

# Sexual Violence Denialism and the October 7 Attack (Online Article)

## Historical Note

This online article was published in April of 2025 on the blog [Cypriot Footnotes](#) and was signed with the pseudonym Delirium.

## Content

### Sexual Violence Denialism and the October 7 Attack

I have encountered, on several occasions, rape denialism when talking with Cypriot pro-Palestinian leftists in relation to the October 7 Hamas attack. Since every such discussion has left me, frankly, nauseated, I decided to collect here some of the documented proof regarding the matter. I am responding here to one claim only, that rapes and sexual violence did not take place during Hamas' attack.

I am not interested in writing a detailed rebuttal of every pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian propaganda point surrounding the narratives over sexual violence. Others are better equipped to do so than me, and indeed have done so. What I have encountered is not a discussion of such points, but merely the plain denial that sexual violence took place in any form or consistency. In relation to the facts themselves, we have reports and statements from credible organisations whose purpose is to document human rights violations across the globe, and who have not been shy of documenting atrocities committed by Israel both in the past and in the present. The three sources I quote below do not exhaust the available documentation.

- **The United Nations Report**

“Overall, based on the totality of information gathered from multiple and independent sources at the different locations, there are reasonable grounds to believe that conflict-related sexual violence occurred at several locations across the Gaza periphery, including in the form of rape and gang rape, during the 7 October 2023 attacks. Credible circumstantial information, which may be indicative of some forms of sexual violence, including genital mutilation, sexualized torture, or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, was also gathered” (page 21).

You can read it by [pressing here](#).

- **The Amnesty International Public Statement**

“Amnesty International has interviewed one person who described being subjected to rape at the Nova festival by members of a Palestinian armed group. It has spoken to several mental health and legal professionals who, between them, reported treating or providing legal services to a number of survivors and witnesses of rape or other sexual violence during the attacks, and a psychiatrist who said that some returned hostages reported being subjected to sexual violence by men guarding them.

The organization has received testimonies describing bodies of people killed during the attacks that raise concerns about rape or other sexual violence and is reviewing several images of bodies of victims of the attacks that also appear to prompt such concerns” (page 5).

You can read it by [pressing here](#).

### • The Human Rights Watch Report

“Human Rights Watch found evidence of acts of sexual and gender-based violence by fighters including forced nudity, and the posting without consent of sexualized images on social media. [...] The extent to which acts of sexual and gender-based violence were committed during the October 7 assault will likely never be fully known: many victims may have been killed; stigma and trauma often deter survivors from reporting; and Israeli security forces and other responders largely did not collect relevant forensic evidence from the attack sites or the recovered bodies” (Pages 7-8).

You can read it by [pressing here](#).

### Survivor Testimonies

It has been more than once that I encountered the argument that there are no public accounts of rape victims themselves. In the minds of some people, this is apparently proof that rape and sexual violence did not occur. I always found the demand that victims of rape must publicly expose themselves bizarre, a demand that I frankly have never encountered amongst Cypriot leftists in any other occasion of sexual violence.

These accounts are indeed scarce, and the reason is obvious. Many of the victims of rape and sexual assault were killed on the same day by Islamist militants. Those who survived have to endure the psychological fallout of their abuse, as well as social stigma in a patriarchal society that has long been shifting towards conservatism and religious fundamentalism. But for those who desperately need such proof, here is one statement of a survivor of the Nova massacre [witnessing rape](#), and another by a survivor [experiencing rape](#). Although not relevant to the October 7 attack as such, there is also this long piece of a former  [Hamas hostage detailing her experiences](#), including being raped at gunpoint.

### A Recent Instance of Misinformation

In January 2025, Israeli prosecutor Moran Gez gave an interview to [Yedioth Ahronoth](#), stating, amongst other things, that:

“Unfortunately, it will be very difficult to prove these crimes. In the end, we don’t have complainants. What was reported in the media compared to what will ultimately be established will look very different—either because the victims were murdered or because women who were raped are unwilling to come forward.

We reached out to women’s rights organisations and requested cooperation. They told us no one had contacted them. Some parents reached out to these organisations, asking what to do if something happened to their daughters, but they didn’t disclose the assaults.

In this area, I would temper expectations. I know the public is expecting action and understands the need to address the horrific sexual offences and assaults that occurred, but the vast majority of these cases won’t meet the evidentiary threshold in court, and the criticism will ultimately fall on the prosecution—unjustly so.”

Moran Gez was here commenting on the legal dimension - it is not enough in a court of law to prove that rapes did take place, as the reports above indicate. One has to connect each individual rape to an individual perpetrator, who needs to be first identified, taken into custody, formally charged, and proven guilty based on the standard of proof demanded by the judicial system. So for Gez, the chances of legal persecutions and convictions of October 7 rapists are slim, even if surviving victims do come forward - which they are unlikely to do, as has been the case in past examples of conflict-driven sexual violence, [including that of Cyprus](#).

How was the above reported by some pro-Palestinian sites? By misrepresenting the statements made in the interview, cherry-picking them to promote the narrative that no rapes or sexual violence ever took place, and that Gez herself confirmed that. This is what [Electronic Intifada](#) did, as well as the [Middle East Monitor](#), the [World Socialist Website](#), and the Iranian [Press TV](#), just to name a few. And with the way (mis)information spreads in today's algorithm-driven social media, it does not take long for the content of a propagandistic article on a website to be repeated to me by a friend over coffee during a lazy afternoon.

## Propaganda & Ideology

Lies during conflicts spread like Los Angeles wildfires. Early on in the conflict, Israeli narratives promoted spectacles of abysmal violence, descriptions of brutal acts that fall well within Islamophobic stereotypes, orientalist caricatures and dehumanising discourses whose purpose is to strip any human resemblance of Palestinians at large. This was a propaganda uninterested in careful documentation, aimed at dominating public discourse at day one, and good propaganda needs its exaggeration. When [some of the accounts](#) circulating on international media proved to be false, various pro-Palestinian groups, websites and activists grasped the opportunity to produce their own counter-narrative, that no rapes or sexual violence whatsoever took place during the October 7 attack. This counter-narrative is no less propagandistic than the Israeli one, it concerns itself not with the truth, but with its distortion for political ends. Its presence is neither surprising nor new. Encountering it amongst local feminists and socialists, whose commitment to social justice I do not doubt, is what I increasingly find disturbing.

The first time that I noticed such levels of misinformation within the alternative left in Cyprus was during the Covid-19 pandemic. The second time was during the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and there is a [long report](#) on this blog (in Greek) documenting the denialism of Russian crimes against humanity by a popular leftist social media page. In all cases, what became blatantly obvious was the inability of people to separate a reliable from an unreliable source, to effectively fact-check what they are consuming and to identify obvious misinformation. I will simply list here again some of the news media sources that have proven to be **consistently reliable** in terms of their reporting of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: Associated Press, Reuters, Al Jazeera, Bellingcat. These are to be viewed as complimentary news media sources, as each has a different focus. In relation to human rights violations and crimes against humanity, the reports of Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and the United Nations are the focal points of reference.

On the left, we often accuse others of having been brainwashed by hegemonic discourses. Leftist ideology, like all counter-hegemonic ideologies, perceives itself as being located outside broader ideological processes, looking in. Indeed, much of the self-gratification in leftist politics can be traced to the (un)conscious belief that one sees beyond the ideological facade, participating in a politics that brings to the surface social reality as it itself objectively exists. It is a dangerous belief, making those holding it easily susceptible to all sorts of misinformation, precisely because they perceive themselves exempt from it. And when you are repeating the talking points of rape denialists, it might be time to ask yourself how you got there.

## Delirium



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Last update: **2025/07/24 22:05**

