

Episode 30: Omer Bartov

Guests: Prof. Dr. Omer Bartov – Professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Brown University, Rhode Island

Hosts: Yusuf & Efe

Bio: Prof. Dr. Omer Bartov, born in Israel in 1954, is one of the world's leading scholars of Holocaust and Genocide Studies. He served in the Israeli army during the 1973 Yom Kippur War before pursuing history studies at Tel Aviv University and earning his doctorate from Oxford, focusing on war crimes of the Wehrmacht. Prof. Bartov's research examines how violence unfolds through armies, ideologies, and between neighbors and within communities. His landmark book *Anatomy of a Genocide* explores the town of Buczacz, his mother's birthplace, as a case study of local-level genocide; it received the National Jewish Book Award and the Yad Vashem International Book Prize for Holocaust Research. His most recent book, *Genocide, the Holocaust, and Israel-Palestine*, was recently released in German translation. Prof. Bartov currently teaches at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island.

In this Episode: In this episode, Yusuf and Efe speak with Prof. Bartov about the personal and political dimensions of studying mass violence. The conversation explores his family history and how it shaped his academic path, the evolving understanding of genocide and international law, and the historical roots and contemporary implications of antisemitism. Bartov reflects on the October 7 attacks, the rise of campus protests in the U.S., and ongoing debates around genocide accusations related to Gaza. The discussion concludes with insights on the role of education in processing trauma and transmitting historical lessons to future generations, emphasizing empathy, complex narratives, and truth in Holocaust and genocide education.

Links:

Prof. Dr. Omer Bartov, Brown University, Rhode Island <https://history.brown.edu/people/omer-bartov> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Bartov, Omer. *Anatomy of a Genocide: The Life and Death of a Town Called Buczacz*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018. <https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/Anatomy-of-a-Genocide/Omer-Bartov/9781451684544> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Bartov, Omer. *Genocide, the Holocaust, and Israel-Palestine*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2025. Deutsch: <https://www.suhrkamp.de/buch/omer-bartov-genozid-holocaust-und-israel-palaestina-t-9783633543359> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025) English: <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/genocide-the-holocaust-and-israelpalestine-9781350332317/> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide

https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocity-crimes/Doc.1_Convention%20on%20the%20Prevention%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Genocide.pdf (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Omer Bartov, What I believe as a Historian of Genocide (Nov 10, 2023): <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/10/opinion/israel-gaza-genocide-war.html> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Omer Bartov on the potentially genocidal nature of Oct 7: <https://taz.de/Genozidforscher-ueber-Gaza/!5984116/> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Omer Bartov describing Oct 7 as an „act of genocidal violence“: <https://www.zeit.de/2025/25/omer-bartov-benjamin-netanjahu-nahostkonflikt-kritiker-instrumentalisierung-holocaust/seite-2> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Omer Bartov, I'm a Genocide Scholar. I know it when I see it (July 15, 2025): <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/15/opinion/israel-gaza-holocaust-genocide-palestinians.html> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Renowned international law scholar **Philippe Sands**, in conversation with Ezra Klein, argued that according to **Raphael Lemkin's original definition**, both the events of **October 7** and the situation in **Gaza** could be considered genocides. He is, however, more skeptical when it comes to the much narrower **legal definition under the Genocide Convention**. Sands emphasizes that proving the *special intent* required for genocide (*dolus specialis*) is nearly impossible, as long as any alternative explanation for patterns of conduct remains plausible. Since human intentions are usually complex, isolating genocidal intent in a court of law from other possible motivations is extremely difficult - so difficult, in fact, that it has never succeeded in the past. The only historical case where the **ICJ** and **ICC** reached a judgment on genocide concerned **Serbia**. Even then, the ICJ did not convict Serbia of committing genocide itself, but of **failing to prevent genocide**. Therefore, if **Myanmar** or **Israel** were to be convicted of genocide, they would be the first countries in history to face such a ruling - a fact which, according to Sands, places an **enormous burden on the judges**. <https://www.nytimes.com/video/opinion/100000010328913/when-is-it-genocide.html> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Martin Shaw, who the Washington Post calls „the leading sociological expert on genocide“ describes October 7 as a „genocidal massacre“ and Israel's response as an „asymmetrical counter-genocide“. As „ Hamas also knew that its mass atrocity against Israeli civilians would cause a huge, destructive response“, this „certainly makes the genocide a 'co-production', but Israel has the prime, direct responsibility.“ The term „genocidal massacre“ refers to Leo Kuper's concept of „a limited, local expression of what the Genocide Convention calls genocide 'in part'“. <https://jpr.winchesteruniversitypress.org/articles/164/files/6765c472d1841.pdf> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025) / <https://>

newlinesmag.com/spotlight/the-uses-and-abuses-of-the-term-genocide-in-gaza/
(Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Public Statement by International Law Experts on Oct 7 as potential Genocide:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd4IrsDRg3HbJqoAf0BI Ae7BHJuzpQB_Le27Iureq9vpCoBkw/viewform
(Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Harvard Caps Poll of October 19, 2023: 62% of 18-24 year olds answered that October 7 „attacks on Jews were genocidal in nature“, but 51% of them answered they were „justified by Palestinian grievances.“ (p. 43). https://harvardharrispoll.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/HHP_Oct23_KeyResults.pdf
(Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Resolution of the International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS): <https://genocidescholars.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/IAGS-Resolution-on-Gaza-FINAL.pdf> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Criticism by former board member Sara E. Brown: <https://shorturl.at/1q4Zb> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Petition of Scholars against the Resolution: <https://shorturl.at/W9qLd> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

IAGS Board's reaction: <https://shorturl.at/a6fWa> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Report of the UN Human Rights' Counsel's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel <https://shorturl.at/ld5o8> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Independent UN Experts:

https://www.un.org/unispal/document/un-experts-statement-07may25/?utm_source=chatgpt.com (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Amnesty International:

https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/12/amnesty-international-concludes-israel-is-committing-genocide-against-palestinians-in-gaza/?utm_source=chatgpt.com (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Human Rights Watch: https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/12/19/israels-crime-extermination-acts-genocide-gaza?utm_source=chatgpt.com (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Doctors Without Borders: https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/latest/gaza-death-trap-msf-report-exposes-israels-campaign-total-destruction?utm_source=chatgpt.com (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

B'Tselem: https://www.btselem.org/press_releases/20250728_our_genocide?utm_source=chatgpt.com (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Physicians for Human Rights: https://www.phr.org.il/en/genocide-in-gaza-eng/?utm_source=chatgpt.com (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Please also check out our other episodes of the political debate chapter to explore multiple perspectives.

Dedication:

We dedicate this Podcast to all victims and survivors of October 7, the hostages and their families, to all innocent civilians killed and injured in Gaza and their grieving families and friends. To our dear guests Udi Goren, Khalil Sayegh, Sima and Mai who shared their losses so powerfully with us. To their families: Tal's wife Ella Haimi, their children Nir, Einav, Udi and Lotan, who never got the chance to meet his father. To Khalil Sayegh's mother and siblings, to Mai's and Sima's family, to her mother Bushra.

To the blessed memory of: Tal Haimi, Lara Sayegh, Jeris Sayegh, Mahmoud, Danny Darlington and Haim Perry.

Disclaimer:

In each episode of this podcast, the invited guests speak on their own behalf. They share their experiences, assessments, and expert perspectives. These contributions are central to the multiperspectivity of the project but do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial team or producers.

Legal & Historical Anchor Episodes:

This podcast may include controversial legal terms of specific technical significance. Their legal applicability requires a thorough expert contextualization; for this, we refer to our legal chapter. All relevant terms of international law, its institutions, current controversies, and the state of jurisprudence are explained in

the anchor episode with Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Claus Kreß LL.M. (Cambridge) (Episode 36). He is co-author of the Rome Statute, Special Advisor to the International Criminal Court, and Judge at the International Court of Justice in the parallel Gambia vs. Myanmar genocide case.

Historical matters are discussed from multiple perspectives in this podcast. Please check the cross-references in the shownotes of the respective episodes for details. All historically contested issues are addressed in the history anchor episode with Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Gudrun Krämer (Episode 21), author of the comprehensive work *A History of Palestine: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Founding of the State of Israel* (Princeton 2008), a standard reference in the field. For her scholarly achievements as a historian, she was awarded the *Preis des Historischen Kollegs* in 2025, the highest distinction in her discipline in Germany.