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Israel's Genocide Is Big Business – and the Face of the Future

JONATHAN COOK • JULY 21, 2025 • 3,300 WORDS • 2 COMMENTS



US corporations and military planners welcome the ‘legal maneuver space’ Israel has opened up for them to profit from warfare that slaughters and starves civilians

[An audio version of this article is available [here](#)]

The Financial Times **revealed** this month that a cabal of Israeli investors, one of the world's top business consulting groups and a think-tank headed by former British prime minister Tony Blair had been secretly working on plans to exploit the ruins of Gaza as prime real estate.

The secret consortium appears to have been seeking practical ways to realise US President Donald Trump's "vision" of Gaza as the "Riviera of the Middle East": transforming the small coastal enclave into a playground for the rich and an enticing investment opportunity, once it can be ethnically cleansed of its Palestinian population.

Meanwhile, the UK government has **declared** Palestine Action a terrorist organisation – the first time in British history that a direct-action campaign group has been banned under Britain's already draconian terrorism legislation.

Notably, the government of Keir Starmer took the decision to proscribe Palestine Action after **lobbying** from Elbit Systems, an Israeli weapons maker whose factories in the UK have been targeted by Palestine Action for disruption. Elbit supplies Israel with killer drones and other weapons central to Israel's genocide in Gaza.

These revelations came to light as the United Nation's special rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories, Francesca Albanese, published a **report** – titled "From economy of occupation to economy of genocide" – exposing Big Business' extensive involvement in, and profits from, Israel's crimes in Gaza.

In an interview with US journalist Chris Hedges, Albanese, an expert in international law, concluded: “The genocide in Gaza has not stopped, because it is lucrative. It’s profitable for far too many.”

[VIDEO LINK](#)

Albanese lists dozens of major western companies that are deeply invested in Israel’s oppression of the Palestinian people.

This is not a new development, as she notes. These firms have exploited business opportunities associated with Israel’s violent occupation of the Palestinian people’s lands for years, and in some cases decades.

The switch from Israel’s occupation of Gaza to its current genocide hasn’t threatened profits; it has enhanced them. Or as Albanese puts it: “The profits have increased as the economy of the occupation transformed into an economy of genocide.”

The special rapporteur has been a growing thorn in the side of Israel and its western sponsors over the past 21 months of slaughter in Gaza.

That explains why Marco Rubio, Trump’s secretary of state, announced soon after her report was issued that he was imposing sanctions on Albanese for her efforts to shed light on the crimes of Israeli and US officials.

Revealingly, he **called** her statements – rooted in international law – “economic warfare against the United States and Israel”. Albanese and the UN system of universal human rights that stands behind her, it seems, represent a threat to western profiteering.

Window on the future

Israel effectively serves as the world’s largest business incubator – though, in its case, not just by nurturing start-up companies.

Rather, it offers global corporations the chance to test and refine new weapons, machinery, technologies, data collection and automation processes in the occupied territories. These developments are associated with mass oppression, control, surveillance, incarceration, ethnic cleansing – and now genocide.

In a world of shrinking resources and growing climate chaos, such innovative technologies of subjugation are likely to have domestic, in addition to overseas, applications. Gaza is the corporate world’s laboratory, and a window into our own future.

In her 60-page report, Albanese writes that her research “reveals how the forever-occupation has become the ideal testing ground for arms manufacturers and Big Tech... while investors and private and public institutions profit freely”.

Her point was underscored by the Israeli arms firm Rafael, which issued a **promotional video** of its Spike FireFly drone that showed it locating, chasing and killing a Palestinian in

what it called “urban warfare” in Gaza.

As the UN special rapporteur points out, quite aside from the issue of genocide in Gaza, western companies have been under a legal and moral obligation to sever ties with Israel’s system of occupation since last summer.

That was when the world’s highest court, the International Court of Justice, ruled Israel’s decades-old occupation was a criminal enterprise based on apartheid and forcible transfer – or what Albanese refers to as policies of “displacement and replacement”.

Instead, the corporate sector – and western governments – continue to deepen their involvement in Israel’s crimes.

It is not just arms manufacturers profiting from the genocidal levelling of Gaza and the occupations of the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Big Tech, construction and materials firms, agribusiness, the tourism industry, the goods and services sector, and supply chains have also got in on the act.

And enabling it all is a finance sector – which includes banks, pension funds, universities, insurers and charities – keen to continue investing in this architecture of oppression.

Albanese describes the mosaic of companies partnering with Israel as “an eco-system

sustaining this illegality”.

Escaping scrutiny

For these corporations and their enablers, international law – the legal system Albanese and her fellow UN rapporteurs are there to uphold – serves as an impediment to the pursuit of profit.

Albanese notes that the business sector can escape scrutiny by shielding behind other actors.

Israel and its senior officials are on notice for committing genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

When she wrote to 48 companies to warn them that they were colluding in this criminality, they either responded that this was Israel’s responsibility, not theirs, or that it was for states, not international law, to regulate their business activities.

Corporations, Albanese points out, can secure their biggest profits in the “grey areas of the law” – laws they have helped to shape.

Lockheed Martin’s F-35 jets, whose “beast mode” has been shop-windowed by Israel as it has destroyed Gaza, depend on some 1,600 other specialist firms operating in eight separate states, including Britain.

Late last month the UK high court, while admitting British-made components used in the F-35 were likely to contribute to war crimes in Gaza, **ruled** that it was up to Starmer's government to make “acutely sensitive and political” decisions about the export of these parts.

UK foreign secretary David Lammy, by contrast, **told** a parliamentary committee it was not for the government to assess whether Israel was committing war crimes in Gaza, using British arms, it was “a decision for the court”.

Lockheed Martin has joined the buck-passing. A spokesperson **said**: “Foreign military sales are government-to-government transactions. Discussions about those sales are best addressed by the US government.”

Big Tech collusion

Albanese also points the finger at leading tech firms for rapidly and deeply embedding in Israel's illegal occupation, including by acquiring Israeli start-ups that exploit expertise gained from the oppression of Palestinians.

The NSO Group has developed **Pegasus phone spyware** that is now being used to surveil politicians, journalists and human rights activists around the world.

Last year the Biden administration **signed a contract** with another Israeli spyware firm, Paragon. Will we learn one day that the US used exactly this kind of technology to spy on

Albanese and other international law experts, on the pretext that they were waging so-called “economic warfare”?

IBM trains Israeli military and intelligence personnel, and is central to the collection and storage of biometric data on Palestinians. Hewlett Packard Enterprises supplies technology to Israel’s occupation regime, prison service and police.

Microsoft has developed its largest centre outside the US in Israel, from which it has fashioned systems for use by the Israeli military, while Google and Amazon have a \$1.2 billion contract to provide it with tech infrastructure.

The prestigious research university MIT, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has collaborated with Israel and companies like Elbit to develop automated weapons systems for drones and refine their swarm formations.

Palantir, which supplies the Israeli military with Artificial Intelligence platforms, announced a deeper strategic partnership in January 2024, early in Israel’s slaughter in Gaza, over what the Bloomberg news agency termed “Battle Tech”.

Over the past 21 months, Israel has been introducing new automated programs driven by AI – such as “Lavendar”, “Gospel” and “Where’s Daddy?” – to select huge numbers of targets in Gaza with little or no human oversight.

Albanese [calls](#) this “the dark side of the start-up nation that is so embedded, so intimately related to the military industry aims and gains.”

Not surprisingly, tech firms are falling back on all-too-familiar smears against the special rapporteur and the UN for pulling back the veil on their activities. The Washington Post [reported](#) that, in the wake of Albanese’s report, Google’s co-founder, Sergey Brin, called the UN “transparently antisemitic” in a chat on a staff forum.

Concentration camp

There are a long list of other household names in Albanese’s report: Caterpillar, Volvo and Hyundai are accused of supplying heavy machinery to destroy homes, mosques and infrastructure in Gaza and the West Bank.

Leading banks such as BNP Paribas and Barclays have underwritten treasury bonds to boost market confidence in Israel through the genocide and maintain its favourable interest rates.

BP, Chevron and other energy firms are profiting from existing gas fields in the eastern Mediterranean and pipelines that pass through Palestinian maritime waters off Gaza. Israel issued [exploration licences](#) for Gaza’s own undeveloped gas field, off the coast, shortly after launching its genocidal slaughter.

Israel’s latest plan to create, in its own words, a “[concentration](#)” **camp** inside Gaza – where Palestinian civilians are to be tightly confined under armed guard – will doubtless rely on

business partnerships similar to those behind the bogus “aid distribution hubs” Israel has already imposed on the enclave’s people.

Israeli soldiers have [testified](#) that they are being ordered to shoot into crowds of starving Palestinians queueing for food at these hubs – explaining why dozens of Palestinians have been killed daily for weeks on end.

Those hubs, run by the misleadingly named Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, were in part the [brainchild](#) of the Boston Consulting Group, the same management consultants caught this month plotting to turn Gaza into Trump’s Palestinian-free “Riviera of the Middle East”.

Israel’s planned concentration camp built on the ruins of the city of Rafah – to be termed, again deceptively, a “humanitarian zone” – will require all those entering to be “security screened”, using biometric data, before their incarceration.

Doubtless other contractors, using largely automated systems, will control the camp’s interior until, in the Israeli government’s words, “an emigration plan” can be implemented to [expel](#) the population from Gaza.

Albanese points to the many precedents for private corporations driving some of the most horrifying crimes in history, from slavery to the Holocaust.

Albanese urges lawyers and civil society actors to pursue legal avenues against these firms in the countries in which they are registered. Where possible, consumers should exert what

pressure they can by boycotting these corporations.

She concludes by recommending that states impose sanctions and an arms embargo on Israel.

Further, she calls on the besieged International Criminal Court – four of whose judges are, like her, under US sanctions – as well as national courts “to investigate and prosecute corporate executives and/or corporate entities for their part in the commission of international crimes and laundering of the proceeds from those crimes”.

Psychopathic culture

All of this is crucial to understanding why western capitals have continued to partner in Israel’s slaughter, even as Holocaust and genocide scholars – many of them Israeli – have reached a firm consensus that its actions amount to genocide.

Governing parties in western countries like the US and Britain are largely dependent on Big Business, both for their electoral success and, after victory at the polling booth, in maintaining popularity through the promotion of “economic stability”.

Keir Starmer reached power in the UK after spurning the popular grassroots funding model of his predecessor, Jeremy Corbyn, and wooing instead the corporate sector with promises that the party would be in its pocket.

His reassurances were also key to making sure the billionaire-owned media – which had ferociously turned on Corbyn, constantly vilifying him as an “antisemite” for his democratic

socialist and pro-Palestinian positions – smoothed Starmer’s path to Downing Street.

In the US, the billionaires even have one of their own in power, in Donald Trump. But even his campaign depended on funding from big [donors like Miriam Adelson](#), the Israeli widow of casino magnate Sheldon Adelson.

Adelson is among a number of top donors, [funding both main parties](#), who make no bones about their number one political priority being Israel.

Once in power, parties are then effectively held to ransom by major corporations on large areas of domestic and foreign policy.

The financial sector had to be bailed out by taxpayers – and still is through so-called “austerity measures” – after its reckless excesses crashed the global economy in the late 2000s. Western governments considered the banks “too big to fail”.

Similarly, Israel – the world’s biggest incubator for the arms and surveillance industries – is just too big to be allowed to fail as well. Even as it commits genocide.

Critics of the rise of globalised corporations over the past half century, such as famed linguist [Noam Chomsky](#) and law professor Joel Bakan, have long noted the inherently psychopathic traits of corporate culture.

Corporations are legally obligated to pursue profit and prioritise shareholder value over other considerations. Limitations on their freedoms to do so are near non-existent after [waves of](#)

deregulation from suborned western governments.

Bakan observes that corporations are indifferent to the suffering or safety of others. They are incapable of maintaining enduring relationships. They lack any sense of guilt, or capacity for self-restraint. And they lie, cheat and deceive to maximise profits.

These psychopathic tendencies have been on show in scandal after scandal, whether from the tobacco and banking industries, or from pharmaceutical and energy companies.

Why would Big Business behave any better in pursuing profits tied up in the Gaza genocide?

Bakan addresses those who confuse his argument with a conspiracy theory. The psychopathic behaviours of corporations simply reflect the legal imperatives on them as institutions – what he calls their “logical dynamic” – to maximise profit and sideline rivals, whatever the consequences for the wider society, future generations or the planet.

Growing fat on genocide

The stakes in Gaza are high for western governments precisely because they are so high for the business world growing fat on Israel’s genocide.

Governments and corporations have an overwhelming shared interest in protecting Israel from scrutiny and criticism: it serves as their colonial attack dog in the oil-rich Middle East, and it acts as a cash-cow for the weapons, surveillance and incarceration industries.

Which explains why Trump and Starmer, on one side, and university administrations, on the other, have invested so much political and moral capital in crushing the spaces, especially in academia, where free speech and protest are supposed to be most prized.

The universities are far from a disinterested party. Before their campus encampments were trashed by police, student demonstrators sought to highlight how heavily invested the universities are in the economy of occupation and genocide, both financially and through research partnerships with the Israeli military and Israeli universities.

The need to ringfence Israel from scrutiny also explains rapid moves in the West both to impute “antisemitism” to every effort to hold Israel, or its genocidal army, to account.

The desperate lengths to which governments will go was on display this month as UK officials and the establishment media kicked up a storm of outrage after a punk band at Glastonbury chanted “Death, death to the IDF!” – a reference to Israel’s genocidal army.

And as the power of the antisemitism accusation has weakened from misuse, western capitals are now rewriting their statutes to designate as “terrorism” any attempt to put a spoke in the wheels of the genocide economy, by for example sabotaging weapons factories.

Morality and international law are being scattered to the winds to keep the West’s most important colonial spin-off a money-maker.

Business as usual

Israel's indispensability to the corporate sector and a captured western political class extends far beyond tiny Gaza. Israel is playing an outsized role as a war-industries incubator on a global battlefield in which the West seeks to ensure its continuing military and economic primacy over China.

Last month the global business elite – comprising tech billionaires and corporate titans, joined by political leaders, media editors, and military and intelligence officials – met once again at the publicity-shy [Bilderberg summit](#), this year hosted in Stockholm.

Prominent were the CEOs of major “defence” suppliers and arms manufacturers such as Palantir, Thales, Helsing, Anduril and Saab.

Drone warfare – being used in innovative ways by key military clients like Israel and Ukraine – was [high on the agenda](#). The greater integration of AI into drones appears to have been a mainstay of the discussions.

The subtext this year, as in recent years, was a supposed rising threat from China and an associated “authoritarian axis” comprising Russia, Iran and North Korea. This threat is seen chiefly in economic and technological terms.

In May, Eric Schmidt, the former head of Google and a Bilderberg board member, [wrote with alarm](#) in the New York Times: “China is at parity or pulling ahead of the United States in a variety of technologies, notably at the AI frontier.”

He added that the West was in a race against China over the imminent development of super-intelligent AI, which would give the winner “the keys to control the entire world”.

Schmidt, like other Bilderberg regulars, **predicts** that the power-draining needs of super AI will lead to ever-intensifying energy wars for the West to stay top dog.

Or as a Guardian report on the conference **summed up the mood**: “In this desperate winner-takes-all race for the keys to the world, in which the ‘geopolitics of energy’ becomes ever more important, power stations – along with the data centers they feed – are going to become the No 1 military targets.”

Israel’s slaughter in Gaza is seen as playing a critical role in opening up the “battlescape”.

The same corporations cashing in on the Gaza genocide stand to benefit from the more permissive environment – legally and militarily – created by Israel for future wars, ones where massacred civilians count only as “incidental deaths”.

An April article in the New Yorker magazine **set out the challenge** facing US military planners, who have considered themselves hobbled since the 1980s by the rise of a human rights community that developed an expertise in the laws of war independently from the Pentagon’s self-serving interpretations.

The result, say US generals regretfully, has been a “general aversion to collateral damage risk” – that is, killing civilians.

Pentagon military planners are keen to use the slaughter in Gaza as a precedent for their own genocidal violence in subduing future economic rivals like China and Russia who threaten the official US doctrine of “global full-spectrum dominance”.

The New Yorker sets out this thinking: “Gaza not only looks like a dress rehearsal for the kind of combat US soldiers may face. It is a test of the American public’s tolerance for the levels of death and destruction that such kinds of warfare entail.”

According to the magazine, the genocidal violence being unleashed by Israel is opening up the “legal maneuver space” – the space needed to commit crimes against humanity in full view.

This is where much of the impulse comes from in western capitals to normalise the genocide – present it as business as usual – and demonise its opponents.

The arms makers and tech companies whose coffers have been swollen by Israel’s genocide in Gaza stand to make far greater riches from a similarly devastating war against China.

Whatever the script we are sold, there will be nothing moral or existential about this coming battle. As ever, it will be about rich people keen to get even richer.

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