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When destruction comes before a make-up tutorial: Gaza's horrors are happening – and being forgotten – in real time

The question is whether we will allow the architectures of our platforms — and the repression built into them — to dictate how and whether the genocide will be remembered



In India, journalists and influencers have faced police cases for posts critical of foreign policy; in the UK, pro-Palestinian protesters have been arrested under vague "public order" provisions; in the US, student activists are



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A genocide is unfolding in [Gaza](#).

Day after day, images of bombed schools, lifeless children, desperate families clutching the few belongings they can carry pour into the timelines of millions around the world. Each post is a demand to bear witness, an attempt at not letting people look away. And yet, within hours — sometimes minutes — these images vanish beneath an avalanche of unrelated content: A trending joke, a makeup tutorial, a football highlight, an ad for instant noodles.

This is the cruel paradox of our media landscape today. What Walter Benjamin might have called the “ephemeral now” governs the platformed world: A temporality in which everything — war, grief, joy, banality — is flattened into a single stream. Here, the act of speaking, posting, or sharing does not preserve memory. Instead, it functions as a ritual of forgetting. The post is the memorial, and once posted, it can dissolve into the churn without guilt.

The forgetting is not simply the byproduct of too much information. It is actively organised. Platforms thrive on the constant replacement of the now — a cycle of attention engineered to make each moment provisional, vulnerable to displacement by the next. The promise that “nothing is lost” because “everything is archived” is a false one. Retrievability is not remembrance. An archive that is never revisited is indistinguishable from an erasure.

In the case of Gaza, this ephemeralisation of memory is compounded by repression and censorship. Instagram users have reported drops in reach, shadowbanning, and content takedowns when posting about the bombing of Rafah or the siege of Al-Shifa Hospital. Meta’s automated moderation has flagged Palestinian journalists’ accounts as “terror-affiliated”.

TikTok livestreams from Gaza are cut mid-broadcast. Even search terms like “Free Palestine” have allegedly been periodically suppressed in trending lists.

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This is not simply “platform bias” — it is an infrastructure of suppression embedded into the architecture of the sharing economy. The platforms present themselves as neutral marketplaces of speech, where anyone can be a broadcaster, yet they operate as tightly regulated spaces where visibility is conditional. At the same time, governments are escalating legal action against creators: In India, journalists and influencers have faced police cases for posts critical of foreign policy; in the UK, pro-Palestinian protesters have been arrested under vague “public order” provisions; in the US, student activists are being surveilled and disciplined for their online speech.

The sharing economy sits at the heart of this double bind. On the one hand, it demands ceaseless production and visibility — the pressure to “stay relevant” by speaking, posting, marking every event. On the other, it polices that visibility through algorithmic censorship, legal threats, and commercial prioritisation of advertiser-safe content. The result is a system that compels you to speak but ensures that your speech circulates only within boundaries that leave the larger political and economic order untouched.

This repression is not an interruption of the system’s logic. It is the system’s logic. The feed thrives on the flattening of difference — a genocide in Gaza and a celebrity wedding occupy the same frame, each equally scrollable, equally forgettable. Outrage is absorbed, not amplified. Political speech becomes content like any other: Weighed in engagement metrics, priced in ad dollars, queued for replacement by the next viral surge. The structure guarantees that nothing remains long enough to disrupt the flow.

And yet, the stakes could not be higher. The speech acts surrounding Gaza are not symbolic gestures. They are part of a global struggle over the ability to narrate, document, and hold accountable those responsible for mass violence. When a video from Khan Younis is taken down, when an eyewitness thread disappears from timelines, when a protest livestream is cut off, it is not merely a personal inconvenience — it is the destruction of evidence, the erasure of testimony, the weakening of a collective memory that might otherwise resist official denial.

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If speech is to resist becoming another ritual of forgetting, it must find forms and spaces beyond the endless scroll. This means building independent archives of testimonies, images, and records outside the reach of algorithmic suppression. It means forming solidarities between creators, journalists, archivists, and lawyers to defend against censorship and legal harassment. It means developing habits of sustained attention that refuse the platform's demand for constant novelty — returning to the same testimonies, the same images, the same stories, until they imprint themselves into political action.

Gaza's destruction is happening in real time, but it is also being buried in real time. The question is whether we will allow the architectures of our platforms — and the repression

built into them — to dictate how and whether it will be remembered. Because the scroll will not remember for us.

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