

“Showboating for War”: Former Prime Ministers Boris Johnson and Australia’s Morrison in Israel

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By [Dr. Binoy Kampmark](#)

Global Research, November 07, 2023

Region: [Europe](#), [Middle East & North Africa](#),
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Banished Prime Ministers are an irritation. They clog the airwaves of punditry with their views about how things were and how things should be. But even there, degrees of severity and competence should be observed. The more noble sorts would pursue the goals of peace, even as they bag large wads of cash in stating the obvious. With former Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, and his disgraced counterpart from the UK, Boris Johnson, the cash is being forked out for war.

That Israeli authorities thought it suitable to invite these two men to bolster their war against Hamas shows a degree of deep desperation. Johnson, a serial rule breaker when it came to his own government’s pandemic regulations, was [forced to resign](#) as PM by his own Conservative party in June this year. He proved to be persistently and pathologically mendacious, a ragtag mix of contemptuousness and buffoonery.

Only Australia’s own Morrison could have possibly kept up, secretly commandeering, without knowledge of his own Cabinet, up to [five different ministries](#) in addition to his own. Despite losing the May 2022 election to Labor’s Anthony Albanese, he remains a sitting federal member, when not avidly think-tanking for anti-China causes and the US imperium.

As Gaza City is being systematically liquidated, pulverised, demolished and destroyed by Israeli firepower, these two men have decided to cheer matters on with their equivalent of pompoms and drums. The Israeli Defence Force needs all the help it can get in destroying any vestige of Palestinian political power in the small settlement, and history lessons are not what interests them. While Johnson is infinitely more informed about history than Morrison, both were united in their cheap showboating exercise.

Their Israeli hosts, assured that they would never be questioned, took the men to Kibbutz Kfar Aza, the place where 100 residents met their fate at the hands of the al-Qassam Brigade, the military wing of Hamas, on October 7. Here was a chance to compress and cleanse history, to give it that ethical clarity Morrison and Johnson always resisted as prime ministers. It was Johnson's [wish](#) that the world would be able to see what had taken place "so people could be under no illusion about the savagery, the sadism, the lack of humanity of Hamas terrorists."

That word, again: humanity. The humanity exorcised from any assessment of Palestinian worth, sovereignty, liberty. A humanity reserved for a certain type of privileged victimhood, one rarified in the cool atmosphere of exceptionalism known as God's chosen people drawn from a document part fiction, part history. It follows that the retaliatory steps taken in prosecuting any response will be justified. "Of course," Johnson emphasises, "it is right for Israel to take the necessary steps... to stop that happening again."

On Channel 12 news, Johnson [stressed the need](#) to keep the moral compass steady and free of any regard for the Palestinians or their cause:

"[S]ince that appalling massacre of October 7, you're seeing a kind of fog descend, a moral fog, and I just want to remind people of the absolute barbarism of what took place and to make it clear that Israel has the right to defend itself."

With emphasis, he stated that,

"There can be no moral equivalence between the terrorism of Hamas and the actions of the Israeli Defence Forces."

When given the chance to talk about pursuing a ceasefire in the name of ecumenical grace, Johnson was curt. Think of those 240 hostages held by Hamas.

"[W]hen you have a crime of this scale, and when there's the possibility of it happening again, I don't think it's the business of the world to tell Israel to stop."

Forget international law, humanitarian restraint on the use of force, proportionate response, and conduct might just find itself within the margins of the tolerable.

Morrison, for his part, [saw the trip](#) as "an opportunity to understand firsthand what is occurring on the ground, honour those who have been lost, show support for those who have suffered and are now engaged in this terrible conflict and discuss how to move forward." He also argued against a ceasefire, as this would only "advantage Hamas to be able to strengthen their positions and make this war go on for even longer".

As for the matter of making sure the attacks of October 7 are never repeated, the point is all too obvious. It will keep happening again with dreary, bloody predictability. If not next year, then the next decade. Or generation. Eliminating Hamas will simply be a bloody pruning exercise verging on genocide, allowing fresh vegetation to thrive. The forest of vengeance will continue to grow; the thousands of children who survive will never forgive the IDF for what they have done and continue to do. Each dead family brings with it a family of converts for the Palestinian cause. Israel's publicity relations wonks would be best advised to pay Johnson and Morrison and wish them on their merry way.

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Dr. Binoy Kampmark was a Commonwealth Scholar at Selwyn College, Cambridge. He currently lectures at RMIT University. He is a regular contributor to Global Research and Asia-Pacific Research. Email: bkampmark@gmail.com

Featured image: Entire neighborhoods have been leveled in the Israeli bombing campaigns. (Photo: Mahmoud Ajjour, Palestine Chronicle)

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