsequent retaliatory measures. The results seem to support the hypothesis that, similar to depictions of enemies of the West, Israel and Democracy in the past, coverage of the human suffering following the events of the initial Hamas attack is rife with comparisons to the Holocaust of European Jews under Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party, specifically in the context of the hardships having recently been endured by *Israelis*, not by Palestinians.

First, the mere existence of nearly 500 unique texts with *Hamas* in the title, in a two-and-a-half month timeframe, but referencing a historical event on the other side of the world that ended nearly 80 years ago, is striking. Even more compelling is the fact that the most frequently occurring collocate was *since* (N=196) the Holocaust. As mentioned previously, nearly two-thirds of occurrences containing *since the Holocaust* or *since the Nazi Holocaust* did not originate in a quotation from a public figure, existing instead, arguably, as a “talking point.” While it is difficult to state with any certainty that this was a directive disseminated from a central source or sources under some kind of editorial or governmental dictate, it cannot be ruled out. Indeed, while preparing this Discussion section, the author encountered this very same cluster, continuing to be repeated, in the State of the Union address exactly five months after the start of the conflict, by no more authoritative a source than American President Joe Biden (para. 323–324): “This crisis began on October 7th with a massacre by the terrorist group Hamas. 1,200 innocent people women and girls, men and boys, slaughtered, many enduring sexual violence. The deadliest day for the Jewish people *since the Holocaust*” [emphasis mine]. Shortly after, Biden asserted that “Israel has a right to go after Hamas” and presumably has the right to continue an extremely bloody campaign with a very large number of civilian casualties.

Why should the Holocaust feature so prominently in a conflict almost 80 years in the future in a completely different part of the world? As mentioned earlier, the employment of rhetoric in which drastic military intervention is crucial to prevent “another Holocaust” seems to be standard operating procedure by prominent Western and Israeli stakeholders (e.g., Shaviv, 2013; Ettinger, 2016; Samuel, 2017; Risch, 2020). Such propaganda would seem especially important for this most recent conflict in order to at least partially inoculate public opinion against the inevitable backlash that has resulted from images, stories, and statistics on the ground in Gaza, in which one influential study estimated around 64,000 deaths⁴ from traumatic injury during the first 9 months of the Israeli military campaign alone (Jamaluddine, Abukmail, Aly, Campbell, & Checchi, 2025). It would be a challenge to characterize the numbers above as a “proportionate response” to the Hamas attack in which around 1,200 Israelis and foreign nationals were killed (Mackenzie, 2024), unless the initial Hamas attack was somehow framed as being only the first step in a

systematic effort to liquidate millions of Jewish people. Not only does it seem that the specter of the Holocaust was used pre-emptively to justify a bloody invasion and occupation of Gaza that was to come, but it was also invoked months after the start of the conflict by Arsen Ostrovsky, a pro-Israel attorney speaking during South Africa’s recent case against Israel at the International Court of Justice, in which he gave an impassioned defense “in the wake of the single largest massacre of Jews, *since the Holocaust* itself (The Jerusalem Post, 2024)” [emphasis mine].

In other words, facilitation of online news discourses in which Jewish people suffered “another *Shoah*” in Israel on October 7th would make sense from the perspective of influencing public opinion on a prolonged, bloody conflict that has resulted in tens of thousands of civilian casualties in Gaza. In his book *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*, American political scientist Norman Finklestein – himself a child of Holocaust survivors – describes the Holocaust as “an indispensable ideological weapon”:

Through its deployment, one of the world’s most formidable military powers [Israel], with a horrendous human rights record, has cast itself as a “victim” state, and the most successful ethnic group in the United States has likewise acquired victim status. Considerable dividends accrue from this specious victimhood — in particular, *immunity to criticism* [emphasis added], however justified. Those enjoying this immunity, I might add, have not escaped the moral corruptions that typically attend it (2003, p. 3).

In other words, the memory of the Holocaust could conceivably provide a moral license to use almost any means of force necessary, as long as a “second Holocaust” was somehow prevented by doing so. According to this way of thinking, the deaths of tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians, destruction of their infrastructure, and the imposition of starvation conditions on an entire population could theoretically be excused because of the unique, incomparable victimhood endured by ethnic Jews in World War II-era Europe. In a recent Al Jazeera Investigations documentary about October 7th, associate professor of media analytics at Northwestern University in Qatar, Marc Owen Jones, gave a potential reason for Israel’s emphasis on provocative accounts of atrocities committed by Hamas fighters against individuals:

You [Israel] try to make the significance of those individual deaths even more disgusting and objectionable. If you can activate people’s sense of disgust, I think they’re more likely to support, for example, dire retribution against Palestinians (Al Jazeera English, 2024, 43:08).

While the results of the current research might provocatively suggest that certain Holocaust-related language present in online news coverage of the events following the October 7th Hamas attack may have been adopted and intentionally disseminated by the English-language press as “talking points,” it is beyond the scope of the present study to examine the precise mechanism by which this occurred. Likewise, an in-depth discussion on the potential ethics of using World War II-era atrocity propaganda to psychologically manipulate a large population of people to support a war is also beyond the scope of the current treatise. Future research might use online tools such as the NOW Corpus to examine the

day-to-day, week-to-week propagation of the *since the Holocaust* talking point to characterize it in even greater detail. In addition, creation and analysis of specialized virtual corpora consisting of transcriptions of television news reports on the conflict during the same timeframe could lead to further insight on this important topic going forward.

Notes

- 1 The use of an asterisk (*) after the node *hamas* means that a search would return results containing both *Hamas*, *Hamas-trained*, etc. and after the node *holocaust*, *Holocaust*, *Holocaust-like*, etc.
- 2 Entry of an asterisk (*) into the “Collocates” field of the search means that a search return would not be limited to any particular part of speech.
- 3 Because Internet articles are sometimes updated, corpus searches at a date and time post-publication may yield slightly different results.
- 4 These numbers have almost certainly changed since the time of manuscript finalization.

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Appendix 1

HAMAS* HOLOCAUS... [779,577 WORDS, 488 TEXTS] (0.0% OF TOTAL) [ALL VIRTUAL CORPORA]
 NOUN VERB ADJ ADV N+N ADJ+N SAVE LIST

HELP	SAVE	WORD (CLICK FOR CONTEXT) TRANSLATE ALL ENTRIES	FREQ	# TEXTS	SPECIFIC		ENTIRE CORPUS	EXPECTED
					FREQ	TEXTS		
					90	48		
1	★	KIBBUTZ	192	81			3,504	0.1
2	★	HOSTAGE	1954	310			120,056	5.0
3	★	BOMBARDMENT	216	94			26,550	1.1
4	★	AIRSTRIKE	352	114			55,616	2.3
5	★	ANTI-SEMITISM	402	150			69,972	2.9
6	★	CEASE-FIRE	643	135			114,815	4.8
7	★	ENCLAVE	230	93			52,817	2.2
8	★	CAPTIVE	154	76			35,787	1.5
9	★	INCURSION	106	66			30,812	1.3
10	★	CIVILIAN	1059	304			326,708	13.6

HAMAS* HOLOCAUS... [779,577 WORDS, 488 TEXTS] (0.0% OF TOTAL) [ALL VIRTUAL CORPORA]
 NOUN VERB ADJ ADV N+N ADJ+N SAVE LIST

HELP	SAVE	WORD (CLICK FOR CONTEXT) TRANSLATE ALL ENTRIES	FREQ	# TEXTS	SPECIFIC		ENTIRE CORPUS	EXPECTED
					FREQ	TEXTS		
					90	48		
1	★	KIDNAP	218	121			134,578	5.6
2	★	CONDEMN	442	189			435,593	18.2
3	★	ABDUCT	96	65			100,720	4.2
4	★	BOMB	94	68			105,259	4.4
5	★	EVACUATE	183	77			219,218	9.1
6	★	DISPLACE	103	66			134,455	5.6
7	★	WOUND	125	80			192,224	8.0
8	★	ATTACK	633	245			1,044,799	43.6
9	★	KILL	1812	368			3,307,551	137.9
10	★	MURDER	154	101			313,369	13.1

HAMAS* HOLOCAUS... [779,577 WORDS, 488 TEXTS] (0.0% OF TOTAL) [ALL VIRTUAL CORPORA]
 NOUN VERB ADJ ADV N+N ADJ+N SAVE LIST

HELP	SAVE	WORD (CLICK FOR CONTEXT) TRANSLATE ALL ENTRIES	FREQ	# TEXTS	SPECIFIC		ENTIRE CORPUS	EXPECTED
					FREQ	TEXTS		
					90	48		
1	★	PRO-PALESTINIAN	183	87			3,261	0.1
2	★	TWO-STATE	91	56			13,808	0.6
3	★	ANTI-SEMITIC	263	103			51,320	2.1
4	★	MILITANT	441	160			119,453	5.0
5	★	HUMANITARIAN	840	180			318,873	13.3
6	★	TERRORIST	628	241			352,485	14.7
7	★	OCCUPIED	107	61			67,444	2.8
8	★	CIVILIAN	305	149			217,968	9.1
9	★	HORRIFIC	109	89			143,332	6.0
10	★	INNOCENT	221	129			306,531	12.8

Appendix 2

HELP	ⓘ	★	RE-USE WORDS	FREQ	+	ALL	%	MI
1	ⓘ	★	SINCE	196		1163	16.85	4.47
2	ⓘ	★	JEWS	104		756	13.76	4.18
3	ⓘ	★	SURVIVORS	78		132	59.09	6.28
4	ⓘ	★	SURVIVOR	47		57	82.46	6.76
5	ⓘ	★	MEMORIAL	29		51	56.86	6.22
6	ⓘ	★	MUSEUM	16		38	42.11	5.79
7	ⓘ	★	GRANDPARENTS	16		43	37.21	5.61
8	ⓘ	★	ELDERLY	16		108	14.81	4.28
9	ⓘ	★	ETHNIC	15		49	30.61	5.33
10	ⓘ	★	PHENOMENON	14		20	70.00	6.52
11	ⓘ	★	DISTORTION	14		21	66.67	6.45
12	ⓘ	★	VASHEM	14		24	58.33	6.26
13	ⓘ	★	CLEANSING	14		33	42.42	5.80
14	ⓘ	★	ANYTHING	14		99	14.14	4.22
15	ⓘ	★	DENIAL-LIKE	13		13	100.00	7.04
16	ⓘ	★	REMEMBRANCE	13		17	76.47	6.65
17	ⓘ	★	WHEELCHAIR	12		17	70.59	6.54
18	ⓘ	★	YAD	12		25	48.00	5.98
19	ⓘ	★	SURVIVED	11		46	23.91	4.97
20	ⓘ	★	EVOLVING	10		14	71.43	6.55
21	ⓘ	★	DENIAL	10		19	52.63	6.11
22	ⓘ	★	BEACH	10		48	20.83	4.78
23	ⓘ	★	MIAMI	10		54	18.52	4.61
24	ⓘ	★	SINGLE	10		95	10.53	3.79
25	ⓘ	★	NAZI	9		87	10.34	3.77
26	ⓘ	★	NAZIS	8		72	11.11	3.87
27	ⓘ	★	EDUCATION	8		93	8.60	3.50
28	ⓘ	★	WITNESSING	7		25	28.00	5.20
29	ⓘ	★	HORRORS	7		56	12.50	4.04
30	ⓘ	★	HITLER	7		58	12.07	3.99