

Israel and the reinvention of bio-necro-politics



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When Michel Foucault theorised biopolitics, he identified a momentous transformation in the mechanics of state power: from the sovereign’s prerogative to take life to the modern state’s obligation to foster, regulate, and optimise it. The now-canonical formula—“make live and let die”—described a shift where public health, census data, birth rates, and urban planning replaced execution and spectacle as tools of governance. Yet what we witness today in Gaza and the broader occupied Palestinian territories is neither a straightforward continuation of this model nor a mere return to sovereign violence. Rather, it is a radical reinvention—an unprecedented fusion of biopolitical management with necropolitical elimination.

Israel has engineered what might best be called bio-necro-politics: a regime in which the technologies of life and death, care and coercion, surveillance and erasure operate not in contradiction, but in concert. In Gaza, this apparatus not only kills—it governs through calibrated suffering. Innocent civilians, particularly women and children, are not spared even in hospitals, shelters, or so-called safe zones. Beyond the immediate toll of airstrikes and sieges, what unfolds is a slower, more insidious orchestration of death—administered with genocidal intent and bureaucratic precision. Israel allows just enough sustenance to forestall mass starvation, just enough medicine to prevent total collapse, while systematically denying everything that makes life dignified: mobility, education, healthcare, security. Gaza is not simply a battlefield. It is a crucible where the very frameworks of power and human dignity are being dismantled, transforming existence into mere endurance and survival into an arena of imposed subjugation. A calculus of bare survival.

In Gaza, survival is not a human right—it is a variable, calculated by the occupying power. Israeli officials once admitted to computing the precise number of calories allowed into Gaza to avoid outright famine while “putting pressure” on Hamas. The goal was not to kill, but to make death visible just enough to become a tool of control. Fuel is rationed. Water desalination is blocked. Medical access is obstructed. Borders are sealed.

This is not collateral damage—it is the architecture of domination. The aim is to degrade life to its bare minimum without extinguishing it entirely. What Giorgio Agamben calls bare life—life stripped of rights, voice, and political existence—becomes institutionalised policy. In Gaza, bombings are not followed by resolution, but by a grim choreography of provisional relief, token reconstruction, and the swift return of siege. The rhythm is not one of war and peace, but of perpetual suspension—a managed stagnation in which devastation is

periodically inflicted, partially repaired, and deliberately prolonged.

This is bio-necro-politics in action: a regime that calibrates suffering as a mode of governance. Israel no longer simply “lets die.” It engineers conditions in which Palestinians remain suspended at the edge of death, indefinitely. Surveillance and algorithmic erasure

This biopolitical regime depends upon a digital infrastructure that renders Palestinian lives not only visible but dissectible—legible to algorithms trained to predict, preempt, and, when deemed necessary, annihilate. Through facial recognition technologies, biometric profiling, predictive analytics, and AI-powered drones, Israel has constructed one of the most advanced surveillance architectures in the world.

The “Blue Wolf” system, used by Israeli forces in the West Bank, reportedly catalogues the faces and profiles of Palestinians, assigning them colour-coded threat levels. Here, identity becomes data, and life becomes a probability score. Surveillance is no longer just about deterrence or monitoring; it is about domination before the fact. Palestinians are not punished for what they have done, but for what they “might” do—an anticipatory logic that collapses due process, intention, and temporality.

This fusion of surveillance and necropolitics produces a chilling effect: to be seen is to be marked; to be marked is to be eliminated. Visibility becomes vulnerability. The “panopticon” no longer watches to discipline—it watches to erase. Assassination as strategic doctrine

This logic of preemption extends beyond Gaza and the West Bank into Israel’s broader regional strategy. Over the past two decades, Israel has normalised the extraterritorial assassination of scientists, generals, and political figures—not simply combatants. These killings are framed as acts of defence, but they also serve to foreclose the possibility of diplomacy.

Consider first the assassination of Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh in November 2020—a high-profile target tied to Tehran’s nuclear research, killed just weeks before the Biden administration’s planned attempt to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. That strike clearly aimed to derail diplomacy in its infancy. Then in April 2024, Israeli airstrikes in Damascus eliminated senior Iranian generals reportedly engaged in backchannel negotiations with the US, making it evident that political engagement had become a target.

Most recently, in June 2025, under the codename Operation Rising Lion, Israel launched a sweeping preemptive campaign against Iran. On June 13, Israeli aircraft targeted Iranian nuclear and strategic military

sites—including Natanz and Fordow—killing several senior commanders and others. Two days later, the strike continued, eliminating senior Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps intelligence officials. These were not acts of battlefield necessity—there was no imminent attack to thwart. Instead, they reflect a deliberate doctrinal shift: diplomacy itself, in its potential to normalise ties, negotiate de-escalation, or forge a future, is being treated

form of pacification. Medical supplies become instruments of subjugation. This is not humanitarianism in the traditional sense; it is a “carceral humanitarianism” in which suffering is administered rather than alleviated.

In this perverse economy, the aid truck does not oppose the drone—it completes its work. The management of life is subsumed under the regulation of death. Fragmentation as

surveillance software, biometric control systems—all “field-tested” on Palestinians—are now marketed globally. Governments across the Global South and even liberal democracies have adopted these tools under the guise of counterterrorism and border control.

Palestine becomes the prototype. What is tested on the stateless, the occupied, and the besieged is repackaged and deployed against



Palestinians inspect the damage at the Dar Al-Arqam school, where displaced people shelter, after it was hit by an Israeli strike, in Gaza City, April 4, 2025.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

as a threat to be preemptively neutralised. The message is unmistakable: diplomacy is not a path to peace—it’s a liability.

Even more disturbing is the public articulation of Israel’s intent to assassinate Iran’s supreme leader “at the earliest opportunity.” This is not simply a military objective—it is an ontological one. It aims not just to decapitate a regime but to erase its symbolic and theological foundation. In this logic, the enemy is no longer defined by behaviour, but by identity.

What emerges is a necropolitical doctrine in which the future is not safeguarded but systematically extinguished. Israel is no longer preventing attacks. It is killing futures. Humanitarianism as control

The weaponisation of humanitarianism is perhaps the most insidious aspect of Israel’s bio-necro-politics. Aid does not function as a rupture in the logic of violence—it reinforces it. The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation and similar mechanisms operate not to dismantle the blockade but to manage its consequences. Aid becomes the soft face of coercion.

Israel permits just enough food, fuel, and medicine to avert a full-blown humanitarian crisis, while ensuring that the conditions of siege remain intact. Flour becomes a

sovereignty

Israel has not only remapped the spatial coordinates of Palestinian life; it has dismembered its political coherence. Gaza is fenced. The West Bank is a mosaic of checkpoints, settler bypass roads, and closed military zones. East Jerusalem is surrounded by surveillance towers. Each fragment is governed by a separate legal regime, movement restrictions, and administrative procedures.

This fragmentation is not incidental—it is constitutive. The very idea of a unified Palestinian body politic is rendered impossible. Political agency is replaced by biometric registration. Sovereignty is replaced by logistical control.

Here, the permit becomes the new passport. The checkpoint becomes the new parliament. Sovereignty is not merely denied—it is dissolved into a bureaucratic maze of control. Life is governed not by laws but by spatial algorithms. From prototype to export model

What makes this regime even more alarming is its portability. Israel does not merely deploy these technologies for internal use—it exports them. Drones, predictive

migrants, dissidents, and the poor worldwide. Israel’s reinvention of bio-necro-politics is thus not an anomaly—it is a global harbinger. The future that must be resisted

Israel’s rule over Gaza and the occupied territories reveals a political formation that collapses the distinctions between life and death, care and coercion, visibility and erasure. This is not simply the brutal enforcement of occupation—it is the design of a future in which control is total, identity is data, and power is exercised through the management of life’s thresholds.

What is being rehearsed in Gaza is not limited to a conflict over land. It is a radical restructuring of governance itself—where the state no longer manages life in order to secure the future, but eliminates futures in order to secure the state.

This bio-necro-political order is not only morally indefensible—it is globally contagious. To confront it is not merely to stand in solidarity with Palestinians. It is to defend the very possibility of life with dignity, futures with meaning, and politics without death at its centre. Gaza is not just a site of suffering—it is the test case of a dystopian future we must resist.

Can Bangladesh’s urban drainage survive climate change?



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The sky rips open, and within an hour, Dhanmondi is knee-deep—not just in puddles, but in a murky, swirling current that transforms familiar streets into treacherous rivers. The roar of car engines gives way to the slosh of water, and the vibrant life of Dhaka grinds to a halt. Just a few hours of rain, and our cities become aquatic ghost towns. Students, their hopes for exams drowned by the rising tide, stare despondently from waterlogged apartments. Rickshaw-pullers, their livelihoods quite literally afloat, huddle under makeshift shelters. Small businesses—the lifeblood of our communities—watch helplessly as their inventory succumbs to the invasive floodwaters. What happens when the monsoon truly peaks? More critically, what is the actual, agonising state of our drainage systems?

This recurring nightmare is no accident—it is the by-product of Bangladesh’s rapid, unplanned urbanisation, where drainage infrastructure has failed to keep pace with city expansion. In Dhaka, Chattogram, Sylhet and Barishal, even moderate rain now triggers widespread waterlogging. The roots of this crisis are threefold. First, rampant encroachment on canals, floodplains and wetlands—nature’s own drainage systems—has throttled water flow, turning once-broad channels into clogged trickles. Second, the drainage blueprints still in use were designed decades ago for a different climate and a far



The drainage blueprints still in use were designed decades ago for a different climate and a far smaller population.

FILE PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

smaller population. Today’s intense rainfall and relentless concrete sprawl quickly overwhelm systems built for 25–30 mm per hour, while actual downpours often double that. Third, overlapping mandates among key agencies—WASA, city corporations and RAJUK—have created a maze of fragmented responsibilities. No one is fully accountable,

and coordination is virtually absent. This toxic mix of encroachment, outdated design, and bureaucratic disarray turns every rainstorm into a disaster, drowning infrastructure and livelihoods alike.

The relentless urban flooding we witness today is not merely a consequence of poor planning—it is the unmistakable, undeniable face of climate change manifesting as urban chaos. Beyond the widely discussed threats

despite Bangladesh consistently ranking among the most climate-vulnerable nations on the Global Climate Risk Index, national adaptation discourse remains disproportionately focused on rural resilience and coastal defences. Urban centres—dense with population and economic assets—remain dangerously under-prioritised. This blind spot in planning and policy is no longer just an oversight; it is a critical vulnerability that leaves millions exposed to cascading climate risks. Recognising the urban flood crisis as part of the climate emergency is not optional—it is long overdue.

If climate change is the accelerant, then poor governance is the kindling. Beneath the rising waters lies a tangle of institutional dysfunction and impunity that sabotages effective action. When Dhaka North goes underwater, blame ricochets from WASA to the City Corporation to RAJUK—yet no agency is held accountable. This bureaucratic merry-go-round ensures that drainage failures are met not with reform, but with finger-pointing. Despite ballooning budgets for drain cleaning and flood prevention, there is little transparency about where the money goes—and even less public trust in how it is spent. Meanwhile, unregulated construction continues to encroach on canals, wetlands and stormwater routes with near-total impunity. Developers routinely fill up vital water bodies, and legal enforcement is either toothless or non-existent. This systematic erasure of natural drainage not only worsens flooding—it cements it as a feature, not a flaw, of urban life. Until we fix who governs water, we will continue drowning in the consequences.

The grim reality demands not just recognition of the problem, but a swift and transformative shift towards comprehensive solutions. Crucially, this involves embracing nature-based solutions that work with, rather than against, our natural hydrology. This means aggressively reviving and restoring

our choked canals, turning them back into functioning arteries for water flow instead of stagnant waste receptacles. Furthermore, we must actively pursue the creation of urban retention ponds and expand green spaces that can absorb excess rainfall, acting as vital sponges during deluges. Innovations such as green roofing and permeable pavements must become standard practice in urban development, allowing water to infiltrate the ground naturally rather than overwhelm drainage systems.

We do not need to reinvent the wheel; successful models exist globally. Singapore’s ABC Waters Programme—which integrates water bodies into the urban landscape for both drainage and recreation—offers a powerful blueprint. What Bangladesh desperately needs is a Drainage Master Plan 2.0: a forward-looking strategy that not only updates archaic designs but fundamentally integrates the latest climate data and rigorously enforces wetland zoning laws. This cannot be a top-down directive. It requires active, regular dialogue and collaboration among urban planners, climate scientists, engineers and local communities—the very people who live and breathe these challenges. Only by working together can we design and implement a resilient drainage system capable of facing the climate realities of tomorrow.

The choice before us is stark. If we fail to fix our urban drainage systems now, the floods of the future will not merely damage property and disrupt daily life—they will systematically drown opportunity. They will wash away the entrepreneurial spirit of our small businesses and stifle economic growth. They will erode public health, fostering outbreaks of waterborne diseases. Most tragically, they will extinguish hope, leaving our citizens trapped in a cycle of despair and vulnerability. The time for action is not tomorrow, but today. Our collective future, and the very liveability of our cities, depends on it.