

How books, film and TV seek to make sense of Oct. 7

Screenshot from “A Letter to David,” about hostage David Cunio.

It has been two years since Hamas unleashed hell on Israel, and the fallout has been staggering. All at once, everything seems lost and horrible – and yet, by many measures, Israel is as secure as it has ever been.

It was hard to imagine on that awful morning that two years after Oct. 7, Hezbollah would be emasculated, Iran would be cowed, and Syria would be under new management that speaks openly about some kind of accommodation with Israel. Meanwhile, Hamas has been decimated in Gaza. People quibble over exactly what it would mean to destroy the terrorist group, but what seems clear is that for the moment, at least, Hamas cannot pull off another Oct. 7.

As I write, President Donald Trump has presented his 21-point plan for peace, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has accepted it, and the world now awaits a response from Hamas. This is the Middle East, which means that by the time you read this, the plan could be a footnote in history. But right now, things feel almost hopeful. A friend in Tel Aviv who marches every week against the PM and the war told me she cried tears of joy watching the Trump-Netanyahu White House press conference.

But all of this has come at an extraordinary cost for Palestinians in Gaza, who are suffering terribly. Some 60,000 have been killed in the war sparked by the attacks of Oct. 7, according to the Hamas-run health ministry. Israel’s international reputation is perhaps as poor as it has ever been. Allegations of starvation and genocide crowd the airwaves and the front pages of international newspapers. European nations are lining up to unilaterally recognize a Palestinian state. A generation of college students wields “Zionist” as a dirty word.

In order to fly to Washington, Netanyahu — indicted by the international criminal court — reportedly had to take a circuitous route to avoid the airspace of countries he feared might arrest him. Internal divisions within Israel sometimes seem as insoluble as the conflict with the Palestinians.

And, of course: the hostages. Nearly 50 of them (around 20 still living) remain entombed in airless Gaza tunnels. In August I visited Israel and asked a cousin there how folks even manage to go about their daily business. He gave me a one-word answer: “Pills.” One imagines the answer in Gaza would be the same if people there could reliably access medications to blunt their reality.

What to make of it all? How to *feel* about it all? I must admit that I’m often left scratching my head.

In times like these, I turn to books to help sort it out. Whether fiction or nonfiction, there’s something about settling into a book and getting into the head of an author or a narrator that I find clarifying. Maybe it’s just getting out of my *own* head for a bit, seeing things from someone else’s point of view. For other people, visual media like film or TV do the same trick.

With the two-year anniversary of that dark Shabbat upon us, and during this contemplative holiday season, culture editor Maya Mirsky has compiled a roundup of just some of the books, films and TV shows that have emerged from Oct. 7. We hope it might help readers try to make sense of what’s going on. At least, it’s a start.

Film & TV

“**We Will Dance Again**” is a minute-by-minute retelling of the horrific events that transpired at the Nova music festival. The film is available on [Paramount+](#), [Hulu](#) and [Apple TV](#), and was screened at Temple Isaiah and B’nai Israel.

“**Screams Before Silence**” focuses on sexual violence during the attacks and includes shocking footage and testimony. Available on [YouTube](#), the film has been presented at the Peninsula JCC and elsewhere.

“**October 8**” (previously “October H8te”) depicts some of the most extreme anti-Zionist and antisemitic responses in the United States after Oct. 7. The film, which played at Bay Area theaters in March, has [been described](#) as “frightening,” “disturbing” and “timely.” It can be [streamed](#) later this month through the Silicon Valley Jewish Film Festival.

“**There Is Another Way**” is about Combatants for Peace, an Israeli-Palestinian group focused on coexistence and founded on a bedrock of nonviolence. Members of the group have visited the Bay Area multiple times in recent years, and [the film](#)

[screened](#) in San Rafael and San Francisco. “It is always a challenge to make a film that holds the suffering of both people, but it also feels essential,” director Stephen Apkon told J.

“Torn: The Israel-Palestine Poster War on NYC Streets,” a [documentary](#) released on the one-year anniversary of the Oct. 7 massacre, was shown in Palo Alto and Aptos. It’s also available to screen [online](#).

“Beyond October 7th” looks at three generations of the Gad family, beginning just two days after their rescue from the massacre, capturing the shock, trauma and grief that follow. It was made by 11-time Israeli Academy Award-nominated director Jasmine Kainy; it is not currently streaming.

“The Killing Roads,” from director Igal Hecht, documents the horrific acts of Oct. 7 on two Israeli highways where Hamas terrorists killed 250 people. It screened in Aptos at Temple Beth El.

“Bearing Witness to the October 7th Massacre” is an Israeli documentary that was compiled via body cam footage from Hamas attackers, security cameras, cellphone videos and dash cams to create a bloody montage of a [day of horror](#). It has been shown privately to politicians and journalists as a way to combat misinformation about the Oct. 7 attacks, including in San Francisco.

“The Children of October 7” focuses on the youngest survivors of the Hamas attacks. Many lost their siblings, parents or homes, and have yet to process the trauma. The short film is currently streaming on [Paramount+](#).

“Tattooed for Life” follows Liraz, a tattoo artist who survived the Nova massacre. To move forward, she designs a multipart fractal tattoo design, which she splits up among those who are also experiencing grief. It’s [streaming](#) on MUBI.

“After October 7: A Personal Journey to Kfar Aza” is a PBS documentary exploring what happened on a kibbutz after the attacks. It’s a personal story of both tragedy and rebuilding, and it’s currently [streaming](#) on the PBS website.

“The Road Between Us: The Ultimate Rescue” tells the story of retired IDF Gen. Noam Tibon, who rushes south to rescue his son Amir and his family during the attacks. Amir Tibon [has spoken](#) in the Bay Area and written about the ordeal. “I do believe that we can create a better future,” he said in Palo Alto in May. “Hope is really important because otherwise it’s tough to survive.” The film is currently not available to stream.

“October 7th: Through Their Eyes” compiles footage from social media to tell a poignant story. As the attacks unfolded, a group of volunteers began to try to collect and preserve the social media documentation to make sure the events would never be forgotten. It’s [currently streaming](#) on PBS.

“Supernova: The Music Festival Massacre” weaves together survivor testimony and on-the-scene footage at the festival to reconstruct 24 hours around the tragic events of Oct. 7. It is streaming on [Apple TV](#) and [YouTube](#), and played at the East Bay International Jewish Film Festival.

“The Road to Recovery” follows an Israeli volunteer who drives Palestinians to Israel for medical care as he revisits his commitment to the cause after Oct. 7. It [played](#) at the East Bay International Jewish Film Festival and is not currently streaming.

“The New Jew: Days of War” follows Israeli comedian Guri Alfi as he seeks to understand the divisions in America in the aftermath of Oct. 7. The documentary series had its U.S. premiere in March at the JCC [in Palo Alto](#). “We immediately knew that we wanted to be part of the film as its primary goal was to make the stories of North American Jews accessible to the Israeli audience,” Rabbi Amitai Fraiman, director of the Z3 Project, told J. at the time. It will screen [on Oct. 16](#) in San Jose and [stream](#) through the Silicon Valley Jewish Film Festival.

“A Letter to David” was directed by Tom Shoval, who once worked on a film with a young David Cunio and his twin brother. Now Shoval has [made a documentary](#) about David, who has been held hostage by Hamas in Gaza since Oct. 7. The film will screen at the [Silicon Valley Jewish Film Festival](#).

“Red Alert” is a four-part scripted Israeli series that will stream on Paramount+ on Oct. 7, 2025. Known as “First Light” in Hebrew, it was written and directed by Lior Chefetz and produced by U.S. producer and multiple Oscar-nominee Lawrence Bender.

“One Day in October” will stream in four episodes on HBO Max starting on Oct. 7. It dramatizes survivor stories, including the shocking story of Sabine Taasa, who [recently spoke](#) in the Bay Area. “I lost my husband and eldest son,” an impassioned Taasa said. “I want to go to the Palestinian people, to the universities, to the schools and say, ‘I have proof.’”

Books

“10/7: 100 Human Stories.” Lee Yaron, a Haaretz journalist, has written intimate, personal portraits of the people directly affected by the terrorist attacks. She [spoke](#) about her latest book — which won book of the year from the Jewish Book Council in January — with J. editor-in-chief Chanan Tigay in October. (St. Martin’s Press)

“While Israel Slept: How Hamas Surprised the Most Powerful Military in the Middle East,” by Yaakov Katz and Amir Bohbot, is [an analysis](#) of the intelligence around the tragic day of Oct. 7. It’s a searing look at the failures and poor decisions that allowed Hamas terrorists to carry out their deadly attack in southern Israel. (St. Martin’s Press)

“Israel Alone” is by Bernard-Henri Lévy, most famous in his native France as a public intellectual. He flew to Israel the day after the Oct. 7 massacre, and the book is the result of his eyewitness accounts of the aftermath, as well as a philosophical look at Israel’s position in the world. (Wicked Son)

“The Gates of Gaza” is by Haaretz journalist Amir Tibon, who recounts the hours he spent in the safe room of his house with his wife and their two babies, listening to the sounds of warfare around him, not knowing what would happen. (His father’s dramatic rescue of the family is the subject of the film “The Road Between Us.”) (Little, Brown)

“Black Saturday,” by Fox News correspondent Trey Yingst, is a firsthand account of his coverage of the events of Oct. 7. He embedded with the IDF and reported from some of the earliest scenes of massacres in southern Israel. (Barnes & Noble)

“Hostage” is a memoir by Eli Sharabi, who was held by Hamas for 491 days. It became the fastest-selling book in Hebrew publishing history and now has an English translation. In it he recounts the harrowing experiences of Oct. 7, when his wife and daughters were killed and he was dragged away into captivity. (Harper Influence)

“The Rescue” is the story of Oct. 7 through a firsthand look through the eyes of a member of an IDF combat rescue unit. The author is known only as “Guy M.” (Wicked Son)

Art

There have been several art responses to the events of Oct. 7, including the **Nova Exhibition**, a traveling installation that uses items salvaged from the area of the music festival massacre to honor those who lost their lives. L.A.-based Israeli artist Tomer Peretz also was artist-in-residence at the city’s Museum of Tolerance with a show in response to Oct. 7 titled **“Art Will Set You Free.”**

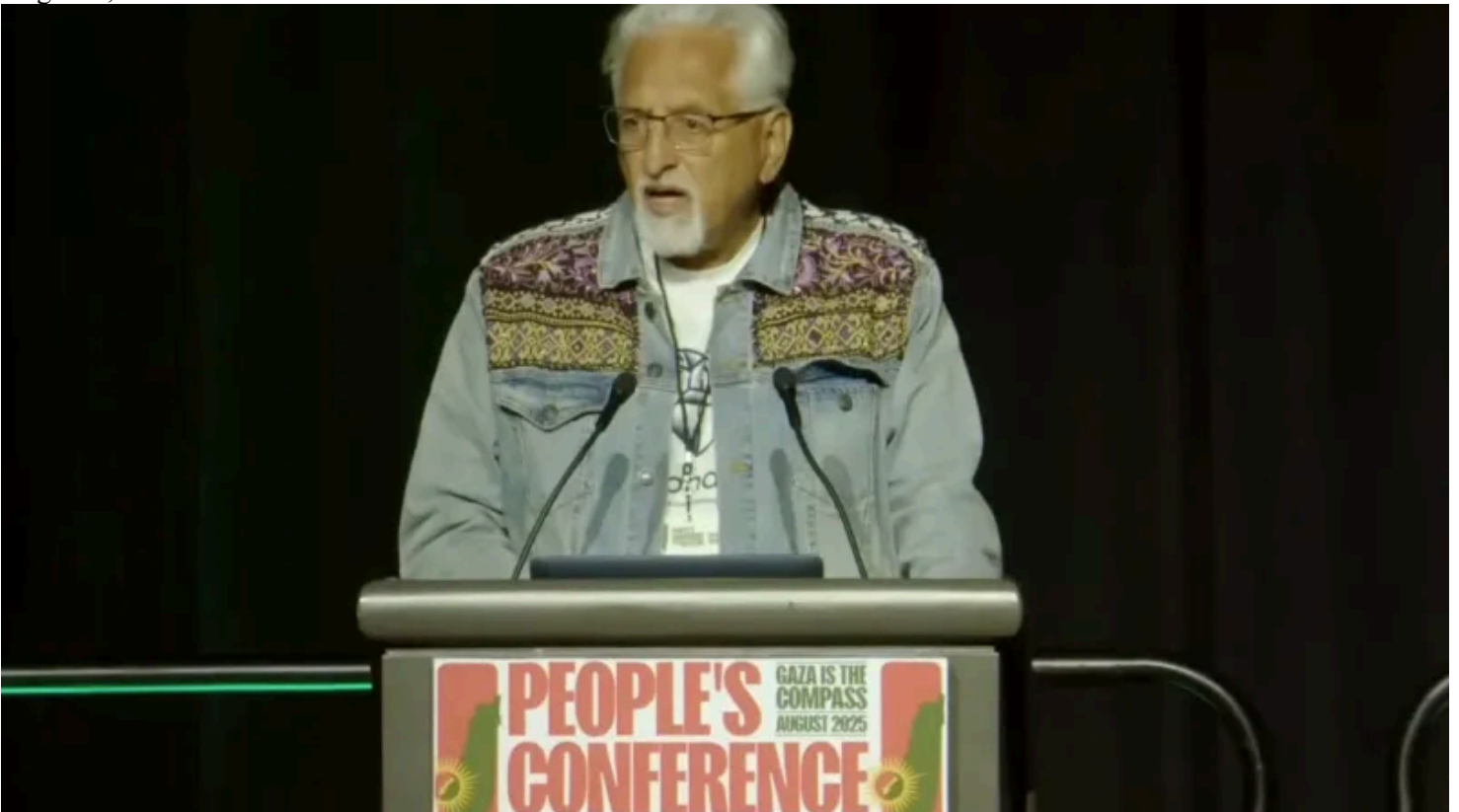
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