



White House Backtracks on Biden Claim About Hamas Beheading Babies

The White House has backtracked on U.S. President Joe Biden's October 11 allegation that he saw images of beheaded children after Hamas' lethal assault on Israel on October 7.

Biden earlier claimed that he had seen images of mutilated children during a meeting with Jewish leaders at the White House.

"I never really thought that I would see, have confirmed, pictures of terrorists beheading children," said Biden, who characterized the attack on October 7 as the "deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust."

Stories of the decapitation of Israeli children and sexual assault of hostages by the Palestinian armed group have gone viral on social media after Saturday's attack.

Nicole Zedek, a reporter with Tel Aviv-based news channel i24, claimed during a live broadcast that she had spoken to Israeli soldiers who had seen decapitated babies.

The Israeli army has admitted that it could not substantiate such claims, which were repeated on October 11 by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's spokesperson Tal Heinrich.

Nonetheless, Israeli military officials have contended in various media outlets that women and children were "brutally butchered in an ISIS way of action."

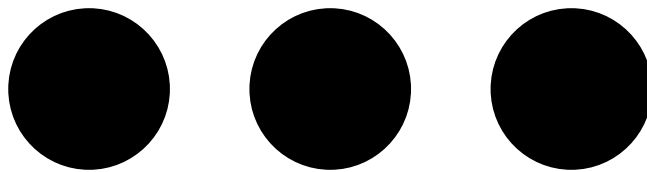
When questioned by *The Washington Post*, a White House spokesperson said Biden's remarks were based on news reports and claims by the Israeli government.

"The president based his comments about the alleged atrocities on the claims from [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu's spokesman and media reports from Israel," the *Post* reported, quoting the White House.

"A White House spokesperson later clarified that US officials and the president have not seen pictures or confirmed such reports independently," the *Post* reported on October 11.

Asked about such allegations by *The Intercept*, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said it could not "confirm it officially," but highlighted that "you can assume it happened and believe the report."

"Women, children, toddlers, and elderly were brutally butchered in an ISIS way of action and we are aware of the heinous acts Hamas is capable of," an IDF spokesperson told *The Intercept*.



AP Images



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on October 13, 2023

Biden's allegations were splashed all over the front pages of mainstream Western newspapers, with reports of beheaded babies quoted in some quarters as an excuse for revenge attacks and the collective punishment of civilians in Gaza.

For its part, Hamas has dismissed claims that its fighters beheaded children and attacked women, castigating them as "lies."

Social-media platforms such as Facebook, X, and TikTok have been awash with conflicting news on the Israel-Hamas war, based on an Al Jazeera probe.

Other allegations have been circulating online since October 7, including claims that fighters had sexually assaulted Israeli women.

Moreover, Biden reinforced such charges earlier this week, claiming that women had been "raped, assaulted [and] paraded as trophies."

Yet the U.S. leader's accusation remains unsubstantiated as of the time of reporting, with the *Los Angeles Times* adding an editor's note to a recent [op-ed](#) indicating that "such reports have not been substantiated."

Israel's long-standing blockade on Gaza has also increased in intensity in recent days, after the government announced a "complete siege" to stop the flow of essentials such as food, fuel, and medicine to Palestinian residents in the enclave, sparking humanitarian concerns.

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant has vowed to ramp up the Jewish state's military campaign in Gaza, declaring on October 11 that Israel would wipe Hamas "off the face of the earth."

The IDF has conducted many airstrikes on Gaza on the pretext of revenge for the Hamas-led attack, pulverizing residential areas and demolishing entire apartment blocks in some raids.

Multiple warnings of the lack of fuel and that the Gaza population is increasingly susceptible to death by starvation have emerged in recent days.

Gaza's only power station, which had been working intermittently for days, ran out of fuel on October 11. Without power, water cannot be transported to houses. Almost total darkness reigns at night, with the occasional fireballs and light from phones used as flashlights.

"I lived through all the wars and incursions in the past, but I have never witnessed anything worse than this war," said Yamen Hamad, 35, a father of four, whose home had been pounded by Israeli strikes on the northern Gaza town of Beit Hanoun.

Over 175,000 Gazans have fled their homes since October 7, according to figures from the UN. Some aid agencies in Gaza stated that the conditions are the worst they have seen so far, even after 16 years of an Israeli blockade in the area since Hamas assumed power there in 2007.

"The civilian loss this time ... is unprecedented," said a spokesman for the International Committee of the Red Cross in Gaza.

With the Gaza strip's only other border, to Egypt, blocked by the Egyptian authorities, Gazans said they were trapped, fearing the worst was yet to come, including a possible ground invasion, as Israel seeks revenge for Hamas' lethal attacks last weekend.

Over 1,300 people were killed and thousands wounded in the Hamas attack inside Israel, Israeli officials have claimed.



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In turn, Israel's retaliatory bombings of Gaza have taken the lives of thousands of people and left more than 5,600 injured.

Analysts predict mass unrest and other possible attacks after former Hamas leader Khalid Mashal issued a general call to arms throughout the Muslim world and the West for October 13, which he called a "Day of Rage" in retribution for Israel's purported war crimes in Gaza following Hamas' deadly rampage in the neighboring border towns.

Mashal first published his speech on YouTube on October 11, but the [video](#) has since been removed. In it, the militant leader [called](#) for global mass demonstrations in solidarity with Palestine. Besides, Mashal urged for the start of a "holy war" by Muslims in Israel's neighboring countries, nicknamed by Mashal as operation "Al-Aqsa Flood" after the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.

Although it is undeniable that the deaths of innocent civilians are never an acceptable means of achieving political goals on both the Israeli and Palestinian sides, the world has been split into various camps as to who was ultimately to blame for last weekend's attacks.

Many countries from the Global South (minus India) view that the latest intensification in the Israel-Palestine conflict as an unavoidable outcome for Israel, echoing [a quote by Noam Chomsky](#) in which he pointed out that it was Israel's policies, beginning in the 1970s, of championing enlargement over security that would undermine Israeli national security and alienate the state from its regional neighbors.

In contrast, Western political figures have been quick to denounce Hamas militants as "terrorists," using the term "[unprovoked](#)" to refer to the [attack](#) on Israel.

On October 9, it was reported that the US would be deploying [a carrier strike group](#) to the Eastern Mediterranean to defend Israel.

That same day, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, himself of Jewish descent, likened Hamas to Russia during a NATO parliamentary session in Copenhagen.

On October 10, Home Secretary Suella Braverman said in a letter of instruction that police in England and Wales should regard Palestinian flags, chants, and other symbols portrayed in certain contexts as hate speech.

"It is not just explicit pro-Hamas symbols and chants that are cause for concern," Braverman wrote in the [letter](#).

"I would encourage police to consider whether chants such as: 'From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free' should be understood as an expression of a violent desire to see Israel erased from the world, and whether its use in certain contexts may amount to a racially aggravated section 5 public order offense."

Adopting a different tone, Spanish Acting Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares said that Hamas should not be mistaken as a representative for all Palestinians, as the country voiced objections to a previously suggested suspension of EU aid to the Palestinian territories.

Albares indicated that Palestinian territories would likely need more help soon following Israel's retaliatory bombardment of the Gaza Strip. "This cooperation must continue; we cannot confuse Hamas, which is in the list of EU's terrorist groups, with the Palestinian population, or the Palestinian Authority or the United Nations organizations on the ground," Albares said in an interview with Spanish radio Cadena SER.



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Ultimately, in complex situations like the Israeli-Palestine conflict, adopting a black-and-white approach could lead to a third World War.



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