



Parallels Between Kristallnacht and Black Shabbat: A Historical Analysis in 2026

By Brigitte Chaya Nussbächer

In 1938, Kristallnacht marked a dramatic escalation in the persecution of the Jews. In 2023, the Hamas attack on Israel became the murderous culmination of decades of aggression.

Two historic turning points, decades apart – and a world that is once again turning away? What connects Kristallnacht with Black Shabbat? And what do the world's reactions reveal about us?

History confronts us with uncomfortable questions about responsibility, solidarity, and antisemitism – and holds up a mirror to us.

For the crucial question is not only what happened back then, but whether we are willing today to open our eyes, take a stand, and act.

THE ESCALATION



Burning synagogues during the November pogroms of 1938. Photo: Shutterstock

Eighty-eight years have passed since Kristallnacht, the night when around 1,400 synagogues burned across the German Reich and 7,500 Jewish businesses, schools, and orphanages were destroyed.

On November 9, 1938, Jewish civilians were abused, threatened, arrested, and murdered in the streets by members of the Sturmabteilung (SA), the Nazi Party's paramilitary wing. It is estimated that more than 1,300 people died that night or as a result of the abuse they suffered.



Today, we know that Kristallnacht marked the transition from the discrimination of German Jews, which had begun in 1933, to their systematic persecution and expulsion. At that point, it would still have been possible to save most of them.



Kibbutz Nir Oz after the Hamas attack. Photo: Private

On October 7, 2023, Jews experienced a new Kristallnacht—this time on Israeli soil. More than 5,000 Hamas terrorists from the Gaza Strip breached the border into Israel on that “Black Shabbat,” brutally murdering more than 1,200 people, severely injuring thousands, abducting around 250, and laying waste to entire communities.

In the face of this disaster, we—the world—have an opportunity to show that we have learned from the past; that as we have promised a thousand times, with the words “Never Again”, we will not leave the Jewish people alone, but will stand by them and support them. How have we handled this chance over the past three years?

REACTIONS OF WORLD PUBLIC OPINION

1938 – The Évian Conference

As the number of Jewish refugees fleeing Germany rose dramatically, the United States initiated a conference in Évian, France, in July 1938. Most European powers, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and nearly all Central and South American countries took part.

At that time, governments knew that Jews in Germany and Austria had been almost completely stripped of their rights and that thousands had been murdered or driven to their deaths. Nevertheless, none of the 32 participating countries agreed to admit a substantial number of the Jews whose lives were under threat. Instead, they left them at the “mercy” of the National Socialists.



2023 – The UN General Assembly



The 2023 UN resolution. Photo: Shutterstock

Following Hamas's horrific terrorist attack, there were visits expressing solidarity, but little practical support for Israel. And less than three weeks later, the United Nations (UN) adopted its first resolution making demands of Israel—not Hamas.

On November 15, 2023, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution unanimously, this time legally binding under international law. Although it called for the release of the hostages, it once again failed to mention Israel's right to self-defense, and there was no condemnation of the Hamas massacre. Instead, it emphatically called for the protection of civilians and humanitarian aid for Gaza, urging Israel to agree to a ceasefire.

This was the solidarity the Jewish people received in the weeks following the massacre, 80 years after the Holocaust. Images of the atrocities committed against Israelis circulated across the internet because the terrorists themselves published them and boasted about their crimes. Yet sympathy shifted toward the Palestinians.



THE NEXT PHASE

The Holocaust



Corpses at Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Photo: Shutterstock

The sad truth is that Nazi Germany perfected mass murder on a horrifying scale, thereby writing one of the darkest chapters in world history.

But another sad truth is that the Nazis would never have been so successful had they encountered more determined resistance. In 1943, Denmark managed to evacuate 99 percent of its Jewish population to neutral, unoccupied Sweden in just three weeks. Allies of Germany, such as Bulgaria, saved around 50,000 Jews, while Finland refused to hand over or strip the rights of its Jewish citizens. These examples prove that the German plans for extermination could have been successfully thwarted.

Yet, the situation in Eastern Europe was very different. Around five million Jews lived there, in territories that today belong to Ukraine, Poland, Belarus, Moldova, Romania, and Lithuania. In the former Russian Empire, the state, the Church, and the population had already targeted Jews in the nineteenth century, restricting their rights through special laws and persecuting them in pogroms. Poland was occupied by Nazi Germany at the end of 1939, while Ukraine and Belarus were occupied in the summer of 1941. Romania was an ally of Nazi Germany. In all these countries, antisemitic crimes were committed in which thousands of people perished—even without explicit orders from the occupying forces.

In 1940, the construction of extermination camps began. Unlike other concentration camps, where prisoners died through executions and from deliberately induced disease and malnutrition, as well as forced



overwork, extermination camps were established specifically for the immediate purpose of murdering the people deported there. All these extermination sites—Auschwitz-Birkenau, Majdanek, Belzec, Sobibór, Treblinka, Bronnaya Gora, and Maly Trostenets—are located in what is now Poland and Belarus. Between 1941 and 1945, more than three million people were murdered there, primarily in gas chambers. Coincidence?

And most churches remained silent. During the Nazi dictatorship, 96 percent of Germany's population belonged to a Christian denomination. The Bible clearly states that the Jews are God's chosen people, with whom He established an eternal covenant. Christians should therefore have known this. Yet many believed that the Jews had been condemned because of the crucifixion of Jesus and were unworthy of God's grace or human compassion.

Ultimately, it was the collaboration of (almost) everyone with the Nazi regime that played a decisive role in the murder of two-thirds of Europe's Jews—or, at the very least, made the Holocaust possible on such an enormous scale.

Israel's Multi-Front War (2023 – 2026)

Following the massacre, Israel set its objectives: the release of the approximately 250 hostages, the removal of Hamas from power and its disarmament, and the defense of the civilian population.

As Hamas refuses to release the hostages and continues to attack Israel, a ground offensive begins in the Gaza Strip. It will continue until October 2025. This is a grueling urban battle against a terrorist organization that recognizes no rules of international humanitarian law, entrenches itself in residential buildings, hospitals, schools, and mosques, and prevents its own civilian population from leaving combat zones in order to use them as human shields.

Since October 8, 2023, the Shiite Islamist militia Hezbollah has been launching attacks against northern Israel. Tens of thousands of Israelis flee to safer areas in the country's interior.

The Houthi terrorist organization in Yemen also attacks Israel. So does Iran, along with fighters from the so-called Islamic Resistance and Iranian-funded paramilitary groups operating in Iraq and Syria.



October 7, 2023, marks the beginning of an existential, multi-front war against Israel and triggers a worldwide resurgence of antisemitism.

Yet it is not the terrorist organizations or the aggressors who must defend themselves before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the UN's principal judicial organ. On December 29, 2023, South Africa files a case against Israel, accusing it of "genocide against the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip." Numerous countries join in advancing the accusation.

Antisemitic demonstrations have drawn hundreds of thousands of participants worldwide since October 2023. Yet the demands being voiced are not for a two-state solution or peace. The slogan "From the river (Jordan) to the (Mediterranean) sea, Palestine will be free" means, in plain terms, that Israel is to disappear from the map. Antisemitic crimes have multiplied dramatically around the world—including in Germany—with incidents ranging as far as the murder of civilians in the streets.

On November 21, 2024, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, and Hamas leaders Yahya Sinwar, Mohammed Deif, and Ismail Haniyeh. This placed a democratically elected prime minister, who had led his country to unprecedented prosperity over more than a decade, in the same category as internationally wanted terrorists.

On May 28, Norway, Spain, and Ireland recognized a Palestinian state without Israel's consent. In September 2025, the United Kingdom, France, Canada, Australia, and others followed suit.

In September 2024, after eleven months of sustained Hezbollah attacks from Lebanon, Israel went on the offensive to make the communities in northern Israel safe and habitable again.

In June 2025 and March 2026, Israel responded to Iran's continuing aggressions and to the attacks in April and October 2024, seeking to reduce the threat posed by Iran's nuclear facilities and missile arsenals.

Since the beginning of the war, a broad front of nations and organizations has emerged to condemn Israel. The overall situation is viewed through a one-sided lens, while the actions of Islamist terrorist organizations are left out of the picture. Efforts are being made to isolate Israel economically and culturally through boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS).



Israel is accused of causing a famine in Gaza—an allegation that, according to subsequent assessments, did not stand up to scrutiny. Nevertheless, Germany reversed course in its policy and restricted arms exports to Israel in the summer of 2025.

As Israel had announced from the outset, the war in Gaza ended with the release of the last living hostages on October 13, 2025, with the help of mediation by President Trump. As with previous hostage deals, Israel had to release thousands of convicted Palestinian prisoners in exchange. The Israeli military withdrew to the agreed line, and vast quantities of humanitarian aid flowed into the Gaza Strip. The bodies of the remaining deceased hostages were returned one by one, with the last one not recovered until January 28, 2026.

Yet the accusations, protests, and hatred directed at Israel continue unabated.

In October 2026, Die Linke, (the left party in Germany) which had already spoken out against Zionism in March, emerges as the strongest political force in the Berlin House of Representatives election—with antisemitic calls for violence such as “Yalla Yalla Intifada” and “Death to the IDF,” amid links to pro-Palestinian activist circles and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), which is designated as a terrorist organization by the European Union.

In 2026, 81 years after the end of the Holocaust, is there any reason to claim that antisemitism—or, more accurately, Jew-hatred—has been overcome? Has the world really treated Jews so differently from the way it did 80 years ago? Or was the difference that, this time, Israel successfully defended itself?

Our Chance — Today!



Honoring the Righteous Among the Nations. Photo: Shutterstock

And yet, in every country, there were always people who thought differently and, above all, acted differently. During the Holocaust, they were willing to risk their lives to save Jews from extermination.



They are proof that, ultimately, each person makes their own decisions—and is responsible for them. They show that no mass movement, no ideology, and no persecution can be so powerful that the human mind loses its ability to distinguish good from evil and take an independent stand. And they teach us that every individual can make a difference.

Where do we stand today—as individuals, each of us?

Every one of us has the opportunity to refuse to join in when the world turns against Israel (once again). We have the opportunity not to repeat the mistakes and sins of our ancestors. This is our legacy and our responsibility.

Christians have both the opportunity and the calling to pray for Israel and the Jewish people (Isaiah 62:7), to show them appreciation and love, and to help them in practical ways. Even small acts may have a profound impact.

As we remember Kristallnacht this year, we know that we cannot undo the past. But are we equally aware that we can help shape the present and influence the future—through our words, and even more through what we do and what our lives bear witness to?



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