

تقي أنني حين يخذلك الناس لن أنخلّي!
وحيث يغادرُك الأصدقاء الغدائي
سأبقى لأصيح بيتاً وحفلاً وظلاً
(روضة الحاج)

YOUR DAILY ARABIC PROVERB

Trust that when others fail you, I will not abandon you. And when old friends depart, I shall remain — becoming your home, your field and your shelter.

Rawdha Al-Hajj

(Contemporary Sudanese poet and woman of letters)

Opinion2025

The year Israel became a pariah state

There is a famous quote that states: “There are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen.” This, I believe, best describes 2024 — a year of tumult, political upheavals, unyielding atrocities, apocalyptic devastation and historical legal precedence.

For the Middle East, this was a year where nations were caught in a vicious loop: the images of bloody rampages, imploding buildings, broken families, shell-shocked children, gutted hospitals and grieving parents. There has been no reprieve. Gaza has become one ever-expanding killing field, a gushing wound in the belly of humanity.

In the beginning, numbers meant something. So many children killed, so many women, so many journalists, so many doctors, so many buried under the rubble; numbers that were meant to deliver shock and awe — and shame.

But then, Israel managed to do something no country has been able to pull off before: it normalized genocide.

Politicians and pundits argued among themselves: Is what is happening in Gaza genocide? They squabbled as the world saw the images of emaciated babies, the headless bodies of children, the mass exodus of civilians, the faces of bereaved parents, wailing mothers and stricken fathers holding little white shrouds containing what was left of their sons and daughters.

As it turned out, it all came down to semantics. Killing thousands in Gaza was justified as Israeli “self-defense.” Politicians defended the massacres because “ Hamas was using civilians as human shields.” Collateral damage, they said, which is another arbitrary and callous term.

Yes, semantics matter. If it was genocide that Israel was carrying out in Gaza, then the US and the West would have acted differently, right? While nations joined South Africa at the International Court of Justice in arguing that, yes, it is genocide, a US State Department spokesperson disagreed and insisted that “we are not seeing any acts that constitute genocide,” adding that South Africa’s case was “unproductive.”

While the debate over what constitutes genocide went on, Israel was quick to describe a clash between Israeli football hooligans and pro-Palestine groups in Amsterdam as a “pogrom.” The mainstream media and Zionist influencers were quick to adopt the term. No one died in Amsterdam and social media activists soon exposed the truth about the events there: Israeli hooligans provoked the clashes by chanting “death to Palestinians.” The term pogrom refers to the organized massacre of Jewish people in Russia and Eastern Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. So, no genocide in Gaza, but a pogrom in Amsterdam.

The mainstream Western media continued to manipulate the coverage of the war in Gaza, particularly the indiscriminate killing of civilians by Israel. “Dozens killed in a strike at a UN school in Gaza,” read one headline in an influential daily newspaper in America, blaming an unnamed third party.

In Gaza, according to the Western press, people “die,” which is a euphemism for “Palestinians killed by Israel.” The dehumanization of Palestinians has not subsided. The disinformation, the bias, the hatred and the allegations that are never fact-checked or corrected have become the poisoned legacy of the Western press.



ILLUSTRATION FOR ARAB NEWS: ALBERTO ARAGON

On the other side of the world, the elections in the US took an unexpected turn. President Joe Biden, a self-described Zionist and Israel’s best friend, was forced out of the race due to fears over his health. Vice President Kamala Harris was pushed into the fray as the presumptive Democratic nominee. She was to challenge Donald Trump, who led the polls against Biden.

Late in 2023 and in the spring and summer of 2024, students at Ivy League universities became the center of media coverage and political jockeying by US lawmakers. The students held sit-ins, vigils and marches calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the severing of ties between universities and Israel.

In the ensuing maelstrom, Gaza, Israel and the Palestinian cause became a consequential election issue. University presidents were summoned to Congress to receive a lashing for allowing antisemitism to spread in American universities.

Pro-Palestine protests had already



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spread across the world in an unprecedented manner. There was what one could call a global awakening. People were protesting their own governments’ pro-Israel policies, citing the contrasts between their policies toward Ukraine and Gaza.

Palestine had become a matter of moral standing. The narrative that Israel had built with precision and deceit over decades began to crumble. Its hasbara lost ground to social media. The deep state and the corporate media were on the defensive.

The culmination of this gaping gulf between the state and the people occurred when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was invited by defiant US House Speaker Mike Johnson to address a joint session of Congress for the fourth time — a record.

The invite was issued following a bold announcement by the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Karim Khan, that he had asked the court to issue warrants for the arrest of Netanyahu and his then-Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, in addition to

Hamas’ military leader Yahya Sinwar, his second-in-command Mohammed Deif and the movement’s political leader, Ismail Haniyeh. Netanyahu and Gallant were accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Khan’s announcement sent shock waves across the world. For the US, which is not a member of the court, it was a time to demonstrate fealty to Israel and present yet another example of Western double standards. Khan and the court were attacked by US lawmakers, who made direct and explicit threats of sanctions against the judges and their families.

Netanyahu’s arrival in Washington to deliver his speech prompted mass protests that engulfed the Capitol. Many Democratic lawmakers boycotted the event. An animated Netanyahu did what he does best: he lied all the way, even claiming that there were no civilian casualties in Gaza. He received more than 50 standing ovations. That scene epitomized decades of the complex US-Israeli alliance. It underlined a bitter and dark reality: the Palestinians were not only facing Israel, but also Washington’s Zionist cult.

Arab and Muslim voters in America were making their position on the elections known. Earlier, during the primaries, they had shunned Biden in Michigan by voting “uncommitted.” Harris had tried to woo them by showing empathy with the Palestinians in Gaza. But she would not allow any representatives of these Arab and Muslim voters to take the stand at the Democratic National Convention to plead their case.

Trump saw an opportunity to address their grievances. He promised to end the wars in Gaza and Lebanon once he took office. Some believed in him and voted for him, only to be disappointed by his nominations for UN envoy, ambassador to Israel and defense chief — all fanatic Zionists.

Meanwhile, a rare bright spot in a bleak regional canvas was the International Criminal Court’s decision last month to issue warrants for the arrest of Netanyahu and Gallant. This historic move rattled Israel and its allies in Washington.

While the two wanted Israeli officials will not surrender themselves voluntarily to The Hague, the fact is that the war crimes stigma has now stuck like an indelible stain on Israel. Israel and the US will fight the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice. When the new administration takes over, it may even pull the US out of the UN altogether, triggering global chaos. That could mean the end of the unipolar world as we know it, sowing the seeds of a new multipolar world; and that could be a good thing in the end.

This is no longer about Gaza and the Palestinians. However, they have become the unsuspecting instigators of what could be the ultimate reset of the world order. Where the world will head in 2025 is a matter of speculation, since there are already many parts simultaneously moving in many directions. But what is a fact is that there is no going back to the world of before Oct. 7, 2023.

We are a long way from seeing justice delivered to the victims of Israel’s horrific war. But we are seeing a world where Israel is turning into a pariah state, with its leaders accused of genocide and war crimes. In that, there may be some solace and fractured justice for its victims.