

The hoax of ‘weaponized rape’ in Gaza takes what seems a fatal hit from The Sunday Times

written by Patrick Lawrence
June 12, 2024



Pro-Palestinian demonstrators protest outside of the Washington Hilton, the site

of the Annual White House Correspondents Dinner, on April 27, 2024 in Washington, D.C.

The Afterlives of Lies

Special to [Consortium News](#)

June 12 — Last Friday, while President Joe Biden, French President Emmanuel Macron, and other Western leaders, along with the reporters who clerk for them, were in Normandy busily airbrushing out the Red Army's heroism in defeating the Reich 80 years ago, something truer to history occurred in the pages of *The Sunday Times*, the distinguished sibling of *The Times of London*.

Under the headline, "Israel says Hamas weaponized rape. Does the evidence add up?" two investigative reporters, Catherine Philp and Gabrielle Weiniger, decisively shredded the dense fabric of lies on this topic, woven these past eight months by the Israelis, Western media, freakishly obsessed Zionist sympathizers and various feminist poseurs.

[See: [Evidence Missing in 'Mass Rape' Charge Against Hamas](#)]

Philp and Weiniger have produced an exceptional piece of journalism, the virtues of which I will shortly consider. For now, just this: You will never read a piece of this integrity on this side of the Atlantic — and certainly never in *The New York Times*, whose infamous dishonesty in the matter of alleged sexual violence in the Gaza crisis has few matches in the history of the once-but-no-longer newspaper of record.

But the significance of *The Sunday Times* piece extends well beyond its quality as first-rate work. Mainstream media have at last reported on the monstrous propaganda operation that has fabricated lurid allegations of sexual abuse on the part of Hamas militias. The surface of silence has finally been disturbed. The historians will have a record with which to work.

And the record will include, as reflections in a mirror, the base derelictions of other major media — *The New York Times*, the BBC, the wire services, and so on down a long list — as they collaborated with the Zionist state to advance this edifice of lies to justify the barbarities of the Israel Occupation Forces. (And let us rename these savages in uniform.)

I liked Aaron Maté's remark when he posted a link to *The Sunday Times* piece on X soon after it came out: "Establishment media starting to catch up with independent journalists and a squirrel Twitter account" – the latter a reference to the man, woman, or entity that flagged the piece when it was published last Friday.

Just the point, or one of many. Various independent publications, notably but not only *The Grayzone*, *Mondoweiss*, *Electronic Intifada* and *The Intercept*, were swift to expose the Israelis' aggressive propaganda op when, with Jeffrey Gettleman's breathtakingly counterfeit pieces in *The New York Times* last December, the lying got entirely out of hand.

These publications kept the light shining on a story that otherwise would have disappeared in darkness. We see in their reports the increasing power of independent media to force accurate accountings of events into the record. In this case if not in many others, those airbrushing the picture failed.

Unambiguous Rebuttal

Answering the question posed in the headline atop their piece, Philps and Weiniger reply with an unambiguous "No": there is no sound evidence whatsoever that Hamas militias, and others that crossed into southern Israel with them last Oct. 7, engaged in systematic, officially planned sexual violence against Israelis, women and men, during their attacks on various kibbutzim just across the Gaza-Israel border.

These fabrications began to appear within days of the Oct. 7 events and have ever

since polluted public discourse across the West. We must now bear another bureaucratic acronym, CRSV, “conflict-related sexual violence,” to secure the gravity of the charges in our minds.

Prominent faux-feminists — Hillary Clinton and Sheryl Sandberg chief among them — continue to indulge in “the politicization of rape,” as one of Philps and Weiniger’s sources calls it.

But the air begins to clear. From here on out, those who continue to peddle the junk conjured by the Israeli propaganda machine will merely expose themselves as unserious buffoons in the service of an apartheid state. Let them.

Philps and Weiniger devote considerable column inches to the report issued March 4 by Pramila Patten, the U.N.’s special representative on sexual violence in zones of conflict.

Predictably, Western media went long on Patten’s report of “reasonable grounds to believe that conflict-related sexual violence occurred in multiple locations.”

Lost in the frisson this language prompted in the mainstream press was the U.N.’s finding that there is also credible evidence, and a lot of it, of such abuse by the IOF. And as Philps and Weiniger report, the Israelis flatly refused to cooperate with a formal investigation into any of these matters — the allegations against either Hamas or the IOF — when Patten, whose mission was preliminary to an official inquiry, recommended one.

The gaping hole Philps and Weiniger blow in the propagandists’ bow also derives from the Patten report. Whatever her team may have found in the way of sexual violence during its Jan. 19-Feb. 14 mission, it reported finding no evidence that Hamas ordered it as a systematic weapon of war.

Netting this out, sexual violence in wartime is as old and as regrettable as warfare

itself.

The peasants in the Red Army's infantry had a reputation for it during World War II. But it was not Soviet military policy by any stretch any more than it was or is the Hamas leadership's.

The distinction is key to the destruction of propagandists' edifice. The most infamous piece of rubbish published on this point — Jeffrey Gettleman's long Dec. 28 takeout, the piece that lit the fuse — was headlined, "[Screams Without Silence: How Hamas Weaponized Sexual Violence on October 7.](#)"

'Inherited Trauma'

Having surfaced this fraud in an influential mainstream newspaper, Philps and Weiniger are simply without equal as they investigate just where the Israelis' platoons of fabricators and outright liars got the imagery that made the propaganda op so explosive. They mark it down to the "inherited trauma" — Gabor Maté's phrase, not Philps and Weinger's — European Jews bear within from all those centuries of pogroms and from the Reich's concentration camps.

Here are the two *Sunday Times* reporters explaining this use of the past. Their reference in this passage is to Sarai Aharoni, a scholar at Ben-Gurion University who is assembling an archive of the events that began Oct. 7 (and may it prove accurate when it is opened after a 50-year embargo):

"For Jewish Israelis, the specter of rape was more closely associated historically with the pogroms of Eastern Europe, in which thousands of Jews were killed and Jewish women raped by Christian soldiers and antisemitic mobs. That persecution would become one of the driving forces behind modern Zionism and the resettlement of European Jews in the Ottoman province that became British mandate Palestine.

These ‘historical memories,’ Aharoni notes, have become a cultural inheritance for the Jewish people, particularly those without a secular education, a fact that would come to play a role in the reporting of what happened on October 7.”

And later in the piece:

“Aharoni and others are struck by how closely the Zaka accounts cleaved to stories handed down about the horrors of the pogroms. ‘The first framing of rape and sexual violence was automatically linked with European histories,’ she says, particularly by those with a religious education. ‘So there is a Zaka [an ultra-orthodox rescue group known for fabricating evidence] volunteer whose main education is religious. He’s read a lot of Jewish texts that depict the raping of women. These texts kind of reappear again and again in Jewish stories and they reappear every time there is a major event against Jewish communities.”

And further on:

“The now debunked story of the pregnant woman and her slaughtered foetus is well known from the pogroms. Many other erroneous tales involved babies — one Zaka figure claimed to have found a baby baked alive in an oven.”

Very fine journalism. Philps and Weiniger are also excellent on the sociology of the worsening of Israel’s ever-present racism since Benjamin Netanyahu, in the cause of his political survival, formed a government of beyond-belief freaks in the final days of 2022.

“The idea of the Arab male as an explicit sexual threat to Jewish women,” they write, “developed in tandem with the movement of Israeli politics to the right.”

Philps and Weiniger are too kind, in my view, to put the framing of Hamas for

directing sexual abuse down to the Jews' past traumas. It seems to me more in the line of amateurishly sloppy propaganda and yet another case — how heartily sick one grows of this — of pimping the historical sufferings of Jews to maintain the Zionists' cynical claim to be the world's eternal victims.

Will *The Sunday Times* exposé cause the propagandists and Zionist zealots to desist, now that a mainstream newspaper adds its voice to the honorable work of the independent publications noted earlier? In the long term, yes. The story of gang rapes, baked babies, and disemboweled mothers is dead.

Maintaining the Facade

In the short term, no. One of the defining characteristics of propagandists is that they can never admit to being wrong when exposed. Surrender is out of the question when your objective is not to convey realities but to construct a façade obscuring them: Façades collapse like poorly built walls if a single chink appears in them.

Jeffrey “I don’t want to even use the word ‘evidence’” Gettleman is our case in point.

While there is no question of the *Times* firing him — this would be to admit the paper’s dishonor — I had predicted he would be reassigned to the police blotter in Trenton or some other such ignominious fate. I was wrong. Gettleman is back in Ukraine, from whence he was reporting until the morning of Oct. 7.

His first piece, after a hiatus of three and some months, appeared May 11 and was actually a very good report on the recent Russian advances into northeastern Ukraine. Several others in this line followed, all more or less balanced — or more balanced, let’s leave it, than the obvious propaganda the Times has long given readers in its Ukraine reports.

Gettleman’s latest, datelined June 8 — a day after *The Sunday Times* ripped him a new one without mentioning his name — was a weirdly long report on how popular

caffeinated energy drinks are among Ukrainian soldiers at the front. I read this, war correspondence at its pithiest, as an indication the *Times* has begun a lengthy rehabilitation of a reporter in whom it has long taken pride.

Will you ever again trust a Gettleman byline? Not I. An “X” user named Mazen Labban put it nicely as *The Sunday Times* piece got around: “Every day the NYT keeps Gettleman on its staff, and does not retract the drivel he’s written, is an insult to journalists and journalism.”

No, there is no erasing a disgrace of the magnitude of Gettleman’s, Mazen. But Gettleman will stay — he must. His job from here on out is to stand in place so the façade does not crack.

There is also the case, at least as egregious as Gettleman’s, of Sheryl Sandberg, the longtime propagator of, let’s call it, corporate feminism. Sandberg took on the sexual violence fraud with what we have to count reckless abandon given how eagerly she adopted the unexamined Israeli propaganda and how indifferent she has since proven to contradicting facts.



Sandberg, center, while chief operating officer of Facebook, at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in January 2016. Photo: WEF, Flickr /Remy Steinegger, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

On May 2 Sandberg released a 60-minute film on Hamas' "weaponization" of sexual violence theme titled "Screams Before Silence." If this suggests to you she is fine replicating all the demonstrated lies of the infamous Gettleman takeout, stay with the thought.

Sandberg calls the film a documentary, and also the worthiest work she has ever done. It is a straight-out rehearsal of the original Israeli line, complete with Zaka and all the other discredited non-witnesses and liars paying attention readers will have encountered in the Gettleman piece and countless others like it.

Screams Before Silence was released two months after the Patten report and the independent journalism previously mentioned, but never mind all that. Sheryl

Sandberg will soldier on regardless. She is determined to make hatred of Hamas, and one suspects by extension Palestinians, some kind of feminist cause. Pitiful. No mention of the 20-odd thousand women the IOF has slaughtered, Ms. Sandberg?

This is feminism weaponized in the Zionist cause, plainly and simply. Genuine, worthwhile feminism, feminism as a subset of humanism, went out the window long, long ago, I am perfectly aware. But this seems to me a degradation too far, even with the sorry history of a cause that was once so promising in view.

Maybe because of Sandberg's obsessive motivations and the repetition of so many false narratives, *Screams Before Silence* has earned faint praise indeed in mainstream media.

CNN and *The Wall Street Journal* covered it, mutedly. Few others have had anything to say.

Lies in the cause of our hegemonic orthodoxies have afterlives, certainly. But they rarely, if ever, live eternally, and they often die slow, painful deaths.

Patrick Lawrence, a correspondent abroad for many years, chiefly for The International Herald Tribune, is a columnist, essayist, lecturer and author, most recently of [Journalists and Their Shadows](#), available [from Clarity Press](#) or [via Amazon](#). Other books include *Time No Longer: Americans After the American Century*. His Twitter account, @thefloutist, has been permanently censored.

