

Peace & Planet News

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Letter to the Children of Gaza

By Chris Hedges

Dear child. It is past midnight. I am flying at hundreds of miles an hour in the darkness, thousands of feet over the Atlantic Ocean. I am traveling to Egypt. I will go to the border of Gaza at Rafah. I go because of you.

You have never been in a plane. You have never left Gaza. You know only the densely packed streets and alleys. The concrete hovels. You know only the security barriers and fences patrolled by soldiers that surround Gaza. Planes, for you, are terrifying. Fighter jets. Attack helicopters. Drones. They circle above you. They drop missiles and bombs. Deafening explosions. The ground shakes. Buildings fall. The dead. The screams. The muffled calls for help from beneath the rubble. It does not stop. Night and day. Trapped under the piles of smashed concrete. Your playmates. Your schoolmates. Your neighbors. Gone in seconds. You see the chalky faces and limp bodies when they are dug out. I am a reporter. It is my job to see this. You are a child. You should never see this.

The stench of death. Rotting corpses under broken concrete. You hold your breath. You cover your mouth with cloth. You walk faster. Your neighborhood has become a graveyard. All that was familiar is gone. You stare in amazement. You wonder where you are.

You are afraid. Explosion after explosion. You cry. You cling to your mother or father. You cover your ears. You see the white light of the missile and wait for the blast. Why do they kill children? What



Children of Gaza by Mr. Fish.

are waves of blast concussions. There are screams. It does not stop.

When your father or mother hunts for food or water you wait. That terrible feeling in your stomach. Will they come back? Will you see them again? Will your

cameras. We drive jeeps. We appear after a bombing or a shooting. We sit over coffee for a long time and talk to the adults. Then we disappear. We do not usually interview children. But I have done interviews when groups of you crowded around us. Laughing. Pointing. Asking us to take your picture.

I have been bombed by jets in Gaza. I have been bombed in other wars, wars that happened before you were born. I too was very, very scared. I still have dreams about it. When I see the pictures of Gaza these wars return to me with the force of thunder and lightning. I think of you.

All of us who have been to war hate war most of all because of what it does to children.

I tried to tell your story. I tried to tell the world that when you are cruel to people, week after week, month after month, years after year, decade after decade, when you deny people freedom and dignity, when you humiliate and trap them in an open-air prison, when you kill them as if they were beasts, they become very angry. They do to others what was done to them. I told it over and over. I told it for seven years. Few listened. And now this.

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Testimonies Reveal Israeli Military Shelled Israeli Citizens with Tanks, Missiles

By Max Blumenthal

Israel's military received orders to shell Israeli homes and even their own bases as they were overwhelmed by Hamas militants on Oct. 7. How many Israeli citizens said to have been "burned alive" were actually killed by friendly fire?

Several new testimonies by Israeli witnesses to the Oct. 7 Hamas surprise attack on southern Israel adds to growing evidence that the Israeli military killed its own citizens as they fought to neutralize Palestinian gunmen.

Tuval Escapa, a member of the security team for Kibbutz Be'eri, set up a hotline to coordinate between kibbutz residents and the Israeli army. He told the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* that as desperation began to set in, "the commanders in the field made difficult decisions—including shelling houses on their occupants in order to eliminate the terrorists along with the hostages."

A separate report published in *Haaretz* noted that the Israeli military was "compelled to request an aerial strike" against its own facility inside the Erez Crossing to Gaza "in order to repulse the terrorists" who had seized control. That base was filled with Israeli Civil Administration officers and soldiers at the time.

These reports indicate that orders came down from the military's high command to attack homes and other areas inside Israel, even at the cost of many Israeli lives.

An Israeli woman named Yasmin Porat confirmed in an interview with Israel Radio that the military "undoubtedly" killed numerous Israeli noncombatants during gun battles with Hamas militants on Oct. 7. "They eliminated everyone, including the hostages," she stated, referring to Israeli special forces.

As David Sheen and Ali Abunimah reported in *Electronic Intifada*, Porat described "very, very heavy crossfire" and Israeli tank shelling, which led to many casualties among Israelis.

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You see the chalky faces and limp bodies when they are dug out. I am a reporter. It is my job to see this. You are a child. You should never see this.

did you do? Why can't anyone protect you? Will you be wounded? Will you lose a leg or an arm? Will you go blind or be in a wheelchair? Why were you born? Was it for something good? Or was it for this? Will you grow up? Will you be happy? What will it be like without your friends? Who will die next? Your mother? Your father? Your brothers and sisters? Someone you know will be injured. Soon. Someone you know will die. Soon.

At night you lie in the dark on the cold cement floor. The phones are cut. The internet is off. You do not know what is happening. There are flashes of light. There

tiny home be next? Will the bombs find you? Are these your last moments on earth?

You drink salty, dirty water. It makes you very sick. Your stomach hurts. You are hungry. The bakeries are destroyed. There is no bread. You eat one meal a day. Pasta. A cucumber. Soon this will seem like a feast.

You do not play with your soccer ball made of rags. You do not fly your kite made from old newspapers.

You have seen foreign reporters. We wear flak jackets with the word PRESS written on it. We have helmets. We have

From the Editors

Opening Hearts, Opening Minds, and Making Change

This special issue of *Peace & Planet News* is all about Palestine, but most specifically the current genocide in Gaza and the corresponding horror in the West Bank. What is contained in these pages is hard-hitting and truthful coverage of the current genocidal war on the people of Gaza, and 75 years of oppression, ethnic cleansing and apartheid that Palestinians have suffered from and resisted.

We know that close-minded individuals who rationalize Israel's war will not be swayed by the contents herein, even if they bother to examine these articles seriously, which is doubtful. Our expectations are not to change those people but to educate, inspire and inform those who seek the truth beyond what comes out of Israeli hasbara and our own mainstream media. Unfortunately there are people who have built their core persona around myths, half truths and often out-and-out lies, who find it too uncomfortable to change even when confronted by undeniable truth.

Cognitive Dissonance

"Sometimes people hold a core belief that is very strong. When they are presented with evidence that works against that belief, the new evidence cannot be

accepted. It would create a feeling that is extremely uncomfortable, called cognitive dissonance. And, because it is so important to protect the core belief, they will rationalize, ignore, and even deny anything that doesn't fit in with the core belief."—Frantz Fanon

Be prepared. The articles in these pages will open your heart and bring tears. I say that because it happened to me. Chris Hedges' "Letter to the Children of Gaza" was one; "The Girl Who Did Nothing" was another.

These articles, and the poems by Palestinians, allow us to bear witness, which alone is important, but it also inspires us to take whatever action we can to end the suffering and to show Palestinians that they are not alone. Literally millions of concerned, empathetic people around the globe have been demanding a ceasefire, marching, occupying politicians offices, closing roads, blocking munitions plants, delaying arms shipments and more. And behind it all: the demand to end the occupation, end the apartheid, end the blockade and let Palestine live.

We echo and applaud Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib and all who cry out, "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free!"

—Tarak Kauff



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From the River to the Sea, Palestine Will Be Free!

An open letter from Veterans For Peace to the 212 Republicans and 22 Democrats who voted to censure Rep. Rashida Tlaib on Nov. 7, 2023:



Dear Members of Congress,

Your Nov. 7 vote to censure Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-Mich.) for her statements condemning the genocidal slaughter Israel is perpetrating in Gaza was one of shameless hypocrisy.

Republican Rep. Rich McCormick, who introduced the resolution, twisted her words, accusing Tlaib of "calling for the destruction of the state of Israel" because of her righteous defense of human rights and a statement calling for Palestinian freedom.

In particular, Tlaib, the only Palestinian American in Congress, was criticized for her use of the phrase "from the river to the sea," which the censure resolution said is "widely recognized as a genocidal call to violence to destroy the state of Israel and its people."

This slogan is nothing of the kind. As Tlaib herself said, it is "an aspirational call for freedom, human rights, and peaceful coexistence," a recognition that everyone living on the land once known as Palestine should be allowed equal rights and that the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who were exiled and dispossessed in 1948 should be allowed to return to their homeland.

The inspirational phrase is a call for an end to the occupation, an end to apartheid,

a return of violently stolen homes and lands and the legitimate right of return of a people ethnically cleansed and driven from the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, a land that was once Palestine. The phrase is a call for freedom and international human rights, including the right of return. It is not a call for destruction.

Jewish theologian and philosopher Martin Buber argued that there must be Arab-Jewish reconciliation before a Jewish state could be established, but he also advocated a one-state solution that accommodated the claims to the land of both peoples. That is what "From the River to the Sea, Palestine Will Be Free" actually means.

This phrase has been twisted and weaponized by characterizing it as anti-Semitic, which is nonsense. Israel, a country that occupies and oppresses the Palestinians, themselves a Semitic people, cries "anti-Semitism" at any criticism of its apartheid policies, but we are not fooled.

Apartheid is anti-Semitic, 75 years of occupation and oppression of the Palestinian people is anti-Semitic, genocide in Gaza is anti-Semitic, a fascist state that imprisons (and often tortures) people without charge (Israeli administrative detention) is anti-Semitic.

The real anti-Semitism is that the traditional Jewish values of justice, compassion, and equality are trampled by



the state that claims to represent Jews worldwide. We stand with Rashida and all Palestinians, and with Jews and others around the world who say, "Never again means never again for anyone."

Veterans For Peace is a global organization of Military Veterans and allies whose collective efforts are to build a culture of peace by using our experiences and lifting our voices. We inform the public of the causes and enormous costs of wars.

Peace & Planet News

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By Ellen Davidson

The word apartheid, meaning literally “apartness,” originally referred to policies introduced in South Africa in 1948. Although presented as a path of equal but separate development of racial groups in that country, like “separate but equal” in this country, it was anything but.

Under apartheid people were classified as “native,” “colored,” “Asian,” or “white,” and these designations determined access to land, schools, resources, etc. Apartheid laws served to reserve the vast majority of the land for white South Africans, relocating the non-white population to so-called bantustans far from the areas they had lived in for many years. In the white-controlled areas, nonwhites were denied political rights, including the right to vote, since they were considered citizens of the ostensibly independent “homelands” set up by the apartheid government, which consisted of small unviable enclaves with no resources or opportunities for work or economic development.

The system also included identity cards that nonwhite people had to carry in order to live, work, or even travel in particular parts of the country. These notorious “pass laws” were the main instrument of control and existed until 1986.

This web of restrictive laws was enforced by a brutal police state, and thousands of South Africans, mainly Black and “colored,” were imprisoned, tortured or killed.

After decades of internal resistance both armed and nonviolent, and an international campaign to isolate South Africa economically and politically, the laws were repealed in the early 1990s and a new constitution was adopted in 1993.

Apartheid now refers to any system of racial segregation and is deemed a crime against humanity by the U.N. Apartheid Convention.

So why have Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the Israeli human rights group B’Tselem and many others declared Israel to be an apartheid state? One of the central tenets of the South African system was dispossession from the land and control of resources by white settlers. Israel has replicated this process. In Israel/Palestine, the land that is nominally under Palestinian control constitutes 22% of historic Palestine. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were made permanent exiles in 1947–48, as Zionist militias terrorized and massacred whole villages. Many more were forced out by the invasion in 1967, when the Israeli army took over the West Bank and Gaza in an occupation that continues to this day.

Even the land that is supposed to make up an eventual Palestinian state, according to proponents of a two-state solution, is not contiguous; it is divided between the Occupied West Bank and Gaza, which, although not technically occupied, is blockaded on both its land and sea borders by Israel. The West Bank itself is split up into enclaves increasingly surrounded by and encroached on by Israeli settlements. It is further atomized by Israel’s “separation barrier” (which Pal-

What Does It Mean to Call Israel an Apartheid State?



‘... we know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians.’—Nelson Mandela

tinians call the apartheid wall), which at times goes through the center of villages (in one case through the middle of an elementary school playground) and cuts off farmers from their agricultural lands. The territory is riddled with checkpoints and other military installations, and crisscrossed with roads that are reserved for Israeli settlers. There are numerous laws both inside Israel’s formal borders and in the Occupied Territories that make clear the second-class status of Israel’s non-Jewish citizens and residents of the West Bank and Gaza. Just to mention a few:

- In 2018 the Israeli parliament adopted the Jewish Nation-State Law, which identifies Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish people, thus formalizing the inferior status of the Palestinian people. The Supreme Court of Israel upheld the law. The current government holds as one of its guiding principles: “The Jewish people have an exclusive and inalienable right over all areas of the Land of Israel.”

- Jews from anywhere in the world are eligible to become citizens of Israel while holding on to their previous citizenship. Non-Jews can apply for citizenship, but they must renounce their previous citizenship, must have lived for three years as a permanent resident, and must demonstrate knowledge of the Hebrew language (Israel is nominally a bilingual state, Arabic and Hebrew). Palestinian refugees who were born in what has since become Israel are not allowed to return and claim citizenship.

- Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem are increasingly cut off from life in their city by the wall snaking through it. As it becomes impossible for them to get to commercial and other districts, they turn to other areas for their needs and risk losing their Jerusalem residency permits and access to the city and government services.

- Palestinians in the Occupied Territories are subject to arbitrary “administrative detention” for up to six months, at which point their detention can be renewed, leading to many Palestinians being held in prison for years on end with no charge and no legal recourse.

- Resources in the Occupied West Bank are disproportionately allocated to the Israeli settlements. For example, settlements use up to 10 times as much water per capita as Palestinian communities, and the Palestinians are charged higher prices.

- Palestinians in the West Bank are subject to the control of the Israeli military, whereas residents of illegal Israeli settlements in the region are not. In fact, rules of engagement for Israeli military in the West Bank forbid them from firing on or arresting Israeli settlers, even when they are armed and violent.

- Palestinians in Gaza have no freedom of movement at all. The entire region is blockaded by Israel, which controls travel

in and out.

- Palestinian homes both inside Israel and in the West Bank are under constant threat of demolition because Israeli authorities deny building permits to Palestinians (Al-Araqib, a Bedouin village in the Negev, has been demolished more than 200 times since 2010). Israeli settlements on the West Bank, which are illegal under international law, are protected by the Israeli military.

- Because of the presence of Jewish settlers, many streets in the city of Hebron are off-limits to the Palestinian residents. They are called “sterilized” by the IDF. There are three levels of sterilization: Palestinians may not open businesses on the street, Palestinians may not drive vehicles on the street, and Palestinians may not walk on the street, even if their home is on that street. The city is dotted with ladders between rooftops used to access homes whose residents cannot walk in or out their own front doors.

These are just some examples of the daily repression and humiliation faced by Palestinians inside Israel and under occupation. No wonder South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu said in 2014, “I know first-hand that Israel has created an apartheid reality within its borders and through its occupation. The parallels to my own beloved South Africa are painfully stark indeed.”

In a call to replicate the boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign that ultimately helped bring an end to South Africa’s racist regime, he said, “Those who continue to do business with Israel, who contribute to a sense of ‘normalcy’ in Israeli society, are doing the people of Israel and Palestine a disservice. They are contributing to the perpetuation of a profoundly unjust status quo.”

First published in The Independent.

Ellen Davidson is a longtime activist and photojournalist. She is on the national board of director of Veterans For Peace and is managing editor of Peace & Planet News and a contributing editor for The Independent newspaper. She has traveled multiple times to the Occupied West Bank, twice leading delegations of Veterans For Peace.



A Palestinian boy looks on as municipal workers demolish a house in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Tzur Baher. Photo: Dan Balilty

The Roots of Israel's Ethnic Cleansing in Gaza

Israel has always chosen occupation and supremacy over peace and security

Note: This article was first published on Oct. 15. Many of the details about Oct. 7 and the current attack on Gaza are out of date, but the overall historical context Maté provides is still timely—the editors.

By Aaron Maté

“In a few days,” writes Amira Hass, the veteran Israeli correspondent who has reported for decades from the Occupied Territories, “Israelis went through what Palestinians have experienced as a matter of routine for decades, and are still experiencing,” including “military incursions, death, cruelty, slain children, bodies piled up in the road, siege, fear, anxiety over loved ones, captivity ... and searing humiliation.”

The Hamas-led operation against Israeli military bases and civilian neighborhoods killed more than 1,300 Israelis, along with at least 120 taken hostage. While enduring that type of violence may be routine for Palestinians, Gaza is now facing the most calamitous Israeli military assault to date.

In less than one week, as of this writing, Israel has killed more than 2,300 people, including 724 children. Israeli strikes have hit residential buildings, mosques, schools, hospitals, universities, and fleeing civilians. Israel has intensified its already crippling blockade by cutting off all food, water, and electricity. It has ordered the expulsion of 1.1 million residents of northern Gaza, “a death sentence for the sick and injured,” the World Health Organization warns. If Israel does not restore Gaza’s water supply, the U.N. Palestinian refugee agency says, “people will start dying of severe dehydration.”

Israel’s ground invasion threatens atrocities on an even larger scale, all while espousing rhetoric that calls for ethnic cleansing or even genocide.

Justifying what he called the “complete siege” of Gaza, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant declared that his government is “fighting against human animals.” According to former Israeli Deputy Foreign minister Danny Ayalon, the Israeli plan is to force Palestinians into the “almost endless space in the Sinai desert, just on the other side of Gaza,” where they can live in “tent cities.” Israeli president Isaac Herzog effectively declared that there are no innocent civilians in Gaza, home to “an entire nation ... that is responsible.” Invoking the ethnic cleansing of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians before and after Israel’s founding in May 1948, known as the Nakba (“catastrophe”), Ariel Kallner, an Israeli parliamentarian, said that



Gen. Moshe Dayan delivers a eulogy for slain Israeli soldier Roi Rutenberg, April 19, 1956.

Israel has “one goal”: a “Nakba that will overshadow the Nakba of ’48.”

Even as the threat of regional escalation grows, the Biden administration fully endorses Israel’s blood lust. Calls for a ceasefire, the White House press secretary declared, are “repugnant.” State Department employees have even been instructed to avoid mentioning the terms “de-escalation/ceasefire,” “end to violence/bloodshed” and “restoring calm.”

Biden’s stance is shared across both political parties, with only a handful of lawmakers demanding a ceasefire. As the United States backs Israel’s assault, “we may be about to see massive ethnic cleansing” in Gaza, one European Union

is evident, to kill and kidnap Israeli civilians). To adopt the Israeli-U.S. narrative, therefore, requires “ignoring Israel’s structural violence and cruelty,” Amira Hass writes, “and the context of the Palestinian people’s ongoing dispossession from their land.”

That Israel is “defending itself” from a people that it has colonized has long been acknowledged at the highest levels. At a 1956 funeral for an Israeli soldier killed by Palestinians in Gaza, Gen. Moshe Dayan, one of Israel’s most famed military leaders, advised the following:

“Let us not cast the blame on the murderers today. Why should we deplore their burning hatred for us? For eight

plant a tree and build a home ... Let us not fear to look squarely at the hatred that consumes and fills the lives of hundreds of Arabs who live around us. Let us not drop our gaze, lest our arms weaken. That is the fate of our generation. That is our choice—to be ready and armed, tough and hard—or else the sword shall fall from our hands and our lives will be cut short.”

In the nearly 70 years since Dayan spoke those words, Israel has heeded them by expanding its theft of Palestinian land and creating new generations of refugees. As B’Tselem, the leading Israeli human rights group, acknowledged in 2021, this has turned Israel into “an apartheid regime” that “promotes and perpetuates Jewish supremacy between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River.”

A foundational moment for Israel’s apartheid regime was its 1967 conquest of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which brought millions of Palestinians under Israeli military occupation. As he did in 1956, Dayan candidly articulated what became the guiding policy: “You Palestinians, as a nation, don’t want us today, but we’ll change your attitude by forcing our presence on you.” Under Israeli rule, the Israeli general said, occupied Palestinians will “live like dogs, and whoever will leave, will leave.”

For Gaza, one of the world’s most densely populated areas, this forced Israeli occupation has confined a population of 2.3 million, more than half of them children, to what former UK Prime Minister David Cameron has described as “an open-air prison,” or what Hebrew University Professor Baruch Kimmerling called “the largest concentration camp ever to exist.”

Israel’s famed 2005 “disengagement” has been falsely described as an end to the occupation of Gaza when, in fact, it only deepened the torment. After years of de-facto blockades, Israel imposed a full

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Under Israeli control, over 90% of Gaza’s water became unfit for human consumption. In 2018, the United Nations declared conditions to be so dire that the territory could become ‘uninhabitable’ within years.

official has warned.

As in previous cases, the Western media and political establishment justify the prevailing support for attacking Gaza by asserting that Israel has “the right to defend itself,” and has no other option against Palestinian militants who refuse to accept its existence.

As a legal matter, the former assertion is false: while Israel has an internationally recognized right to defend itself from an attack, it does not have the right to commit war crimes against a besieged civilian population. Moreover, Israel is not “defending itself” against an external aggressor, but an imprisoned internal population that also has a recognized right to resist military occupation (but not, as

years they have been sitting in the refugee camps in Gaza, and before their eyes we have been transforming the lands and villages, where they and their fathers dwelt, into our estate.”

Dayan, having led Israeli forces in the military campaign during Israel’s founding in 1948, recognized that his country originated with the dispossession of Palestinians and theft of their homes. Yet his acknowledgment was not an act of remorse. Rather than attempt to reverse or redress the forced expulsion of Palestinians, Dayan went on to decree that Israel should maintain the colonization with even more aggression:

“We are a generation that settles the land and without the steel helmet and the cannon’s maw, we will not be able to

Ethnic Cleansing

... continued from previous page
siege in 2007. This was Israel and Washington's response to Hamas' surprise victory in Palestinian legislative elections the previous year, when voters shunned the corrupt and inept Western-backed Palestinian Authority. Hamas then took full control of Gaza in a preemptive operation against a U.S.-backed coup plot that sought to undermine its electoral gains. Hillary Clinton later lamented that the United States failed to rig the Palestinian vote. "If we were going to push for an election, then we should have made sure that we did something to determine who was going to win," she said.

Because it failed to thwart Palestinian democracy, Israel, again with U.S. backing, turned to punishing Gazan civilians for voting the wrong way. Controlling the flow of goods and energy to Gaza, Israel restricted food imports based on a calculation of the precise number of calories that would be needed to ravage them without triggering a full-blown malnutrition crisis. "The idea," Israeli advisor Dov Weisglass explained, "is to put the Palestinians on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger."

Under Israeli control, over 90% of Gaza's water became unfit for human consumption. In 2018, the United Nations declared conditions to be so dire that the territory could become "uninhabitable" within years. The Israeli siege has been accompanied by periodic military assaults that killed, wounded, and displaced tens of thousands of Palestinians.

Israel's commitment to enforcing the dispossession and occupation of Palestinians has also led it to undermine any prospect of the two-state solution that it claimed to support.

The 1993 Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) were "founded on a neo-colonialist basis," in the words of former Israeli Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami. "One of the meanings of Oslo," Ben Ami explained, "was that the PLO was eventually Israel's collaborator in the task of stifling the intifada"—a grassroots and largely nonviolent uprising against Israeli occupation—thereby "cutting short what was clearly an authentically democratic struggle for Palestinian independence."

Oslo's Israeli architects, including Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, never "wanted the autonomy to usher in a Palestinian state."

As a neo-colonial endeavor disguised as a "peace process," the Oslo era saw a doubling of the Israeli settlement population in its first eight years. Israel's so-called "generous peace offer" at Camp David in July 2000—widely cited by Israeli officials and Western pundits as proof of an Israeli willingness to "compromise," and a Palestinian refusal to "co-exist"—was in fact a perpetuation of Oslo's neo-colonial ruse. As Ben-Ami, who took part in the summit as a top Israeli negotiator, himself acknowledged years later: "If I were a Palestinian I would have rejected



Camp David as well."

In 2002, the Arab League offered Israel full normalization in return for a withdrawal from all Arab territories (Syrian, Lebanese, and Palestinian) that it occupied in 1967; the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, with East Jerusalem as its capital; and a "just resolution" to the refugee issue. The initiative was subsequently endorsed by Iran, which signed on to a December 2017 declaration calling for a "two-state solution with East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine."

The proposal would require Israel to end its occupation of the West Bank and abandon the illegal settlement blocs, which carve up Palestinian land and disproportionately consume precious water

reserves. Later on, the Arab League signaled that it would accept mutually agreed land swaps, as the Palestinian Authority had already done, that could keep some settlement areas under Israeli control. But even the most far-reaching Israeli offer, presented by lame-duck Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in 2008, rejected parity in any territorial exchange. As veteran Israeli negotiator Michael Herzog wrote in 2011: "No Israeli government to date has accepted the Palestinian stipulation that land swaps be fully equal in size and 'quality.'"

Israel has repeatedly rejected the Arab League's diplomatic initiative and even refused to accept it as a basis for further

214 Palestinians, including 46 children, and wounding over 36,000. Western pundits who had loudly implored Palestinians to take up Gandhian nonviolence fell resoundingly silent.

The Netanyahu government, meanwhile, returned to a longtime policy of propping up Hamas' rule, recognizing that the group's global isolation and internal divisions could be exploited to undermine the possibility of the Palestinian state that some Hamas leaders had claimed to accept. "Anyone who wants to thwart the establishment of a Palestinian state has to support bolstering Hamas and transferring money to Hamas," Netanyahu explained to Likud Party members in March 2019. "This is part of our strategy—to isolate the Palestinians in Gaza from the Palestinians in the West Bank."

Having successfully deepened Palestinian isolation, Netanyahu's government has intensified the oppression. The guiding Israeli policy, Netanyahu's government declared in December 2022, is that "the Jewish people have an exclusive and inalienable right to all parts of the Land of Israel." This included Gaza, Cabinet Minister Orit Strook explained in March of this year. "I believe that, at the end of the day, the sin of the [Gaza] disengagement will be reversed," Strook said. "Sadly, a return to the Gaza Strip will involve many casualties ... But ultimately it is part of the Land of Israel, and a day will come when we will return to it."

Tareq Bacouni, a former senior analyst for the International Crisis Group, summarizes how Netanyahu's supremacist rule has recently trampled the inalienable rights of Palestinians:

"Under the most right-wing government in its history, Israel has carried out large-scale invasions of Palestinian refugee camps and towns in the West Bank, killing and wounding scores of people. Armed Israeli fighters have burst into Palestinian streets and homes on an almost nightly basis, often picking children out of their beds in the middle of the night to be taken into administrative detention—acts of terror that have gone largely unreported in the Western press.

"The state has accelerated its expulsions of Palestinians from their homes in Jerusalem and the West Bank and expanded the construction of illegal settlements. Settlers have waged weekly assaults on Palestinian villages, attacking and in some cases killing Palestinians, setting fire to their homes, and destroying their property, often under the protection of Israeli soldiers. The domestic secret police has facilitated and fomented violence against Palestinian citizens. Senior members of Israel's government and messianic Jewish extremists have been increasingly aggressive in their provocations in and around the Noble Sanctuary Mosque complex in occupied East Jerusalem. In the weeks leading to Hamas's offensive, the state tightened the blockade on Gaza by still further restricting movement in and out."

Having always chosen occupation and supremacy over peace and security, Israel has now opted to further devastate, displace, and murder occupied Palestinians in retali-

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The Deluge and the Tree

By Fadwa Tuqan

When the hurricane swirled and spread
its deluge
of dark evil
onto the good green land
'they' gloated. The western skies
reverberated with joyous accounts:
"The Tree has fallen!
The great trunk is smashed! The
hurricane leaves no life in the Tree!"
Had the Tree really fallen?
Never! Not with our red streams
flowing forever,
not while the wine of our thorn limbs

fed the thirsty roots,
Arab roots alive
tunneling deep, deep, into the land!
When the Tree rises up, the branches
shall flourish green and fresh in the sun
the laughter of the Tree shall leaf
beneath the sun
and birds shall return
Undoubtedly, the birds shall return.
The birds shall return.

The grande dame of Palestinian
literature, Fadwa Tuqan is considered
one of the best contemporary Arab
poets.

negotiations. In shunning the two-state solution based on the 1967 borders, Israel has showed a less accommodating position than even what Hamas, at one point, claimed to support.

In a March 2008 interview, Khalid Mishal, head of Hamas's political bureau, stated that "most Palestinian forces, including Hamas, accept a state on the 1967 borders." In 2013, Ghazi Hamad, Hamas' deputy foreign minister, reaffirmed this stance: "We agree to the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, within the 1967 borders, and that this would include a solution to the refugee problem."

While Hamas explicitly rejected any recognition of Israel, its acceptance of a Palestinian state within the boundaries the Occupied Territories—about 22% of historic Palestine—constituted a tacit recognition of Israel's internationally recognized borders on the other side. This contrasted with Israel's position, which nominally accepted the notion of a Palestinian state, but remained committed to keeping the large West Bank settlement blocs that would make such a state non-contiguous and therefore untenable.

Having thwarted the prospect of a two-state solution, Israel has also violently crushed any hope of nonviolent Palestinian resistance. In March 2018, tens of thousands of Palestinians launched the Great March of Return, a campaign to break the Gaza siege. "Gaza is a ghetto and what's happening ... is a ghetto uprising," veteran Israeli journalist Gideon Levy wrote. Israel responded to the ghetto uprising by gunning down at least

Israeli activist and writer Miko Peled, the grandson of a signatory to the Jewish state's 1948 Declaration of Independence, has criticized Israel's policies towards Palestine, asserting that "they cannot defeat the Palestinians."

The author, whose father served as a general in the Six-Day War of 1967, spoke to Anadolu about his journey as an activist advocating for the rights of Palestinians, and evaluated the current conflict that started on Oct. 7.

"I come from a very prominent Zionist patriotic family ... I grew up as a patriot, a strong supporter of my country, my state, and of course, Zionism," said Peled, who was born in Jerusalem in 1961.

He was greatly influenced by his father's ideas in the early years of his life, and served in the military for a while but later regretted it and left.

"My father, while still in uniform right after the war, said: 'Look ... we are here forever, our existence is no longer uncertain or in danger. We must allow the Palestinians to have their small state in a small part of Palestine.' ... As soon as the war ended, they started building massive cities in East Jerusalem and the West Bank."

Emphasizing that there is no place called Palestine in the fundamental philosophy of Zionism, Peled said: "According to Zionism, that is Israeli land, and those lands belong not to the Palestinians living there, but to all Jews in the world. If you have a supremacist ideology, that is, if you argue that one group has more rights than another, then you must use violence. You must have an apartheid regime for this racist ideology to be realized. That is the Israeli state," he said.

Peled, pointing out that the Israel-Palestine issue did not start last month, but 75 years ago with the establishment of Israel, said: "As a movement, Zionists and then the state born from this movement

'I realized I lived in a kind of colony, a superficial, artificial reality.'

declared war on the Palestinian people. In this war, we saw ethnic cleansing, genocide policies, and a racist apartheid regime."

Describing Israel as a "terrorist state," Peled drew attention to the oppression that Palestinians have been experiencing for years.

"Palestinians are exposed to terrorism every day. You don't know whether you will be beaten or killed while walking on the street, whether your children will be safe going to school, whether your house will be demolished, whether your brothers will be taken or abducted and disappeared by the Israeli army or Israeli intelligence," he said.

The Israeli-American said he started questioning the existence of Israel after the death of a family member more than two decades ago.

"In 1997, my sister's little daughter was

Miko Peled: Israel a 'Terrorist State, Apartheid Regime'

Grandson of signatory to 1948 Declaration of Independence and son of Israeli general speaks out



Miko Peled. Photo: Ellen Davidson

killed in a suicide attack in Jerusalem. She was 13 years old. This was a tragedy that fundamentally shook a person; you know, after such an event, you cannot look at the world with the same eyes. This led me to examine the reality of what was taught to me, the existence of Israel," he said.

He then embarked on a journey to Palestine to find answers.

"When I started the journey, I realized that the country I thought was mine was someone else's country. I was living in a kind of colony, a superficial, artificial reality that was not real. It did not rely on reality. It was based on an apartheid state built on lies, and these lies legitimized the existence of the Israeli state," Peled said.

On Israel's ongoing attacks in Gaza, which started after a cross-border attack by Palestinian group Hamas, Peled said: "Palestinians who have nothing to do with this event are paying a heavy price. Israel was humiliated, and now it extracts all its revenge and anger from innocent people and civilians who have nothing to do with the attack."

Israel's air and ground attacks on the besieged enclave has since killed more than 14,000 people, most of them women and children.

Pointing out that in Western media there is a tendency to condemn Hamas in every comment on the conflict, Peled said: "It is absurd to condemn those who emerged to resist, people who have been under pressure for so long. This was expected. If we want to eliminate resistance, then we must eliminate pressure. Resistance is al-

ways a reaction against oppression. The Palestinians' response to greater violence that has been going on for more than 75 years has mostly been nonviolent."

"If there is something to condemn, it is to condemn the apartheid regime. It is necessary to condemn the violence, brutality that Palestinians face every day, the thousands of Palestinians being arrested and killed in the West Bank while we speak, the racism practiced by Israel against Palestinian citizens. It is neces-

Ethnic Cleansing

... continued from page 5

ation against those who have fought back.

Zaha Hassan and Daniel Levy, former advisers for their respective Palestinian and Israeli governments, offer three points of agreement that could help end the current crisis:

"First, the militant attack on Israeli civilians was unconscionable, inhumane and in violation of international law. Second, Israel's collective punishment against Palestinian civilians and its actions in Gaza are unconscionable, inhumane and a violation of international law. And, third, one must address the context of occupation and apartheid in which this is unfolding if one is to maintain integrity and be able to plot a strategy going forward in which both Palestinians and Israelis can live in freedom and security. If we can hold these three truths, then it will

sary to condemn the Israeli doctors who signed the petition approving the bombing of hospitals in Gaza, the students who demand the expulsion of Palestinian Israeli citizens from university dormitories, and many more. But condemning a nation under oppression for resisting is the height of hypocrisy and meaningless."

Peled said it is uncertain how the current conflict will unfold, but maintained: "Undoubtedly, one thing is clear, they cannot defeat the Palestinians. Whether you say Hamas or something else. It doesn't matter what you call it. The Palestinians, regardless of which movement they belong to, will not be defeated."

Arguing any support from the interna-

'Condemning a nation under oppression for resisting is the height of hypocrisy.'

tional community is extremely important for the freedom of Palestine, Peled said: "Israel represents everything we know is bad. Calling for support for Israel means more death, more destruction, more racism, and more innocent lives wasted. This is a war against peace and justice. People now have to make a choice."

Emphasizing that despite the heavy price paid by the Palestinians, they continue to struggle with all their might, Peled said he hopes the issue will advance.

"My hope is that this great change that I believe happened on Oct. 7 will advance the Palestinian issue, primarily by garnering more support internationally, allowing Palestinians to demand what they truly deserve. I think Palestinians have always asked for very little and have become accustomed to receiving very little, but I think it is time to demand all of Palestine."

Gulcin Kazan Doger writes for the Anadolu Agency website, where this interview first appeared.

be possible to prevent further casualties, secure the release of prisoners and step back from the precipice."

Hassan and Levy condition their guidance on the principle that "one accepts the humanity and equality of all people without discrimination or distinction." Israel has explicitly rejected this principle since its founding. And with Washington's support, Israel's determination to enforce the dispossession and subjugation of Palestinians is yielding a new ethnic cleansing campaign before our eyes.

Aaron Maté is a New York City-based journalist and producer. He hosts the news show Pushback for The Grayzone, and is a contributor to Real Clear Investigations. In 2019, he was awarded the Izzy Award from Ithaca College outstanding achievement in independent media for Russiagate coverage in The Nation. Previously, he was a longtime producer at Democracy Now! and a producer at Al Jazeera English.

My Heart Is Heavy, Please Stop

The scream of each bomb that falls on Gaza is the dying scream of a failed state. My heart is heavy. Please stop!

The tripping of each electrical switch to turn off the lights; the squeak of each tap to turn off the water supply; the slamming of each door to trap the inmates of the largest open-air prison in the world; all these sounds together are the cacophony of the death rattle of the settler colonial, ethno-supremacist, apartheid, state of Israel.

There, I have said it, got that off my chest. But, obviously, they're not going to listen to me, I've been banging this drum for nearly 20 years and they haven't listened yet. It's almost as if they're deaf to mankind's calls for equal human rights.

Perhaps, the so-called Liberal Western Democracies will step in to demand peace?

Let's have a look.

'Liberal' Western Democracies

Oh, look, Joe Biden has sent an aircraft carrier to the Eastern Mediterranean. What's the plan, Joe? Is the USA going to join in with the genocidal bombing of children in Gaza? No?

And what about the UK? Rishi Sunak? Ideas? Oh yes, Rishi does have one idea, "Criminalize the use of boycott as a nonviolent means of political protest in England and accept the deeply flawed new IHRA definition of anti-Semitism as gospel."

All right, in for a penny in for a pound. I saw a video from my friend Ramzy Baroud this morning, "Either stand with us or stand aside," he says. Ramzy, I unequivocally stand with you and the whole of the oppressed Palestinian people, my friend.

No More War Crimes

Let's address last Saturday morning [Oct. 7]. Did the Palestinian resistance fighters who broke out of the open air prison that is Gaza have a legal right and a moral obligation to fight back against the occupier of their land? Yes, they did.

What followed is as yet unclear. If war crimes were committed, I condemn them. What is happening now in Gaza, however, is not unclear.

I have a Palestinian friend, Lama Al-Arian, living in Beirut. She texted me in the middle of the night to tell me that 11 members of her family including a two-year-old cousin were killed by an Israeli bomb as they sat in the dark.

A Proposal

Here's my suggestion of what should be done. It is only an opinion, but it is shared by many. There must be an immediate and permanent ceasefire.

No more killing by anyone, Hamas and IDF included.

This would mean Israel accepting that the Zionist experiment has failed, because it can only be continued with more killing. It would also mean the end of Israel's illegal military occupation of all Palestinian land.

To be clear, Zionists would have to accept that they have had their chance and failed to establish a viable State. If you go back and read the history and all the



stuff that David Ben-Gurion and Golda Meir, among many others, espoused, you can see that Zionism was always bound to fail in a world that agrees that religious or ethnic-supremacist ideologies are nonstarters in these recently enlightened times.

So ... what next?

First, get 'round a big table and hammer out a one-state solution.

This would be a New State with equal human rights for all its citizens irrespective of their ethnicity or religion or previous nationality.

So, this new state would be an actual, real, democracy.

They'd have to decide on a name? Good luck with that. What about The Holy Land?

The important thing is, the new constitution would need to include truth and reconciliation hearings, like they had in post-apartheid South Africa.

Second, a side issue: the Golan Heights.

Obviously, the Golan Heights are not part of any of this and they would revert to Syria where they belong.

Persuading Israel

Would it be easy to persuade the current government of Israel to adopt this plan?

Presumably not. They will need a lot of re-education and a huge helping push from B'Tselem, and all the Western Liberal Democracies.

Unfortunately, the UK and France in particular have been deeply enmeshed in colonial agendas in Western Asia/the Middle East since well before the Balfour Declaration in 1917 and Mr. Sykes and Mr. Picot's document dividing up the Ottoman Empire the year before.

Speaking of Lord Balfour, I can't let the mention of his 1917 letter offering Her Majesty's support for a homeland for the Jewish people pass without referring to a sentence from the second half of that letter which says, "... it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities. in Palestine."

This is a part of Lord Balfour's letter which is rarely quoted and has been completely ignored by Zionists since the 1930s.

My heart is heavy. I weep for all my brothers and sisters in the Holy Land: Muslims, Christian, Jewish, Druze, Agnostic and Atheist alike.

I weep for all their children. All those young minds being filled with fear and hate and division and despair.

The attacks on civilians, whether they have been by Hamas last Saturday or now the State of Israel on a massive scale in Gaza, have thrown into sharp relief the fact that Palestinians have been suffering violence, intimidation, and displacement for over 70 years and only now is the Western World beginning to wake up because of the events of the last few days.

Well, we, the Western World, are not waking up fast

enough. Let's be clear, the whole underlying question is not as complicated as we've all been led to believe.

The question is this, "Do we believe in Universal Human Rights or not?"

We either dream of a world where all men and women are equal under the law or we don't.

My father (1914–1944) dreamed that dream. He died in Italy fighting the Nazis to defend that dream.

I dream that dream. No ifs, no ands, no buts.

I will not stand aside, Ramzy Baroud, my friend. I stand shoulder to shoulder with you. Today, in the Holy Land, there is an oppressor and there are the oppressed.

Who is to blame for the bloodshed? The oppressor is. No ifs, no ands, no buts.

To whom it may concern,

Please stop.

Love,

R.

In Jerusalem

Mahmoud Darwish

Translated by Fady Joudah

In Jerusalem, and I mean within the ancient walls, I walk from one epoch to another without a memory to guide me. The prophets over there are sharing the history of the holy ... ascending to heaven and returning less discouraged and melancholy, because love

and peace are holy and are coming to town. I was walking down a slope and thinking to myself:

How do the narrators disagree over what light said about a stone?

Is it from a dimly lit stone that wars flare up? I walk in my sleep. I stare in my sleep. I see no one behind me. I see no one ahead of me. All this light is for me. I walk. I become lighter. I fly then I become another. Transfigured. Words sprout like grass from Isaiah's messenger mouth: "If you don't believe you won't be safe." I walk as if I were another. And my wound a white biblical rose. And my hands like two doves on the cross hovering and carrying the earth. I don't walk, I fly, I become another, transfigured. No place and no time. So who am I? I am no I in ascension's presence. But I think to myself: Alone, the prophet Muhammad spoke classical Arabic. "And then what?"

Then what? A woman soldier shouted: Is that you again? Didn't I kill you? I said: You killed me ... and I forgot, like you, to die.

Palestinians File Emergency Motion to Block U.S. Aid for Israel's Genocide in Gaza

A federal lawsuit accuses Biden, Blinken and Austin of failure to prevent genocide and complicity in genocide

By Marjorie Cohn

On Nov. 16, two Palestinian human rights organizations, three Palestinians and five Palestinian Americans brought an emergency motion in United States federal court to immediately force President Joe Biden, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to stop providing additional weapons, money, and military and diplomatic support to Israel, which is committing genocide in Gaza.



more than five weeks of Israel's unrelenting slaughter in Gaza — alleges violations of the Genocide Convention, the Genocide Convention Implementation Act and customary international law which forbids genocide.

The lawsuit charges that defendants Biden, Blinken and Austin transferred a significant amount of weapons and military equipment to Israel.

'I've lost five relatives, treated too many children who are the sole survivors of their families, ... and seen the hospital turn into a shelter for tens of thousands of people as we all run out of fuel, electricity, food and water.'

"Our Palestinian clients are asking the court to urgently order Biden, Blinken and Austin to stop supporting Israel's genocide," said Maria LaHood, Deputy Legal Director of Center for Constitutional Rights which filed the lawsuit on behalf of the Palestinians, in an interview with Truthout. "Israeli officials stated their intent to eliminate everything in Gaza, and then proceeded to carpet-bomb it, killing more than 11,000 people, including nearly 5,000 children thus far — many more are missing, buried under rubble, crushed and suffocating before they die."

LaHood also pointed to Israel's ongoing siege in which Palestinians in Gaza remain cut off from food, water and electricity. "Those still alive are starving and drinking contaminated water, fearing being bombed. Yet the U.S. continues to expedite weapons and other support, in defiance of its international law obligation to prevent genocide, not fuel it," LaHood told Truthout. "Our clients, who have already collectively lost more than 116 of their family members, are asking the court to provide preliminary relief so they do not suffer even more irreparable harm."

The motion for preliminary injunction is grounded in U.S. officials' legal duty to prevent — not exacerbate — Israel's ongoing genocide against the Palestinian people in Gaza. The motion says that an immediate court order is necessary to protect the plaintiffs from "irreparable harm." Some of the plaintiffs face a grave risk of death from Israel's war on Gaza.

Palestinians Sue Biden, Blinken and Austin

The emergency motion that the group of Palestinians filed on Nov. 16 came days after the same group of Palestinian plaintiffs sued Biden, Blinken and Austin in the U.S. District Court of Northern California for failure to prevent genocide and complicity in genocide.

The complaint — which the group filed on Nov. 13, after

Plaintiffs include Defense for Children International — Palestine; Al-Haq; three Palestinian individuals who reside in Gaza and five Palestinian Americans who have family in Gaza.

"To be honest, it's difficult to revisit all the scenes of the past weeks. They open a door to hell when I recall them," said Plaintiff Dr. Omar Al-Najjar, an intern physician at Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Yunis, Gaza. "I've lost five relatives, treated too many children who are the sole survivors of their families, received the bodies of my fellow medical students and their families, and seen the hospital turn into a shelter for tens of thousands of people as we all run out of fuel, electricity, food and water. The U.S. has to stop this genocide. Everyone in the world has to stop this."

The U.S. sends \$3.8 billion in annual military assistance to Israel, more than it provides to any other country. Israel has special access to U.S. military stockpiles, likely worth up to \$4.4 billion. The U.S. has long provided political and diplomatic cover to Israel by blocking resolutions in the United Nations Security Council condemning Israel's human rights violations, and undermining efforts to hold Israel accountable in the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Article II of the Genocide Convention defines genocide as specific acts "committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group." The acts include: 1.) killing members of the group; 2.) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; and 3.) deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.

As of Nov. 10, Israeli occupying forces had killed more than 11,078 Palestinians in Gaza, 4,506 of whom were children. Israeli forces had caused serious bodily and mental harm by injuring 27,490 people in Gaza. About 2,700 more, including approximately 1,500 children, were missing. Israel also forced the displacement of 1.5 million people, half the population of Gaza.

For the past five weeks, the Israeli government has intensified its preexisting and already severe blockade of Gaza, with a "total siege" by further restricting the entry into Gaza of basic necessities, including food, water, medicine and fuel, and by cutting off electricity.

In his declaration in support of the motion for preliminary injunction, Professor William Schabas, a leading expert on genocide who is also Jewish, wrote that the "avowed policy of depriving Gaza of water, food, medicine and electricity, bearing in mind the rather desperate economic situation in the territory prior to the conflict and the fact that the borders are sealed, leaving the people of Gaza with nowhere to go, will inexorably lead to their physical destruction. If the siege and blockade continue, there can be no other outcome."

Israel, as an occupying power, cannot claim self-defense against the people it occupies, the lawsuit maintains.

Public statements by Israeli leaders constitute evidence of an "intent to destroy, in whole or in part" a "national group." Palestinians in Gaza constitute a substantial part of the Palestinian nation.

Senior Israeli officials and politicians have used dehumanizing rhetoric to describe Palestinians in Gaza, calling them "human animals" and "children of darkness," and refusing to distinguish between civilians and combatants, declaring that the whole population of Gaza is responsible for the Hamas-led Oct. 7 attack.

The New York Times reported that, "Calls for Gaza to be 'flattened,' 'erased' or 'destroyed' had been mentioned about 18,000 times since Oct. 7 in Hebrew posts on X, the site formerly known as Twitter, said FakeReporter, an Israeli group that monitors disinformation and hate speech."

Biden, Blinken and Austin Violated Legal Duty to Prevent Genocide

Article I of the Genocide Convention imposes a duty on all States Parties, which include Israel and the U.S. who have ratified the treaty, to prevent genocide. The International Court of Justice said in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro that "a State's obligation to prevent, and the corresponding duty to act, arise at the instant that the State learns of, or should normally have learned of, the existence of a serious risk that genocide will be committed."

The Center for Constitutional Rights's motion for preliminary injunction charges that, "Defendants have been on notice of the risk of genocide since at least Oct. 9, if not already on Oct. 7, through the public and widely circulated statements and actions by Israeli officials with whom they

Reports and images of Israel's assault on the Palestinians in Gaza accompanied by words and actions of Israeli leaders revealing the intention to ethnically cleanse Gaza of Palestinians have been ubiquitous.

were in close, regular contact and consultation, as well as by warnings of indicators of genocide from United Nations officials and other sources that have only increased since then."

Reports and images of Israel's assault on the Palestinians in Gaza accompanied by words and actions of Israeli leaders revealing the intention to ethnically cleanse Gaza of Palestinians have been ubiquitous.

Yet instead of fulfilling their legal duty to prevent the unfolding genocide, Biden, Blinken and Austin poured gasoline on the fire by sending Israel vast amounts of weaponry, money and advisory support. On Oct. 18, the U.S. vetoed a UN Security Council resolution that would have called for a ceasefire and urged Israel to rescind

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Block U.S. Aid

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its order to 1.1 million Palestinians in northern Gaza to leave their homes and move to southern Gaza.

Complicity to commit genocide can only occur if there is a punishable act of genocide by another state or persons. The accomplice enables or facilitates the crime but doesn't have to share the specific intent to commit genocide. A defendant may be liable for genocide if he knowingly provides assistance, encouragement or moral support for the crime.

Furnishing arms and ammunition and operational support and advice that armed forces use to commit atrocities can constitute aiding and abetting if the defendant knew his actions would assist the international law violation.

The lawsuit charges that defendants Biden, Blinken and Austin transferred a significant amount of weapons and military equipment to Israel. They asked Congress to appropriate \$14.1 billion in additional military assistance to Israel. Blinken authorized a \$320 million transfer of military equipment to an Israeli manufacturer of kits for precision bombs.

U.S. leaders are intimately involved in day-to-day assistance to Israel as it bombards Gaza. On Oct. 30, Defense Deputy Press Secretary Sabrina Singh stated that Defense Department and other officials, "all the way up to the president have certainly informed and at least guided some of what the Israelis are doing on the ground in their ground operation," the complaint says.

U.S. officials refuse to place any limitations on Israel's use of U.S.-furnished weaponry to carry out its genocidal assault on the Palestinians in Gaza. On Nov. 7, Singh admitted that "we don't put conditions on weapons that ... we're sending or that Israel is using."

Further, Biden continues to refuse to call for a ceasefire. On Nov. 9, when asked at a press briefing about the chances of a ceasefire, he replied, "None. No possibility."

The complaint states, "As Israel's closest ally and strongest supporter, being its biggest provider of military assistance by a large margin and with Israel being the largest cumulative recipient of U.S. foreign assistance since World War II, the United States has the means available to have a deterrent effect on Israeli officials now pursuing genocidal acts against the Palestinian people in Gaza."

Lawsuit Seeks Declaratory and Injunctive Relief

In their lawsuit, the Palestinian plaintiffs are asking the court to declare that defendants Biden, Blinken and Austin violated their duty under customary international law, as part of federal common law:

1. to take all measures within their power to prevent Israel from committing genocide against the Palestinian

people in Gaza;

2. that prohibits their complicity in genocide, by knowingly continuing to provide assistance that enables and facilitates Israel's commission of genocidal acts against the Palestinian people in Gaza.

The plaintiffs are also seeking an injunction ordering defendants to take all measures within their power to prevent Israel's commission of genocidal acts against the Palestinians in Gaza, including but not limited to ordering defendants to exert influence over Israel to:

1. end its bombing of the Palestinian people of Gaza, resulting in mass killing and serious injury;
2. lift the siege on Gaza and allow all electricity, fuel, food, water and humanitarian aid into Gaza; and
3. prevent the "evacuation" or forcible transfer and expulsion of Palestinians from Gaza and ensure freedom of movement.

Finally, plaintiffs are asking the court to issue an injunction to prohibit defendants from:

Dehumanization at Home and Abroad

Three Palestinian American students—Tahseen Ahmed, Kinaan Abdalhamid and Hisham Awartani—were shot in Burlington, Vermont, as they walked down the street Nov. 25. Awartani, who attends Brown University, was shot in the spine and may never walk again.

In a text message read aloud at a vigil for him at the university Nov. 27, Awartani said, "It's important to recognize that this is part of the larger story. The serious crime did not happen in a vacuum. As much as I appreciate every single one of you here today, I am but one casualty in a much wider conflict. ... This is why, when you say your wishes and light your candles today, your mind should not just be focused on me as an individual, but rather as a proud member of a people being oppressed."

Joyce Ajlouny, former director of the Ramallah Friends School, the school where all three boys went to school in Ramallah and now the general secretary of American Friends Service Committee, shared a poem written by Awartani when he was in the sixth grade:

Hope dwells in my heart
It shines like a light in darkness
[This] light cannot be smothered
It cannot be drowned out by tears and the screams of
the wounded
It only grows in strength
This light can outshine hate

1. providing, facilitating, or coordinating military assistance and financing to Israel, including sales, transfer or delivery of weapons and arms to Israel, and providing military equipment and personnel, advancing Israel's commission of genocidal acts;

2. obstructing attempts by the international community, including at the UN, to implement a ceasefire and lift the siege on Gaza.

The lawsuit says that even the crimes committed by the military wing of Hamas on Oct. 7 that killed approximately 1,200 Israelis, including many civilians, and kidnapped 240 others, cannot legally justify the targeting of an entire population and collective punishment the Israeli government has meted out, let alone genocide.

Israel, as an occupying power, cannot claim self-defense against the people it occupies, the lawsuit maintains. Moreover, the intent to commit genocide repeatedly expressed by Israeli officials belies any claim to self-defense.

"Article 51 of the U.N. Charter, which sets the confines for the invocation and use of self-defense by States, is inapplicable when the threat originates from a territory over which Israel exercises control," the lawsuit states, citing the International Court of Justice's Advisory Opinion in "Legal Consequences of Construction of a Wall in Occupied Palestinian Territory."

Congress is considering the request by Biden, Blinken and Austin to authorize more than \$14 billion in additional military assistance to Israel. On Nov. 3, the National Lawyers Guild, Center for Constitutional Rights and Palestine Legal sent a letter to congressmembers alerting them that they could face legal liability for aiding, abetting, inciting or conspiring to commit genocide by appropriating funds to support Israel's ongoing genocide.

A hearing on the plaintiffs' motion for preliminary injunction is set for Jan. 11, 2024, in the Oakland, California, courtroom of Judge Donna M. Ryu.

Marjorie Cohn is professor emerita at Thomas Jefferson School of Law, former president of the National Lawyers Guild, and a member of the national advisory boards of Assange Defense and Veterans For Peace, and the bureau of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers. Her books include *Drones and Targeted Killing: Legal, Moral and Geopolitical Issues*. She is co-host of *Law and Disorder radio*.



Tahseen Ahmed, Kinaan Abdalhamid and Hisham Awartani.

This light can outshine injustice
It outshines segregation and apartheid
As of Greek legend, Pandora opened a box
And when she did that, all the evil escaped
But luckily, Pandora closed the jar before hope could escape
And as long as hope stayed in that jar
Hope would never escape
So I ask you one thing, learn from that story
Learn to never give up hope
Learn to let hope give power
In the darkest of times
And let the light shine.

U.S. Media Evades Responsibility to Acknowledge Gaza Genocide



Protestor outside Grand Central Station
Oct. 27. Photo: Ellen Davidson

By Lara Witt and Tina Vasquez

The images that have emerged from Gaza over the last several weeks are not ones we can easily forget: a once vibrant city reduced to rubble by Israeli occupation forces. A Ministry of Health press conference held in the aftermath of a massacre, where the bodies of murdered Palestinians are piled up around the podium. Young children, visibly in shock, covered in the blood of their families and debris from their homes that no longer exist. Parents, hysterical with grief, holding their dead and dying babies.

Amid all the pain and suffering we have seen, among all of the incomprehensible stories emerging, we find ourselves returning to one extraordinary fact: Palestinians are going to great lengths to ensure their voices are heard. Decades of evidence tells them that the media will get it all wrong, so they are using their last bits of power during a blockade and sometimes their final moments on earth to correct the public record.

Palestinian journalists who have recently had their homes, families, colleagues, and places of work bombed by Israeli occupation forces continue to do interviews with Western media. No doubt they feel tremendous pressure to address rampant disinformation from the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF), to correct the media's use of passive language, and to introduce words like "apartheid" to ahistorical reporting. Everyday Palestinians are also using social media to relay the facts on the ground, documenting the violence of settler colonialism.

The evidence is there. It is screaming at us. It is journalistic malpractice to see the hard facts of genocide plainly before us and to pretend it is not happening.

These efforts at truth telling are a strong indictment of the U.S. media. Palestinians know what many across the world are just beginning to understand: While Gaza and the Palestinian people stand on the brink of oblivion, the press will only gloss over U.S.-backed war crimes, rationalize their

collective punishment, and spin narratives that further erase their rights and realities.

In this earth-shattering, history-defining moment, the American media is failing. Despite the facts on the ground, many American news outlets refuse to identify what's happening in Gaza as genocide, citing a lack of evidence for the term. But in fact, the very definition of genocide and the metrics for identifying it under international law require precisely the kind of evidence we're seeing now, which means that any news outlet claiming to produce "evidence-based" journalism that won't use the word "genocide" is violating its own stated principles.

Our understanding of genocide is largely based on how it's been defined by Raphael Lemkin, a Jewish attorney who campaigned to establish the Genocide Convention as the Holocaust was unfolding during World War II. The definition is clear and concise: the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. There are also clear metrics and measuring sticks under the Genocide Convention and international law.

The Center for Constitutional Rights released an emergency briefing on Oct. 18 detailing the State of Israel's crime of genocide of the Palestinian people and how the United States is complicit. The report notes, "There is a plausible and credible case, based on powerful factual evidence, that Israel is attempting to commit, if not actively committing, the crime of genocide in the occupied Palestinian territory, and specifically against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip." The report also details that the United States is not only failing "to uphold its obligation to prevent the commission of genocide, but there is a plausible and credible case to be made that the United States' actions to further the Israeli military operation, closure, and campaign against the Palestinian population in Gaza, rise to the level of complicity in the crime under international law." And what has often been left out of news coverage since the Hamas attacks on Oct. 7 is that "no State or individual can ever be permitted to justify geno-

cide in the name of self-defense."

But you would not know this if you were simply relying on U.S. mainstream media sources. By continuing to frame this as a war between the State of Israel and Hamas, newsrooms across the country continue to break the backbone of journalistic integrity and ignore Israel's pattern of dehumanizing Palestinians.

Israeli officials have been very clear in their language when referring to Palestinians. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office posted on X (formerly known as Twitter) that Israel's assault on Gaza is a "struggle between the children of light and the children of darkness, between humanity and the law of the jungle." He reiterated a similar racist stance in an Oct. 25 address, saying, "We are the people of the light, they are the people of darkness." Dan Gillerman, the former Israeli ambassador to the United Nations, described Palestinians as "inhuman animals" in an interview with UK outlet Sky News Oct. 25. Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant stated, "We are fighting against animals."

It is a fact to call the State of Israel an apartheid state that has committed ethnic cleansing. It is a fact to state that the IDF has committed war crimes.

In failing to call out the use of these white supremacist framings of a civilized race's conquest of a barbaric or uncivilized race, U.S. and other Western media are implicitly refusing to recognize Palestinians as human enough to have a genocide committed against them.

Numerous articles regurgitate the words of U.S. government briefings and IDF officials, uplifting the occupying government's invocation of so-called self-defense for its siege and displacement of 1.4 million of the 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza. As of publishing this op-ed, the IDF's continuous bombings have totaled more than 12,000

tons of explosives since Oct. 7—about the equivalent explosive force of the U.S. nuclear bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan in 1945. By Oct. 27, Israel had killed more than 6,500 people, including more than 2,700 children. Many more remain trapped under the rubble. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that more people have been killed by the occupation forces' bombings within those 19 days than died of all causes throughout 2022. The State of Israel's bombings in Gaza also killed 16 health care workers and 35 humanitarian and aid workers and staff members with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) and are targeting members of the press and their families, killing more than 20 Palestinian journalists. By holding back aid and cutting off electricity and water (and the capacity to maintain water health standards), Israel has also condemned thousands more to health crises and slow, torturous deaths.

In an analysis in *Jewish Currents*, Israeli Holocaust scholar Raz Segal called the occupation government's actions a "textbook case of genocide." In a follow-up interview with *Democracy Now!*, Segal also said that the Israeli state's exceptionalism and comparisons of its Palestinian victims to "Nazis" are used to "justify, rationalize, deny, distort, disavow mass violence against Palestinians." It is a fact to call the State of Israel an apartheid state that has committed ethnic cleansing. It is a fact to state that the IDF has committed war crimes. It is also a fact that the reactions to the genocide aren't being properly covered by mainstream media sources. There have been massive protests across the United States demanding a ceasefire and an end to the occupation; thousands are marching and engaging in civil disobedience, yet there is barely any news coverage in the outlets countless Americans rely on.

The national media watchdog Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) noted that the Biden Administration is actively suppressing discussion of de-escalation and the HuffPost reported that a State Department memo instructed staff not to use the phrases "de-escalation/ceasefire," "end to violence/bloodshed," and "restoring calm" in press materials related to

Israel's ongoing genocide of Palestinians. The U.S. news media has largely followed those directions. FAIR's Oct. 24 analysis of U.S. TV broadcasts between Oct. 12 and 18 rarely mentioned the demands for a ceasefire and noted that *ABC World News Tonight*, *CBS Evening News*, *NBC Nightly News*, and *PBS NewsHour* aired a total of 105 segments primarily about Israel/Gaza. Just eight of those segments included the word "ceasefire" or some form of the word "de-escalate."

But Black, Indigenous, and people of color, including Palestinian refu-

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U.S. Media

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gees and Palestinian Americans in the United States, are acutely familiar with these journalistic failures. How the media is covering Israel's occupation of Palestine and the genocide in Gaza mirrors how journalists and editors cover white supremacy and state violence committed against Black people. If you're asking yourself how the U.S. media could do this, look no further for answers than how the United States covers the criminal legal system. The media reflects the nation, and the United States, like the State of Israel, is a settler-colonial state. Our country committed a genocide against Native peoples, it enslaved and tortured millions of Africans, and through its drawing of borders and hostile policies, designates who is

blame in the past. Newsrooms in recent years have fired reporters over their support for Palestinians, and legacy newsrooms continue to frame genocide as 'grievances.' These actions have persuasive power that molds how people, including elected officials, continue to think and talk about the occupation.

Essential components in maintaining systems of oppression are the obfuscation of information and the amplification of the oppressors' voice to incite violence and manufacture consent for genocide. We fail at our jobs when the telling of history uplifts the oppressor's perspective and silences the oppressed. Audre Lorde knew this when she wrote about the U.S. government's support of apartheid in South Africa and the interconnectedness of Black liberation across the globe. "We are citizens of the most powerful country in the world, a country which stands upon

ugee camps, mosques, and churches that pre-date our professions and not clearly state that this is a genocide. When we omit the truth in favor of protecting the oppressor, we create a chilling silence for people who rely on us to report the truth and shed light on injustice. A moral grounding only helps contextualize the truth because journalism is never without perspective. White supremacy and colonialism are inherently devoid of morality, yet they stain U.S. journalistic practice. Many in the United States rely on our work as something that they can point to as evidence of genocide, an attribution they can use so that they do not lose their livelihoods or safety for stating what is plainly in front of us. The world is watching, and there are many turning to our industry for informa-

tion that helps them stay alive.

For those reporters on the fence about how to do their jobs, to editors who have tremendous power in shaping stories and influencing public opinion, for newsrooms obscuring the obvious in favor of the easy: Genocide is an evidence-based term, and it is here.

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The evidence is there. It is screaming at us. It is journalistic malpractice to see the hard facts of genocide plainly before us and to pretend it is not happening.

worthy of life and death. Today, U.S. federal agencies put migrants in camps, use cruel techniques to deter migration, and manufacture ways for migrants to die in the borderlands. The United States commits atrocities across the globe and calls it freedom. The rest of the Western world bows to the United States, and together, these Western nation-states, with Israel as their creation, dictate who is worthy of humanity and who isn't. And the U.S. media largely falls in line.

Through journalistic sleight-of-hand—including the use of passive language, ever-shifting headlines, bothsidesism, and the myth of objectivity—reporters across the United States are fueling the genocide their newsrooms are refusing to acknowledge is taking place.

Some of us are choosing not to fall in line. An open letter organized by Prism workers and signed by us and hundreds of other media makers, clearly outlined our industry's long history of engaging in these dangerous practices.

"Media has disproportionate power to manufacture consent for genocide based on the context that writers and editors choose to include," the letter states. "Our industry's history is rife with warmongering and platforming of some of the most violent voices calling for invasions, war crimes, and ethnic cleansing. The white southern press was crucial in spreading lies and misinformation regarding lynchings—a fact that Ida B. Wells fought to acknowledge. Editors at the highest level of well-established and trusted media sources have spent the past few decades participating in the dehumanization of Muslims and Arabs across the world to desensitize readers and justify American-led wars. Media workers today are shaped by what information past writers and editors have chosen to give us and who they choose to humanize, but we cannot leave

the wrong side of every liberation struggle on earth," Lorde wrote.

The evidence is there. It is screaming at us. It is journalistic malpractice to see the hard facts of genocide plainly before us and to pretend it is not happening. It is a moral failure to witness the displacement and murder of peoples and bombings of entire residential buildings, schools, ref-



Palestine supporters rally in front of the library at Copley Square in Boston.
Photo: Chris Christo/Boston Herald

The Israel Lobby and Genocide

By Fred Nagel

It is hard to think about anything else while a genocide is going on. Of course, our first priority is to stop Israel from murdering Palestinian children. Then we can ask for a cessation of Israeli attacks on hospitals and schools.

Pictures coming out of Gaza clearly show what the Israeli Defense Force has been doing. The utter wasteland that remains are clearly the results of "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in

part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group," which is the official U.N. definition of genocide. And the U.S. role in funding, arming, and protecting a nation committing genocide? There is little doubt in the eyes of the world that the United States is also committing genocide in Gaza.

But how is it that our government has been so enthusiastic about continuing the slaughter? Our Congress and President have even favored opening up our weapons stockpile to Israel, and sending tens of billions more in military aid. Aren't

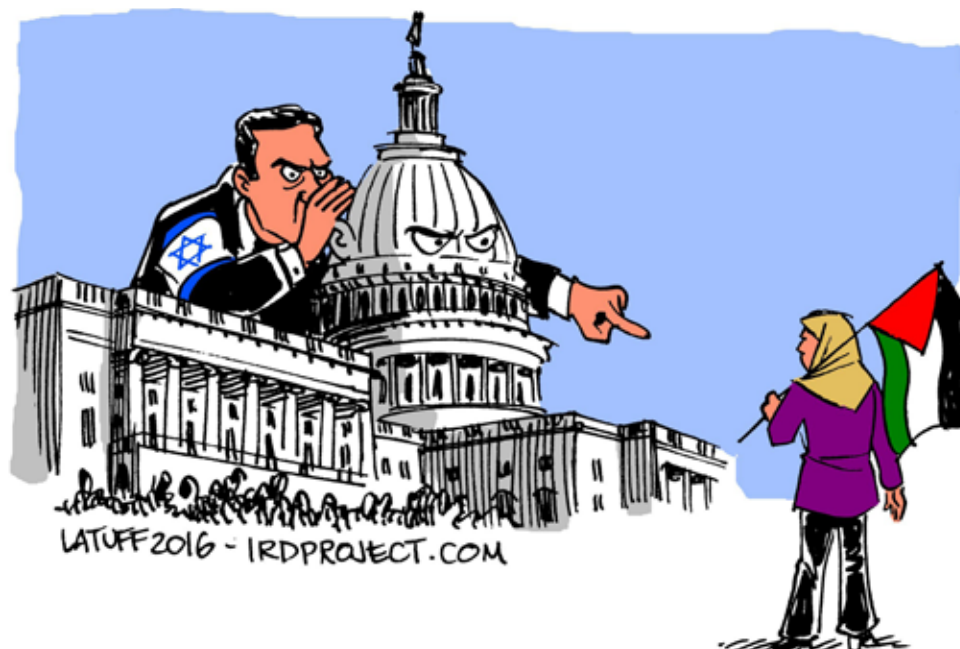
5,000 dead children enough for them?

The same is true for our colleges and universities. Presidents are throwing Students for Justice in Palestine off campus, and warning others of disciplinary action for pro Palestinian rallies. How is it that our educational leaders are also consumed by pro-genocidal enthusiasm?

The answer is one word: venal. It means capable of being bought off for money or other valuable assets. Politicians in DC have long been funded by the Israel Lobby, and it is hard to find a representative who is not in on the take. The same is true for college presidents. Despite huge endowments, college presidents are more than willing to limit intellectual discussion on campuses if alumni donations are threatened.

And that is how our society has been debased by the Israel Lobby. Instead of our institutions serving the people, they are doing what a small group of rich elites demand: support Israel Apartheid and keep the blood of innocents flowing. It is well past time for us to rise up and challenge our venal leaders in Congress and on campus.

Fred Nagel is a Vietnam-era veteran and political activist whose articles have appeared in CounterPunch, Global Exchange, LA Progressive, Mondoweiss, Peace & Planet News, Popular Resistance, and Z Magazine. He also hosts a show on Vassar College Radio, WVKR (classwars.org). He is a member of Veterans For Peace.



Night Raids, Tear Gas and Captivity

Reflections on a mother's eyes

By Matthew Hoh

Note: I originally intended this as a short post to provide videos and photos of my time in Palestine in 2017. With news of a hostage swap, my mind is on the terror that detention and captivity bring to Israeli and Palestinian families.—Matthew Hoh

As I type, reports are being posted that the Israeli government and Hamas are near a deal for a hostage swap.

More than nine years ago, I had dinner with Bowe Bergdahl's parents. Bowe was the American soldier who had been held prisoner by the Taliban for nearly five years. At that point, 41 years old and having been to war three times, I had seen a lot. However, I had never seen a look of pain like I did in the eyes of Jani, Bowe's mom, that night. The next day, President Obama announced Bowe's release as part of a prisoner exchange with the Taliban.

I have been with mothers as



Advancing arm in arm with Issa Amro, one of many unheralded 'Palestinian Gandhis,' toward a line of Israeli Border Police in Hebron. Ray McGovern, the first red shirt on the left, had just been struck in the arm by a tear gas canister.

multiple occasions, we participated in nonviolent resistance against the occupation. Many of those times, maybe most, we were met

the house raids—to which, as foreigners, we were not subjected, but, as veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq, we were familiar with committing. We heard and met those who had loved ones gunned down in the streets where they were born by an occupying power, again something with which we were familiar. There was also the apartheid, evident and apparent—separate roads, denial of water and land, eviction and destruction of housing, and, of course, a forbidden airport. These were rules, restrictions and restraints from which we were exempt, but the Palestinians were not. Yet, none of that is what scarred me.

In every village, town and city we went to in those three weeks, I saw a nightmare in the eyes of Palestinian parents that I had

seen only before in Jani's eyes. Of all the crimes of the occupation, we heard none so often and

Just like our occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, with those checkpoints, shootings and night raids, the Israeli occupation has only served to engender and sustain resistance.

they have buried their sons. Holding them as they are forced to accept the atrocity of a son being put in the ground transfers an agony to you that is unnatural and ghastly as if an unholy specter has entered your body, mind and soul to vandalize your past love and steal your future. Similarly, I once had the task of informing a young man of his brother's death. Putting that kind of pain onto someone was the worst moment of my life.

But I had never seen pain like I saw in Jani's eyes that night. A mother whose child is held captive in both unknown circumstances and well-understood violence is enduring a helplessness, grief and terror that should never be known.

Then I went to Palestine.

In 2017, I was part of a Veterans For Peace (VFP) delegation that spent three weeks in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. We spent our time with both Israelis and Palestinians, and on mul-

with a violent response from the Israeli security services as well as Israeli settlers.

We witnessed Palestinians enduring the daily humiliation and subjugation of occupation—the checkpoints, the searches, and



Bassem Tamimi speaks with the Veterans For Peace delegation in 2017 about nonviolent activism in his village of Nabi Saleh.

Photo: Ellen Davidson



Nonviolent action on Shuhada Street in Hebron. Shuhada Street, once a part of a thriving market and residential neighborhood, is off-limits to Palestinians. No more than five minutes later settlers and a platoon of soldiers arrived. Photo: Ellen Davidson

emotionally as the arrest of children.

Since 2000, the Israeli military and border police have abducted more than 500 Palestinian children a year. These arrests are almost always arbitrary, with night raids on a home and the child taken from bed. A day or two or three in custody, with little information provided to the family, during which the child is interrogated, treated roughly and abused, put in solitary confinement or not allowed sleep, and often forced to sign a confession in Hebrew, which they cannot read. Sometimes that confession is just nonsense; other times, it serves as a mark against the child, and, many times, chillingly, it implicates family members.

Most children are released in

24–72 hours, but some are not. Before Oct. 7, according to the Israeli human rights organization B'tselem, at least 146 Palestinian children were being held, the majority without sentence, in Israeli prisons for "security" purposes. *The New York Times* reports that currently there are 200 Palestinian boys in Israeli prisons, along with 75 women and 5 girls. These women and children would make up the bulk of the Palestinians exchanged for Israelis in the reported deal. Overall, it is believed there are 7,000 Palestinians in Israeli detention.

This rendition of children is as systematic as it is arbitrary; no family can know whether or not their child will be next. A village or a neighborhood only has to be visited with one or two such kidnappings a year to strike a fear in parents that dominates every moment of their life, awake and asleep. It is a deliberate form of state terrorism meant to dissuade resistance to the occupation.

The terror, anger and debilitating apprehension I encountered in Palestinian families across the West Bank, one family after another, was only outdone by their

determination to tell us what the occupation was doing to them. I don't think what we witnessed will ever leave me, just as what I saw in Jani's eyes will never be forgotten. It certainly will never leave those who have had to bear it, and just like our occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, with those checkpoints, shootings and night raids, the Israeli occupation has only served to engender and sustain resistance. A resistance that will only grow more violent and extreme as it is suppressed. What else could ever come from occupation, subjugation and humiliation?

Among those held in Israeli prisons are my friends Bassem and Ahed Tamimi. Bassem is a long-time leader of the non-violent resistance in the West

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This Piece May Be My Last

By Hanin A. Elholy

After dawn prayers at our home in Beit Lahiya, my husband Ahmad and I heard heavy rocket-fire. This was unprecedented and unusual, and seemingly coming from all directions.

I ran to Majd, our nine-month

Deif, the leader of Hamas' military wing, who was killed.

We knew nothing, but we knew it was critical.

Then, a flood of pictures and videos of Palestinian fighters in occupied Palestine. It was a shock. My mouth gaped open. I felt an incomprehensible combination of pride, joy, and faith.

turned home to get some clothes and food. There was no electricity and barely any water. I tucked away my jewelry and money in my bag, along with diapers and milk for Majd.

I looked around our apartment and felt it might be the last time I saw it. Our home was more than just walls and furniture. We had worked day and night for years to furnish and renovate our home.

And, of course, the memories. It was where we loved, argued, danced, studied. Nights over dinners of fish, my husband's favorite, watching "The Walking Dead."

I left our home, but it didn't leave me. My husband cried to me, "Come on, Hino! We are going for some days till the end of the aggression."

No Electricity, Food or Gas

There were 10 of us. My mother-in-law and sister-in-law on the first floor. On the second floor, two of my brothers-in-law and their families.

There were no markets nearby so we made bread ourselves. We washed our clothes by hand since there was no electricity. We cooked small amounts of



food because we couldn't store it in the fridge. We charged our phones at a neighbor's home, the only one with solar panels in the neighborhood.

We make bread from what little supplies we have left.

The Israeli attacks had taken us back in time.

My sister-in-law has a wheat allergy, so she relies on a specific diet. But with her food no longer available, she suffered. I played songs on my phone for the kids so they wouldn't notice the sounds of bombs. This was successful during the day, but at night, the bombs shook the whole house.

On Tuesday afternoon, Oct. 10, I heard people shouting outside. My brother-in-law came into the house and yelled that the Israeli army had just warned

a neighbor. We were worried and confused; we had heated arguments.

Some of us decided to leave the area, but I chose to stay. Nothing happened that night. The Israeli "warnings" had been rumors.

But then, on Thursday, Oct. 12, the Israeli planes dropped posts telling Beit Lahiya citizens to leave. Ninety percent of our neighbors left, and so did we.

It wasn't an easy decision. I hated the idea of leaving our homes to the Israelis. But I prioritized my life because I love life, as all Palestinians do.

Majd, Ahmad and I, along with his brother and sister, went to the house of their uncle. There were 20 of us in the home.

Here we had a gas generator to pump water. Nearby was

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On Thursday, Oct. 12, the Israeli planes dropped posts telling Beit Lahiya citizens to leave. Ninety percent of our neighbors left, and so did we.

old, who had woken up crying, and hugged him. "What's happening?" I asked Ahmad. He said it sounded like Palestinian rockets, perhaps a response to an Israeli assassination or operation.

I had never heard such furious sounds. We looked for news but found nothing.

I opened Facebook and then other news channels on Telegram, only to find rumors that Israel had assassinated Hamas leader Saleh al-Arouri. Others said that it was Muhammad

I felt that the liberation of Palestine is close and that I may live to witness it. Ahmad was jubilant: "I need nothing from life after living this. I don't care if I die after seeing these pictures."

After breakfast, we went to the home of my husband's family. By sunset, it became obvious that Israel would embark on some kind of destructive aggression. We spent the night with them and planned to return home the next day.

By Sunday morning, Oct. 8, Israel had launched a war. I re-



Gassed in Hebron. Photo: Ellen Davidson

... continued from previous page Bank village of Nabi Saleh, a place, among others, where our VFP delegation encountered flash-bang grenades, gas and live rounds. His daughter, Ahed, gained international attention several years ago when, as a minor, she was arrested by the Israeli military. Bassem

was arrested in October without charge, as far as I know. More than 2,000 Palestinians have been detained along with Bassem in the West Bank during the last six weeks, while Israeli soldiers, border police and settlers have killed more than 200. This follows a mass subjugation campaign in the West Bank that saw

more than one Palestinian shot dead by Israeli security forces and settlers each day this year before Oct. 7.

Twenty-two-year-old Ahed was arrested earlier this month by more than a dozen soldiers in a night raid on her family's home. The charges against Ahed are of incitement on social media, specifically a post on Instagram. Ahed and her family reject the charges, saying the account that posted the offending words was not hers. I believe that. This war in Palestine is the most propagandized war of our lifetimes, and the use of social media to inform and misinform, rally and manipulate, and justify and condemn is one of its hallmarks. To masquerade as someone else on Instagram or hack an account to justify arrest, detention or worse, is simple. Before I stopped counting, I noted 20 Ahed Tamimi accounts on Instagram, with her picture in the profile. War, a house that has forever been built on lies, has entered a new era. As we are coming to understand, social media is as much a critical driver of war as the newspaper and telegraph line were, and the internet is as much a revolution in military affairs as

the stirrup or gunpowder.

I hope the reports of a hostage swap are accurate and that the horror, grief and fear dominating hundreds of Israeli and Palestinian families will come to an end. Maybe by the time you are reading this, men, women, and children have been returned home to their families, and a pain I hope none of us will ever personally know will come to an end. Perhaps, for a relative few, there can be some relief amid the ongoing death, fear and suffering.

Matthew Hoh is a member of the advisory boards of Expose Facts, Veterans For Peace, and World Beyond War. In 2009 he resigned his position with the State Department in Afghanistan in protest of the escalation of the Afghan War by the Obama Administration. He previously had been in Iraq with a State Department team and with the U.S. Marines. He is a Senior Fellow with the Center for International Policy.



Gassed again in Nabi Saleh. Photo: Ellen Davidson



We make bread from what little supplies we have left. Photo: Hanin A. Elholy

Last Piece

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a bakery, which was later bombed. However, without an internet connection at the house, I spent three days not knowing what was happening around us. All the surrounding homes were also packed with entire families.

Since the homes are so close together and the streets are very narrow, I had trouble sleeping Friday night, Oct. 13.

I was kept awake by the sounds of people talking and walking. I felt as if everyone was evacuating. I opened the window and listened. Someone said a nearby house had been threatened and that we should leave now. Another said to wait a minute, that they needed to wake the kids up.

Many families were leaving. Disheveled mothers carried sleeping kids, and frightened fathers carried mattresses and bags.

People were leaving their homes in a hurry.

On Saturday morning, Oct. 14, we returned home to Beit Lahiya.

As soon as we entered the home, the bombing started. We gathered in the hall. I hugged my baby and closed his ears. We all sat close and covered our heads and ears.

With every bomb, we heard windows breaking and shrapnel falling. My heart and body shook violently. I wondered if this was the end. I'm terrified of death. I'm not ready to die.

I read verses from the Quran for protection. My brother-in-law shouted, "We shouldn't have come here! The house will collapse on us! I'm leaving!" My husband cried louder, "Sit down! It's dangerous to leave now!"

I didn't want to leave and I felt it was our end. My sister-in-law called my oldest brother-in-law to come in a car and rescue us, but their mother begged, "Don't ask him to come. This will put his life at risk." My baby Majd was crying and I tried to calm him.

When the bombings were less intense, we carried our bags and left the house.

We waited for my brother-in-law to arrive in his car, and when he did, we threw in our bags and sat on top of each other and fled to the home of my husband's grandmother.

Like Zombies

I felt that the house was haunted.

The kids' faces were pale and yellow, in shock. Some sat very calm and didn't say a word. Another cried every time her mother left the room. Fathers were depressed and smoked in the hall. Mothers cried and asked questions.

I was speechless. We moved around like zombies. Our four-floor building emptied in less than an hour. They went south, to a "safer" place. All the women and children left the house. I remained with my husband's uncles, their sons and one aunt.

I was thinking of leaving. Shall I endure the bombing and stay at home to protect it from the Israelis? Or shall I leave and protect my life, so I can tell others about the massacres?

That night, rumors spread that there would be a ground invasion at 4 am. I couldn't sleep that night because of the continuous bombings. I had nightmares of soldiers entering the house and killing my husband and child in front of me. I asked them to kill me first or to kill the three of us all at once. I couldn't decide my destiny, even in my dreams.

I felt so lonely, and I didn't want to be killed.

I wanted to go to my family's home. I didn't care if it was safe or not, though no place is safe here. Israel has bombed hospitals, churches, mosques and schools. I just wanted to be with my family: my father, mother, sisters and brothers. Whether we lived or died, I just wanted to be with them.

In Khan Younis, the city where I was born, I went to my uncle's house, where my family had sheltered. They had left their home in Tel al-Hawa, which Israel was bombing.

At my uncle's house, there was food and water, some gas and a weak internet signal. (This would be luxury nowadays.)

At that time, my husband had been far

from Majd and me for 21 days. He wanted to visit, but the Israeli forces have divided Gaza's north and south. They shoot anyone they see moving. My son, looking for his father, clung on to other men.

I Choose to Resist

Israel is using the media to spread its fake narratives and to get more international support against Palestinians. While Israel claims it has the right to self-defense, its actions are not self-defense. It is an occupier.

Israel has killed more than 4,000 children and is targeting hospitals and schools, claiming that it is attacking Hamas. But the reality is, this is ethnic cleansing.

Israel's stated goal of completely getting rid of Hamas is foolish. Hamas is not just its fighters—it is the idea of resisting the occupation. This is a belief that cannot be eradicated.

The news makes me sick. Every time I

We Palestinians in Gaza love life more than people think. We have dreams. I have so many things I want to do in life: to complete my PhD, to teach, to improve as a writer and to continue in journalism.

I hope to give birth to a girl and raise her along with my son. I want to travel with my husband and enjoy a honeymoon. I want to know what it feels like to watch a movie at a cinema, to make a snowman, go on a hike.

I want to see my baby walk for the first time, his first day of kindergarten.

Are these impossible things to ask for? A rocket can end all this in a second.

Israel attacks anyone who moves and who resists. Palestinian citizens are all targets, but I choose to resist, and I will speak up before I'm attacked.

This piece may be my last.

I was born here and so were my parents and their parents. I have no other place to live but occupied Palestine, and I won't leave it save to paradise, God willing.

Today, I have only a little bit of water. I

I want to know what it feels like to watch a movie at a cinema, to make a snowman, go on a hike. I want to see my baby walk for the first time, his first day of kindergarten.

read or hear about families or individuals killed, I expect that we will be the next. Everyone around me looks depressed. Death haunts us night and day. I'm terrified I will lose one of my family members. I keep imagining frightening scenarios, and I cannot stop crying.

must use it to cook, to go to the bathroom and to shower. Tomorrow I may not find any water to drink. Today, we ate bread and some canned food. Tomorrow there may be nothing.

Hanin A. Elholy is a researcher, writer and translator based in Gaza.

Letter to Children

... continued from page 1

There are very brave Palestinian journalists. Thirty-nine of them have been killed since this bombing began. They are heroes. So are the doctors and nurses in your hospitals. So are the U.N. workers. Eighty-nine of whom have died. So are the ambulance drivers and the medics. So are the rescue parties that lift up the slabs of concrete with their hands. So are the mothers and fathers who shield you from the bombs.

But we are not there. Not this time. We cannot get in. We are locked out.

Reporters from all over the world are going to the border crossing at Rafah. We are going because we cannot watch this slaughter and do nothing. We are going because hundreds of people are dying a day, including 160 children. We are going because this genocide must stop. We are going because we have children. Like you. Precious. Innocent. Loved. We are going because we want you to live.

I hope one day we will meet. You will be an adult. I will be an old man, although to you I am already very old. In my dream for you I will find you free and safe and happy. No one will be trying to kill you.

You will fly in airplanes filled with people, not bombs. You will not be trapped in a concentration camp. You will see the world. You will grow up and have children. You will become old. You will remember this suffering, but you will know it means you must help others who suffer. This is my hope. My prayer.

We have failed you. This is the awful guilt we carry. We tried. But we did not try hard enough. We will go to Rafah. Many of us. Reporters. We will stand outside the border with Gaza in protest. We will write and film. This is what we do. It is not much. But it is something. We will tell your story again.

Maybe it will be enough to earn the right to ask for your forgiveness.

Chris Hedges is a Pulitzer Prize-winning American journalist, Presbyterian minister, author, and television host. His books include *America: The Farewell Tour*, *American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America*, and *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, a finalist for the *National Book Critics Circle Award for Nonfiction*. He previously worked overseas for the *Dallas Morning News*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and *NPR*, and hosted the Emmy-nominated *RT America* show *On Contact*.

Our Children Hear Israeli Troops Getting Closer; How Can We Comfort Them?



Palestinians examine the ruins of the five-story house of the Batnji and Badrasawi families after it was targeted by an Israeli airstrike in central Gaza City, Oct. 7, 2023. Photo: Mohammed Zaanoun/Activestills

By Mahmoud Mushtaha

I am still in Gaza City with my family. We didn't flee south, despite the orders of the Israeli military, whose ground forces have now totally encircled us. We made the painful decision that it is better to

halt to this devastating assault. This is the plea of all the innocent children, women, and men, as well as the young people of Gaza who have borne the burden of war their whole lives instead of being able to pursue their dreams.

Israel's declaration of war in response

in one another's presence, when suddenly the ground shook beneath us as a powerful explosion reverberated through the house. We rushed to the windows to see the damage to nearby homes. To our horror, we saw the aftermath of an airstrike dangerously close to our relatives' house,

gripped our souls. We frantically attempted to reach my brother, desperately dialing his number—but there was no available phone service to facilitate the call. After several agonizing minutes, we discovered, thankfully, that they were safe.

The true shock, however, wasn't solely the intensity of the strike or our concerns for my brother's family; sadly, we have grown accustomed to such circumstances. The shock came with the realization that the Israeli occupation had cut off our ability to communicate with anyone outside the Strip, effectively severing Gaza from the rest of the world.

Israel's decision to periodically impose internet blackouts on Gaza, coupled with the cutting of much of our electricity supply since Oct. 7, is a deliberate act of cruelty. It is a calculated attempt to silence us as we endure unimaginable suffering, and a reminder that, in the eyes of the world, our lives and stories hold little value.

The blackouts have intensified our agony, leaving us in the dark about the latest news and developments. Each time we regain a fleeting internet signal, our hearts race with fear and anticipation. We dread the arrival of new messages that might bring more bad news. But in the face of this cruel silence, this unending cycle of anxiety and despair, the people of Gaza continue to resist, to persevere, and to hope for a brighter future.

Survivors, Dreamers, and Fighters

My dreams, like those of people all around the world, are simple. I yearn to pursue my passions, complete my studies, and travel beyond the walls of the besieged Gaza Strip. I dream of a life free from the constant threat of Israeli bombardment and the suffocating blockade that has gripped us for 17 years. I want to marry the woman I love and build a peaceful home for our future—a home untouched by the horrors of conflict. My deepest desire is to raise children without subjecting them to the trauma that has become the shared experience of all Palestinians.

Originally published in +972 Magazine
Mahmoud Mushtaha is a Gaza-based freelance journalist and human rights activist.

I dream of a life free from the constant threat of Israeli bombardment and the suffocating blockade that has gripped us for 17 years. I want to marry the woman I love and build a peaceful home for our future—a home untouched by the horrors of conflict.

stay here, with our relatives in this besieged city, than to be bombed while fleeing. We hear the news about Israeli airstrikes in the southern parts of the Strip, and feel viscerally that nowhere is safe in Gaza.

The overwhelming anxiety and terror inflicted on us by Israel's ground assault in the past week—on top of the month-long, unprecedented aerial bombardment—has left us on the brink of despair. Our children cry incessantly. Initially, when the attacks began, we tried to reassure them: "That is a distant sound," or "It's just a balloon popping." But now, we are at a loss for words.

Last night, I couldn't sleep at all. My heart trembled at the noise of intense clashes and shelling. How can we console our loved ones, especially the children, when they hear the Israeli forces getting closer with each passing moment? I long for someone to offer comfort, even if it is a comforting lie. But there is none.

We are living through a nightmare that won't end, with no escape in sight. Our sole wish is for a humanitarian ceasefire, a

to the Oct. 7 surprise attack by Palestinian fighters marked the beginning of what have been harrowing weeks of nonstop bombardment across the besieged Strip. Each passing day has brought more devastation and despair, leaving us with the unbearable realization that there is nowhere to hide.

Every night for over a month, I have found myself sitting in a crowded room, surrounded by my family and relatives, contemplating our uncertain fate. The questions that plague my mind are relentless. Will I survive this attack? If I do, how will I possibly endure the excruciating pain and trauma that Israel's assault has brought into my life? If I live to see the end of the war, would I stay in Gaza? No. I have to leave. If I even can.

On the evening of Friday, Oct. 27, we were at my aunt's house. Forced to evacuate our home due to warnings from the Israeli occupation forces, we gathered in a room that we consider the safe room, with about 18 family members.

We were doing our best to find comfort

where my brother, Islam, had taken refuge with his wife and three children.

In that heart-stopping moment, fear



Palestinians search for survivors in a house belonging to the Al-Zahar family, after an Israeli airstrike in the city of Rafah, southern Gaza Strip, Oct. 31, 2023.

Photo: Abed Rahim Khatib/Flash90



I Am the Grandchild of Holocaust Survivors, and I Am Calling for a Ceasefire Now

As anti-Zionist Jews, we oppose any nation that aims to expel, oppress, or wipe out another people

By Tal Frieden

Wrapped in Israeli flags, thousands of demonstrators and elected officials gathered on the National Mall earlier this week. Disturbing images from the bipartisan rally in support of Israel’s genocidal attacks against Palestinians are still haunting me. “Let Israel Finish the Job,” read one sign that went viral on social media. The crowd of people interrupted multiple speakers, chanting “No ceasefire.”

The rally featured John Hagee, the founder of Christians United for Israel, who once said that “God sent Adolf Hitler to help Jews reach the promised land.” Hagee was joined by both Democratic and Republican leaders who held hands in front of the United States Capitol: New House Speaker Mike Johnson, who has attacked trans health care and opposed gay marriage, was joined by Sen. Chuck Schumer, the highest-ranking Jewish elected official in the U.S. Both spoke at the rally alongside Hagee.

The rally was loud in its claim that Israel has the unconditional support of the U.S. government. But the U.S. people do not support Israel’s attack on Gaza, which Holocaust scholars have deemed

a genocide. Recent polls show that over two-thirds of the U.S. public support a ceasefire, and less than one-third support sending weapons to Israel.

For the past month, I have watched videos of unthinkable devastation and loss. Israel has bombed Palestinian schools and hospitals. Israel has told Palestinians to leave their homes, only to bomb them in transit. At the time of writing, more than 11,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza — one in 200 residents of the open-air prison. Thousands of the Palestinians who have been killed are children.

In the face of this terrible devastation, millions of people across the world have come together to act in solidarity and oppose this genocide.

For the past month, thousands of other Jews and I have joined Jewish Voice for Peace to take action to stop U.S. support for Israel’s genocide in Palestine. First, outside Senator Schumer’s house, where I was arrested with more than 60 others calling for a ceasefire and an end to U.S. military aid to Israel. Then, in the rotunda of the House office building, I joined more than 300 rabbis, Jews and other people of conscience who were arrested for protesting U.S. support for the ongoing genocide of the Palestinian people. The following Friday evening, thousands of us descended upon Grand Central Terminal, filling the Grand Concourse with echoing chants of “ceasefire now!” Just last week, hundreds of us boarded ferries to Liberty Island and brought our voices to the Statue of Liberty, making our message seen and heard across the world.

Our movement is strong, and it is growing. Millions of people across the world are calling on their governments to stop supporting Israel’s genocide of the Palestinian people. Indigenous activists

have used canoes to block boats carrying bombs headed for Israel. War resisters in Missouri have shut down weapons factories. Belgian and Spanish unions have said they will not load ships carrying weapons to Israel. The day after D.C. police attacked a vigil being held outside the Democratic National Convention building, protesters shut down major bridges in the Bay Area, Montreal, and Boston—and this was all just in one day. For the past month, public squares, bridges, and train stations across the world have been filled with Palestinian flags and calls for justice. The tactics and targets have been diverse but the goal unified: free Palestine.

These brave and crucial actions are

showing people that we can take action together. We can wield our collective power. We can join our voices together and work for a world without apartheid, without genocide, without bombs falling on people in their homes, in schools and in hospitals.

Shutting down the infrastructure that supports this war is a way for all of us to reclaim our agency. It is how we say loudly and fiercely, “Not in our name.” As we watch Palestinians persevere through the worst of humanity, it’s the only way I know how to find hope.

I grew up Jewish in the U.S. I was steeped in Zionist propaganda for most of my childhood. I was told that my grandparents’ history of surviving the Holocaust was why we needed a Jewish state.

In high school, my dad and I hesitantly attended a Jewish Voice for Peace meeting, where a woman who had spent time in the West Bank shared what she witnessed in her travels. I was shocked. I couldn’t believe that Israel would build segregated highways, demolish people’s houses and restrict Palestinians’ access to water. At first, it was hard to accept these facts for what they were. Years of indoctrination made it hard to let go of a narrative about Israel that was not true.

Letting go of this false narrative required opening my mind to new voices and ideas. By listening to the stories of Palestinians, I learned more about the history of Zionism and the Nakba, the forced expulsion of more than 750,000 Palestinians from their homes in 1948. I had to accept a paradigm shift. I let go of fearmongering that told me that the only way for me to be safe was for another group of people to suffer. I let go of a sense of pride and protectiveness over a country that is founded on forced displacement, and returned to the values of freedom and justice for all.

I didn’t learn all of this on my own. Through talking to other anti-Zionist Jews, I became committed to the idea that Israel does not have a monopoly on Judaism. Together, we created new Jew-

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Jewish Voice for Peace protesters are arrested at Grand Central Station Oct. 27.

Photo: Ellen Davidson

Ceasefire Now

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ish communities, ones that hold resisting Zionism as a fundamental part of being Jewish. My anti-Zionist Jewish communities host shabbat dinners, study Torah, celebrate holidays and dream of a better future together. We read poems by Jews in the diaspora, sing songs written by friends and create new traditions. By building these alternative communities, I started to think of my grandparents' stories of the Holocaust as a reason to oppose any nation that aims to expel, oppress and wipe out another group of people.

From working alongside Palestinians, I have learned how to have hope, how to be brave and how to lead with heart. Ahed Tamimi, a Palestinian who was arrested and detained by the Israeli army at the age of 16, put it strongly. "I'm not the victim of the occupation," Tamimi said. "The Jew or the settler child who carries a rifle at the age of 15, they are the victims of the occupation. For me, I am capable of distinguishing between right and wrong. But



Protesters shut down the Manhattan Bridge Nov. 26.

not him. His view is clouded. His heart is filled with hatred and scorn against the Palestinians. He is the victim, not me. I always say I am a freedom fighter. So I will not be the victim."

The Palestinian solidarity movement requires that each of us listen to the Palestinians on the ground who face brutal repression and asks us to garner an ounce of the courage they display every day. Standing in solidarity in Palestine requires that we defy the drumbeat of war and cry out for justice. Supporting Palestinian liberation offers each of us the opportunity to bravely and fiercely stand for what is right, and for the dignity and humanity of all people. While it can mean making ourselves vulnerable to doxxing, harassment, loss of employment or police-perpetrated violence, we know that using our voices and our bodies to stand with Palestine is the only way to stop the atrocities that Palestinians are forced to endure.

We know that continuing to speak out and take action is the only path towards hope. No one of us will be able to end this injustice on our own. But together, we can march towards a better world, and build it one step at a time.

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Tal Frieden is a Jewish organizer based in New York City.

A Farewell to My Beloved Gaza

Photos and story by Mahmoud Nasser

Leaving home. Leaving everything that makes you who you are.

Your home country. Your memories.

Your dreams, your hopes, the smell of your apartment, the laughter of your uncles, your coworkers, the sound of a rooster at the crack of dawn.

Leaving our beloved Gaza.

Feelings of loss have come in all forms in recent weeks. From losing your business, your home, your loved ones, to losing your country, for which you abandoned the safe life of the "West," all for our beloved Gaza.

"Why would you ever come back here? Are you crazy?"

Everyone asks.

But there's something about the air here.

This is something that many cannot and will not understand or feel.

It is October, autumn is here, winter is on the horizon, it's 9 pm on a Thursday night. You make your way back from a hard day's work in the city to retreat to your family home.

The car window is open as the first whiff of wind strikes your nostrils. You inhale deeply and an indescribable relief consumes your entire being.

You have entered the town of Beit Hanoun. That smell, that feeling that lives eternally inside us, the same feeling for which we endure all the hardships of life in Gaza.

This is what many can't feel.

Our beloved Gaza.

Waking up on the first day after leaving Gaza, it is strange to feel the absence of war. Suddenly, there is no fear of losing your life in an airstrike.

It's a feeling of safety that intrudes like a stranger from the past.

There is running water here. There are toilets that flush. There's safe water to drink.

It's a strange life, one that has been entirely absent for the past few weeks. Normal life to any free soul has become a luxury to us.

The shock and trauma of the war worms its way into our heads at night. We sleep, but waking up in the middle of night from nightmares of the war, you ponder the misery.

You cry a little.

Questions begin to creep in.

Why does this happen to us? Are we not humans?

Is our life of less value?

No one seems to have an answer.

You are filled with rage at seeing your humanity taken from you.

You think about the worst place a human can reach, when your humanity has been robbed from you, when you're deprived of your dignity, when some people look the world straight in the eye on TV and tell us "you're all terrorists," that we deserve this somehow.

This hurts more than the pain of the actual war, to be dehumanized to a point where your entire existence becomes meaningless and the value of your life nonexistent.

Helpless, beaten, exhausted, and scared, even after leaving the war and our beloved Gaza, being Palestinian doesn't end.

My dear and beloved Gaza.

To you I write. I left you, with a bag on my shoulder. I weep at losing you.

A part of myself will forever be empty without you. My body may not be there, but my soul, my heart, everything that makes me human, stays etched in your beautiful and rugged concrete landscape.

No more stunning sunsets and walks on the beach. No more falafel from Zahran. No more Thursday nights with our families.

It's goodbye for now.

I hope to see you again, my beloved Gaza.

Originally published Nov. 23 by the Electronic Intifada.

Mahmoud Nasser is a photographer and writer.



From top to bottom: People making their way to Egypt on the last crossing of the day, Nov. 12; Palestinian border police stamping passports, Nov. 12; taxi driver takes us to the Rafah border crossing on our first attempt to leave, Nov. 10; a horse-drawn cart delivers people and luggage to the Rafah crossing Nov. 10.

There is an acute fuel shortage in Gaza so few cars are still running.



One of many homes in Kibbutz Be'eri that appear to have been shelled with heavy weapons.

Oct. 7 Testimony

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While being held by the Hamas gunmen, Porat recalled, “They did not abuse us. We were treated very humanely ... No one treated us violently.”

She added, “The objective was to kidnap us to Gaza, not to murder us.”

According to *Haaretz*, the army was only able to restore control over Be'eri after admittedly “shelling” the homes of Israelis who had been taken captive. “The price was terrible: at least 112 Be'eri residents were killed,” the paper chronicled. “Others were kidnapped. Yesterday, 11 days after the massacre, the bodies of a mother and her son were discovered in one of the destroyed houses. It is believed that more bodies are still lying in the rubble.”

Much of the shelling in Be'eri was carried out by Israeli tank crews. As a reporter for the Israeli Foreign Ministry-sponsored outlet i24 noted during a visit to Be'eri, “Small and quaint homes [were] bombarded or destroyed,” and “well-maintained lawns [were] ripped up by the tracks of an armored vehicle, perhaps a tank.”

Apache attack helicopters also figured heavily in the Israeli military's response on Oct. 7. Pilots have told Israeli media they scrambled to the battlefield without any intelligence, unable to differentiate between Hamas fighters and Israeli noncombatants, and yet determined to “empty the belly” of their war machines. “I find myself in a dilemma as to what to shoot at, because there are so many of them,” one Apache pilot commented.

Video filmed by uniformed Hamas gunmen makes it clear they intentionally shot many Israelis with Kalashnikov rifles on Oct. 7. However, the Israeli government has not been content to rely on verified video evidence. Instead, it continues to push discredited claims of “beheaded babies” while distributing photographs of

“bodies burned beyond recognition” to insist that militants sadistically immolated their captives, and even raped some before torching them alive.

The objective behind Tel Aviv's atrocity exhibition is clear: to paint Hamas as “worse than ISIS” while cultivating support for the Israeli army's ongoing bombardment of the Gaza Strip, which has left over 7,000 dead, including at least 2,500 children at the time of this writing. While hundreds of wounded children in Gaza have been treated for what a surgeon described as “fourth-degree burns” caused by novel weapons, the Western media's focus remains trained on Israeli citizens supposedly “burned alive” on Oct. 7.

Yet the mounting evidence of friendly fire orders handed down by Israeli army commanders strongly suggests that at least some of the most jarring images of charred Israeli corpses, Israeli homes reduced to rubble and burned out hulks of vehicles presented to Western media were, in fact, the handiwork of tank crews and helicopter pilots blanketing Israeli territory with shells, cannon fire and Hellfire missiles.

Indeed, it appears that on Oct. 7, Israel's military resorted to the same tactics it has employed against civilians in Gaza, driving up the death toll of its own citizens with the indiscriminate use of heavy weapons.

Israel Bombs Its Own Base, Nerve Center of the Gaza Siege

Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) launched Operation Al-Aqsa Flood at 6 am on Oct. 7, quickly overwhelming the military bases from which Israel maintains its siege of the Gaza Strip. Chief among the objectives outlined by Hamas and PIJ was the release of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel, including as many as 700 children passing through the system each year, along with 1,264 Palestinians

currently being held without charges.

The 2011 swap for Gilad Shalit, an Israeli soldier captured five years prior and released in exchange for 1,027 prisoners, provided clear inspiration for Al-Aqsa Flood. By storming military bases and kibbutzes, the Palestinian militants aimed to capture as many Israeli soldiers and civilians as possible, and bring them back to Gaza alive.

The lighting assault immediately overwhelmed Israel's Gaza Division. Video recorded from GoPro cameras mounted on the helmets of Palestinian fighters shows Israeli soldiers cut down in rapid succession, many still dressed in underwear and caught off guard. At least 340 active soldiers and intelligence officers were killed on Oct. 7, accounting for close to 50% of confirmed Israeli deaths. The casualties included high-ranking officers like Col. Jonathan Steinberg, the commander of Israel's Nahal Brigade. (Many first responders and armed Israeli civilians were also killed.)

The Erez Crossing is the home of a massive military and Coordination of Government Activities in the [Occupied] Territories (COGAT) facility that functions as the nerve center of Israel's siege on Gaza. When it was overrun by Palestinian fighters on Oct. 7 with droves of army bureaucrats inside, the Israeli military flew into a panic.

According to *Haaretz*, the commander of the Gaza Division, Brig. Gen. Avi Rosenfeld, “entrenched himself in the division's subterranean war room together with a handful of male and female soldiers, trying desperately to rescue and organize the sector under attack. Many of the soldiers, most of them not combat personnel, were killed or wounded outside. The division was compelled to request an aerial strike against the [Erez Crossing] base itself in order to repulse the terrorists.”

Video released by Israel's COGAT 10 days after the battle—and the Israeli airstrike—shows severe structural damage to the roof of the Erez Crossing facility.

Israeli Apache Helicopters Attack Inside Israel

By 10:30 am, according to an account the military gave to the Israeli news outlet Mako, “Most of the [Palestinian] forces from the original invasion wave had already left the area for Gaza.” But with the rapid collapse of the Israeli military's Gaza Division, looters, common onlookers and low-level guerrillas not necessarily under the command of Hamas flowed freely into Israel.

By this point, Israel's two Apache helicopter squadrons had eight choppers in the air, “and there was almost no intelligence to help make fateful decisions,” Mako reported. The squadrons did not reach full strength until noon.

As the wave of infiltrations from Gaza drove chaos on the ground, discombobulated Israeli pilots unleashed a frenzy of missile and machine-gun salvos: “The Apache pilots testify that they fired a huge amount of munitions, emptied the ‘belly of the helicopter’ in minutes, flew to re-arm and returned to the air, again

and again. But it didn't help and they understand it,” Mako reported.

The Apache helicopters appear to have focused on vehicles streaming back into Gaza from the Nova electronic music festival and nearby kibbutzes, attacking cars with apparent knowledge that Israeli captives could be inside. They also fired on unarmed people exiting cars or walking on foot through the fields on the periphery of Gaza.

In an interview with Israel's Mako news outlet, one Apache pilot reflected on the tortuous dilemma of whether to shoot at people and cars returning to Gaza. He knew that many of those vehicles may have contained Israeli captives. But he chose to open fire anyway. “I choose targets like that,” the pilot reflected, “where I tell myself that the chance that I am shooting here on hostages as well is low.” However, he admitted that his judgment “was not 100%.”

“I understand that we have to shoot here and quickly,” the commander of the Apache unit, Lt. Col. E., told Mako in a separate report. “Shooting at people in our territory—this is something I never thought I would do.”

Lt. Col. A., a reserve pilot in the same unit, described a fog of confusion: “I find myself in a dilemma as to what to shoot at, because there are so many of them.”

A report on the Apache squadrons by the Israeli outlet Yedioth Aharanoth noted that “the pilots realized that there was tremendous difficulty in distinguishing within the occupied outposts and settlements who was a terrorist and who was a soldier or civilian. ... The rate of fire against the thousands of terrorists was tremendous at first, and only at a certain point did the pilots begin to slow down the attacks and carefully select the targets.”

A squadron commander explained to Mako how he nearly attacked the home of an Israeli family occupied by Hamas militants, and wound up firing next to it with cannon rounds. “Our forces hadn't had time to reach this settlement yet,” the pilot recalled, “and I've already run out of missiles there, which is the more accurate weaponry.”

With the family inside a fortified bomb shelter, the pilot “decided to shoot a cannon 30 meters from this house, a very difficult decision. I shoot so that if they are currently there, they will hear the bombs inside the house, that they understand that it is known they are there, and with the hope that they will leave that house. I am also telling you the truth, it crossed my mind that I was shooting at the house.”

Ultimately, the Israeli helicopter pilots blamed clever Hamas tactics for their inability to distinguish between the armed militants and Israeli noncombatants. “The Hamas army, it turns out, deliberately made it difficult for the helicopter pilots and the operators of the UAVs,” Yedioth Aharanoth claimed.

According to the Israeli paper, “it became clear that the invading forces were asked in the last briefings to walk slowly into the settlements and outposts or within them, and under no circumstances to run, in order to make the pilots think

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Oct. 7 Testimony

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they were Israelis. This deception worked for a considerable time, until the Apache pilots realized that they had to skip all the restrictions. It was only around 9:00 a.m. that some of them began to spray the terrorists with the cannons on their own, without authorization from superiors.”

And so, without any intelligence or ability to distinguish between Palestinian and Israeli, the pilots let loose a fury of cannon and missile fire onto Israeli areas below.

Israeli Military ‘Eliminated Everyone, Including the Hostages’

Photos of the aftermath of the fighting inside kibbutzes like Be’eri—and of the Israeli bombardment of these communities—show rubble and charred homes that resemble the aftermath of Israeli tank and artillery attacks inside Gaza. As Tuval Escapa, the security coordinator at Kibbutz Be’eri, told *Haaretz*, Israeli army commanders had ordered the “shelling [of] houses on their occupants in order to eliminate the terrorists along with the hostages.”

Yasmin Porat, an attendee of the Nova music festival who fled into Kibbutz Be’eri, told Israeli Radio that when Israeli special forces arrived during a hostage standoff, “They eliminated everyone, including the hostages because there was very, very heavy crossfire.”

“After insane crossfire,” Porat continued, “two tank shells were shot into the house. It’s a small kibbutz house, nothing big.”

A video posted by the Telegram account of Israel’s South Responders shows the bodies of Israelis discovered below the rubble of a home destroyed by a powerful explosive blast—likely a tank shell. The right-wing *New York Post* ran a report on a similar incident about a boy’s body found scorched beneath the ruins of his home in Be’eri.

The phenomenon of charred corpses whose hands and ankles had been tied, and who were found in groups beneath the rubble of destroyed homes, also raises questions about “friendly” tank fire.

Yasmin Porat, the hostage who survived a standoff at Be’eri, described how Hamas militants tied her partner’s hands behind his back. After one militant commander surrendered, using her as a human shield to ensure his safety, she saw her partner lying on the ground, still alive. She stated that Israeli security forces “undoubtedly” killed him and the other hostages as they opened fire on the remaining militants inside, including with tank shells.

Israeli security forces also opened fire on fleeing Israelis whom they mistook for Hamas gunmen. A resident of Ashkelon named Danielle Rachiel described nearly being killed after escaping from the Nova music festival when it was attacked by militants from Gaza. “As we reached the roundabout [at a kibbutz], we saw Israeli security forces!” Rachiel recalled. “We held our heads down [because] we automatically knew they’d be suspicious of us, in a small beat-up car ... from the same



A car full of charred corpses at the entrance of Kibbutz Be’eri.

direction the terrorists were coming from. Our forces began shooting at us!”

“When our forces fired at us, our windows shattered,” she continued. It was only when they shouted in Hebrew, “We’re Israelis!” that the shooting stopped, and they were taken to safety.

Some Israelis were not as lucky as Rachiel. Adi Ohana was shot dead by Israeli police near his home after being mistaken for a Palestinian guerrilla. “An innocent man was killed in the most negligent way possible,” his niece complained. Israeli media is now filling up with reports of the military gunning down fellow Israelis, even as they were defending their homes from Palestinian gunmen.

Did ‘Hamas Atrocity’ Photos Depict Dead Hamas Fighters?

Among the most gruesome videos of the aftermath of Oct. 7, also published on the Telegram account of South Responders, is one showing a car full of charred corpses (above) at the entrance of Kibbutz Be’eri. The Israeli government has portrayed these casualties as Israeli victims of sadistic Hamas violence. However, the melted steel body and collapsed roof of the car, and the comprehensively scorched corpses inside, evidence a direct hit from a Hellfire missile.

It is also possible that the male occupants of the car were Hamas activists who had streamed in after the fences were breached. They may have also been returning to Gaza with Israeli captives inside their car.

Israel’s U.N. ambassador, Gilad Erdan, appears to have promoted photos showing dead Hamas fighters during his Oct. 26 tirade at the United Nations. Erdan gesticulated angrily at the podium, bellowing that “we are fighting animals” before whipping out a paper displaying a QR code captioned, “Scan to see Hamas’ atrocities.”

When I scanned the code that day at noon, I found around eight grisly images of burned bodies and blackened body parts. One showed a pile of completely charred male corpses piled into a dumpster. Would Israeli rescuers and medics have disposed of dead Jewish Israelis in such a fashion?

All Israelis killed on Oct. 7 appear to have been collected in individual body bags and transported to morgues. Meanwhile, numerous videos recorded by Israelis showed them defiling the corpses of Hamas gunmen killed by security forces—stripping them naked, urinating on them, and mutilating their bodies. Throwing their bodies in a dumpster would seem to be a part of the de facto policy of corpse abuse.

Just over 12 hours after Ambassador Erdan promoted the supposed Hamas atrocity photos at the United Nations, the Google drive file contained only one brief video. Among the mysteriously disappeared photos was the image of the dumpster filled with burned bodies. Had it been deleted because it showed Hamas fighters torched by a Hellfire missile, and not Israelis “burned to death” by Hamas?

Destruction Reminiscent of Israeli Attacks on Gaza

Some rescuers who arrived at sites of carnage in southern Israel after Oct. 7 said they had never seen such destruction. For those who have borne witness to Israel’s bombardment of the Gaza Strip, however, the images of bombed-out homes and burned cars should have been familiar.

While reporting on Israel’s 51-day assault on Gaza in 2014, I came across a destroyed vehicle in central Gaza City belonging to a young taxi driver named Fadel Alawan who had been assassinated by an Israeli drone after he unwittingly dropped a wounded Hamas fighter off at

a nearby hospital. Inside the car, the remains of Alawan’s sandal could still be seen melted into the gas pedal.

By the afternoon of Oct. 7, placid settlements and desert roads across southern Israel were charred and lined with bombed-out cars that looked much like Alawan’s. Were the lightly-armed Hamas fighters actually capable of exacting destruction on such a comprehensive scale?

Israel’s Military Kills Israeli Captives Inside Gaza

Inside Gaza, where some 200 Israeli citizens are held hostage, there is little doubt about who is killing the captives. On Oct. 26, the Hamas armed wing known as the Al-Qassam Brigades announced that Israel had killed “almost 50 captives” in missile strikes.

If Israel’s military had intentionally targeted areas where it knew the captives were held, its actions would have been consistent with Israel’s Hannibal Directive. The military procedure was established in 1986 following the Jibril Agreement, a deal in which Israel traded 1,150 Palestinian prisoners for three Israeli soldiers. Following heavy political backlash, the Israeli military drafted a secret field order to prevent future kidnappings. The proposed operation drew its name from the Carthaginian general who chose to poison himself rather than be held captive by the enemy.

The last confirmed application of the Hannibal Directive took place on Aug. 1, 2014, in Rafah, Gaza, when Hamas fighters captured an Israeli officer, Lt. Hadar Goldin, prompting the military to unleash more than 2,000 bombs, missiles and shells on the area, killing the soldier along with over 100 Palestinian civilians.

Whether or not Israel is intentionally killing its captive citizens in Gaza, it has proven strangely allergic to their immediate release. On Oct. 22, after refusing an offer from Hamas to release 50 hostages in exchange for fuel, Israel rejected an offer from Hamas to free Yocheved Lifshitz, an 85-year-old Israeli peace activist, and her 79-year-old friend, Nurit Cooper.

When Israel agreed to their release a day later, a video showed Lifshitz clasping hands with a Hamas militant and intoning “Shalom” to him as he escorted her out of Gaza. During a press conference that day, she recounted the humane treatment she received from her captors.

The spectacle of Lifshitz’s release was treated as a propaganda disaster by the Israeli government’s spinmeisters, with officials grumbling that allowing her to speak publicly was a grave “mistake.”

The editor-in-chief of The Grayzone, Max Blumenthal is an award-winning journalist and the author of several books, including best-selling Republican Gomorrah, Goliath, The Fifty-One Day War, and The Management of Savagery. He has produced print articles for an array of publications, many video reports, and several documentaries, including Killing Gaza. Blumenthal founded The Grayzone in 2015 to shine a journalistic light on America’s state of perpetual war and its dangerous domestic repercussions.

'The Girl Who Did Nothing'

The story of Palestinian child prisoner Dima Ismail al-Wawi

Starting on Nov. 24, a prisoner swap between the Palestinian resistance and Israel began in stages. On Nov. 24, 39 Palestinian prisoners were released. More prisoners were freed on the days following.

These are stories of Palestinian prisoners included in Ramzy Baroud's volume These Chains Will Be Broken: Palestinian Stories of Struggle and Defiance in Israeli Prisons.—the Palestine Chronicle Staff

By Ramzy Baroud

Dima Ismail Rashid al-Wawi was born on Nov. 20, 2003, in the town of Halhul, north of Al-Khalil (Hebron) in the occupied West Bank. She is the youngest of six sisters and three brothers. Her family earns its income mostly from farming a small piece of land located on the outskirts of the town.

Halhul has been a constant target for Israeli army raids, as its residents have protested against the confiscation of much of their land to support the expansion of the illegal Jewish settlement of Karmeit Tzur. Since 2000, the Israeli military has confiscated about 1,500 dunums of land belonging to Halhul, which is subject to routine closures imposed by the Israeli army.

Halhul is almost entirely suffocated. While the illegal settlement blocks the residents' movement north, an Israeli military base and "Jewish-only" bypass roads isolate the town from all other directions. With military checkpoints and iron gates, the residents of Halhul are trapped and isolated from their natural surroundings.

Dima has been witness to much of the violence and injustice meted out against her town, although her family tried to protect her and her siblings. On Feb. 9, 2016, Dima was "arrested" by an armed, illegal Jewish settler who claimed that the 12-year-old girl was trying to stab him. After weeks of interrogation by the Israeli army, a military court sentenced her to four-and-a-half months in prison.

Here is her story.

I had a terrible headache. I did not know what to do. One of my sisters said: 'Mom is working in the field; go and see if she will take you to the clinic.' I did not know exactly where our land was. We rarely went there; only Mom, Dad, and my older siblings did. The younger kids, like me, stayed home, because the Jewish settlers always harassed my family and my parents wanted us to be safe. All I knew is that our land was located near the Jewish settlement. I thought if I reached the settlement first, I could easily find my mom.

Our piece of land is small. It used to be bigger, but the Jewish settlement kept growing in size and kept eating at the land around it, land that belonged not only to Halhul, but to Beit Ummar as well.

When I got close to the settlement, I could not find my mom or any of my family. I was desperate. I started walking hurriedly, at times even running, while looking everywhere. Suddenly an armed man charged at me. He pushed me to the ground and pointed a gun at me. He then ordered me to lie face down, stepped on my back and tied my hands together. After that, he blindfolded me. I was crying really hard, but no one could hear me. Later, a group of Israeli soldiers arrived and threw me into the back of an army vehicle.

I was only 12 years old when this happened. They accused me of trying to stab a settler. It is a complete lie. The settler made that up to justify the way he treated me. They placed me in a very dark room. It was the first time in my life that I slept away from my mom and my family. I was very scared. I thought to myself: 'What if they keep me in prison my whole life?' I felt so bad for my mom. She did not know where I was. She was running all over the area calling my name.

They transferred me to HaSharon Prison. There were screams and loud noises coming from everywhere. The Israeli officer who interrogated me told

I was afraid. I kept repeating: 'Ma'miltish ish'—'I didn't do anything'. But they kept asking, swearing at me and yelling in my face, from morning until the evening hours. Before they left, they tied me to a chair that did not even have legs.

me that I would be imprisoned for a long time. It was so shocked to hear that. I never thought I would endure such an experience. I had heard of this happening to other kids, but I had no idea that it would happen to me, too. I did not know that the occupation was so criminal and so unfair to this extent. But I told myself: 'Dima, you have to be strong and face your reality the way it is.'

Then, seven large officers entered the room and began interrogating me all at the same time. I was afraid. I kept repeating: 'Ma'miltish ish'—'I didn't do anything.' But they kept asking, swearing at me and yelling in my face, from morning until the evening hours. Before they left, they tied me to a chair that did not even have legs. I tried so hard to find a comfortable position. It was impossible. I stayed that way until after midnight.

Days passed without my being able to see my family. Only a long time later, my mom was allowed to see me. I was missing my dad, my brothers and my sisters, but just seeing my mother's beautiful face made me happy. She held me close to her the whole time. Her embrace is always so warm. But,



Dima al-Wawi greeted by her father Ismail, left, and mother Sabha, right, after her release.

then, she had to leave. When she did, I felt that my soul and my heart left with her.

I was tried before a military court in the Ofer Prison. I kept telling them that all the accusations were a lie. However, the judge did not listen to me and sentenced me to four-and-a-half months in prison. Back at HaSharon Prison, they placed me with a child around my age. Her name is Malik Salman. We were in the same prison with all the Israeli women criminals. Later, they moved us to the part of the prison where the Palestinian women were held.

I spent a lot of time talking to the prisoners. They were women who were recovering from wounds and others who

I served two-and-a-half months of my sentence. The night I was released, an Israeli interrogator summoned me to a room and told me that I would be receiving a life term in prison. I collapsed and began crying, but then they released me the next day. I had no idea what was happening most of the time. In the courts, they spoke Hebrew. They yelled and swore at me all the time. All I knew was that I was in prison for something I did not do.

When I finally knew that I would be released, I tried to recall everything that had happened, to make sense of that terrifying experience. I counted the minutes, even the seconds, separating me from being with my family. At last, soldiers came, handcuffed and shackled me and took me to the bosta. But, instead of dropping me in Halhul, they left me at a military checkpoint in Tulkarm. They thought no one would care to greet me there, but hundreds of people turned out. They came from Halhul, Tulkarm and all over the West Bank. They all hugged me, kissed me, held me on their shoulders and chanted my name and for Palestinian freedom. When I finally got to see my family, I embraced my mom and dad at once. They kissed me all over. I was so happy to be free again, but I could not stop thinking of all the women who were still in prison. They had treated me as though they were all my mothers.

After I was released, on April 26, 2016, I returned to the Halhul Martyrs School. It was wonderful to be back, and I cannot wait to finish my education and become a journalist, carrying the message of the prisoners and their suffering to the world. I want to show the world how the children of Palestine are mistreated every day by the occupation.

Finally, I would like to send a simple message to the free peoples of this world. Please keep Palestine in your heart. Think of the children who are oppressed and who will continue to be oppressed until this unjust occupation ends.

Ramzy Baroud is a U.S.-Palestinian journalist, media consultant, an author, internationally-syndicated columnist, editor of Palestine Chronicle, former managing editor of the London-based Middle East Eye, former editor-in-chief of The Brunei Times and former deputy managing editor of Al Jazeera online.

'Love Behind Bars'

The story of Palestinian prisoner Nael al-Barghouti

The youngest sister of the Palestinian longest-serving prisoner, Hanan al-Barghouti, was released in the ongoing prisoner swap between Israel and the Palestinian resistance.

Her brother Nael's story was included in Ramzy Baroud's volume These Chains Will Be Broken: Palestinian Stories of Struggle and Defiance in Israeli Prisons.

By Ramzy Baroud

Nael Saleh al-Barghouti was born on Oct. 24, 1957, in the village of Kobar, north of Ramallah in the West Bank. His five-member family includes his parents, his older brother, Omar, and his younger sister, Hanan. His father is Saleh al-Barghouti, a kindly man with strong religious beliefs, and his mother is a famed Palestinian poetess known as "Farha." They subsisted on farming, a tradition that runs deep in their family, forming an unbreakable bond between them and their land.

Nael was a student activist who took part in many protests against the Israeli occupation. He was arrested by Israeli soldiers from his family home in Kobar on April 4, 1978. After a long and harsh interrogation, he was sentenced to 112 years in prison for allegedly killing an Israeli occupation officer north of Ramallah. His brother, Omar, was also arrested, along with his cousin, Fakhri. Omar spent 26 years in prison, while Nael spent 34 years. Nael was released in a prisoner exchange between the Palestinian resistance and Israel in 2011.

Both brothers were detained, once more, shortly after their release.

Iman Nimr Sarhan Nafi' was born in 1964 in the village of Ni'lin before her family moved to the city of Ramallah, six years later. Like Nael's family, the Nafi's are also farmers. Iman studied nursing and joined a local hospital where she interacted with a mixed group of people, Palestinians and international medical staff. She describes her life in that period as "beautiful," especially as she drove her own car and had an exciting social life.

But such relative contentment was often interrupted by the Israeli occupation. Israeli soldiers raided the Nafi' family home many times, arresting and re-arresting Iman's brother. Happiness completely eluded Iman when her brother was shot in front of her during a protest in the city of Ramallah. While her political consciousness was formed at an early age, the wounding of her brother while peacefully protesting the Israeli occupation turned her life upside down.

Iman would soon join her people's resistance against Israeli occupation.

Here is their story, narrated by Iman Nafi'.

I was only 17 years old when, in 1981, I was first arrested by the Israeli army. But I was in prison for only a short period of time, since I was merely accused of organizing protests in my school, demanding freedom from Israel. Six years later, the stakes were much higher. On Nov. 25, 1987, the soldiers came for me. They arrested me and, later, they arrested my mother and my brother. My mother, especially, suffered so much in jail since she was very ill.

I was held in Al-Maskobieh Detention Center in Jerusalem, where I was subjected to very harsh interrogation as I was accused of planning to carry out an attack against an Israeli target in Yafa Street in Jerusalem. I remained strong despite the intense pressures, until I heard my mother's voice coming from one of the adjacent interrogation rooms. I tried to force my way through the soldiers while yelling: "My mother has nothing to do with this!"

They kept us both in one cell that was filled with rodents and cockroaches. My mother was very ill. Her high blood pressure required constant medical attention, none of which she received during her unfair imprisonment. She had difficulty in



Nael al-Barghouti with picture of himself when arrested

breathing, before she collapsed. I began screaming like a crazy person. Just seeing my poor mom lying on the dirty floor, unconscious, made me lose my mind. A while later, a soldier came with one of her blood pressure pills which they had confiscated. She was revived, but remained with me in the same dirty cell.

My mother was eventually released, but I was sentenced to fifteen-and-a-half years in prison. It hardly helped that the list of charges included an assault on a female prison guard. I needed to defend myself, as she had assaulted me and physically abused me while in detention. I spent 10 of those years in prison and was released in 1997. Since then, I have dedicated my life to defending the rights of prisoners through my work with the Prisoners Club. It would be years before I met, fell in love with, and married Nael. Even though we did not live together for a long time, I feel as if he has been a part of me for my entire life.

Like me, Nael was only a high school

student when he was arrested. But, unlike me, his accusation was far more serious. In 1978, they charged him with the killing of an Israeli occupation soldier. He had spent more time in Israeli prisons than any other Palestinian prisoner. Although he was released in a prisoner exchange in 2011 after spending 34 uninterrupted years in Israeli jails, he was arrested again, along with 70 other freed prisoners. The Israeli government has decided to reinstate the 117 years sentence he was serving before they freed him. Every day, I pray for his freedom.

Two weeks after Nael was released, we began the wedding preparations, to be fully betrothed two months later. He was so desperate to claim a sense of normalcy in his life; he returned to farming his land in the village of Kobar near Ramallah, as soon as he was free. Sadly, the soldiers came back for him before he harvested what he had sown.

I was so happy to be married to Nael. He, too, was thrilled. We both found love, and our life, for once, seemed to get back on track. Great festivities ensued. It was major news all over Palestine. Many freed prisoners with their families had joined our happy family in a traditional wedding that I would never forget. The Barghouti and Abu Haniyeh Nafi' clans were united

symbolic. It meant that my family was invested in Nael as a man, regardless of money or wealth. His reputation as a leader in our struggle for freedom was more than enough.

Then, Nael stood up and uttered these words:

"As a freed prisoner, I consider my marriage to another freed prisoner a victory against prison, a challenge to those who deprived us from our freedom, and a triumph of the spirit of faith and hope. This joyous occasion is only the first step in unlocking the door of the life that still lies ahead of us. They denied us freedom, but didn't kill our determination to break our chains. Now, I can say that Iman and I will embark on a new journey, as we are about to start yet another family among this great nation. We pray to God that He completes our happiness and joy, and heals our wounds that have bled for too many years, leaving deep memories that will live with us forever. But these memories shall also serve as lessons that will strengthen our resolve to continue our march for freedom."

His passion and his strength were so palpable. He moved people. He moved me. I was immensely proud of him and excited about our life together.

Nael did not stop there. He spoke about those who died while he was in prison. He remembered his mother and his father. He spoke about our people in Gaza, their legendary struggle in their larger prison. He spoke about Palestinians in the diaspora and the need to strengthen our collective identity through celebrating our memories and our culture. "One day, all of us Palestinians shall be united together and that is the true celebration," he said. People nodded in agreement. Lots of tears fell on that day. Lots of hugs and kisses.

Happiness was real. I felt it.

Nael is a Palestinian hero. I have known of his heroism, his steadfastness and leadership in prison for many years. He is a special person. He belongs to a revolutionary school that is true and authentic and comes from the land itself. When he came asking for my hand, I told my family that I agree without any hesitation. In him I saw a faithful life partner.

After we officiated the marriage, I thanked God for this precious gift. I was determined to build a happy family together and do my best to compensate Nael for the 34 years he spent in prison. I knew it would not be easy, but our love for each other, for Palestine and our faith in God would overcome all obstacles.

We lived together for 31 months before the Israeli army came to our house and re-arrested him. They gave no reason whatsoever as to why they reneged on the prisoner exchange agreement. He has been back in prison for years, and every hour of every day I think of him, of his suffering in prison and of the life that still awaits us.

From prison, he wrote this: "When a nation seeks its freedom, it will always prevail. The occupation will never succeed in planting defeat in our hearts, because we summon our courage from our faith in God and from the legacies of all the nations that sought and achieved their freedom and dignity."

While a Fire Rages in Gaza, the West Bank Smolders

Surge in Israeli killings, administrative detention, and settler violence

By Omar Shakir

While global attention is focused on Israel and Gaza, Israeli authorities are tightening their repression in the West Bank and Israeli settler attacks on Palestinians are surging. That repression was already at a peak before the Oct. 7 Hamas-led attack that killed some 1200 people, mostly civilians, in Israel, but it has gotten much worse since.

Between Jan. 1 and Oct. 6, Israeli security forces killed more Palestinians in the West Bank—192, including 40 children—than in any other year since 2005, when the United Nations began systematically recording fatalities. Since Oct. 7, according to the United Nations, they

have killed another 201 Palestinians, including 52 children; meaning they have killed more Palestinians in the West Bank in the last six weeks than in any entire year since 2005. Palestinians have killed 24 Israeli civilians and 4 security force members in 2023 in the West Bank as of Nov. 16, the highest number in more than 15 years.

Settlers have killed 15 Palestinians as of Nov. 17. During the first eight months of 2023, settler violence soared to its highest level since the United Nations began recording this data in 2006; three incidents per day on average, up from two in 2022 and one in 2021. That rate has almost doubled since Oct. 7.

As of Oct. 1, Israel held 1,264 Palestinians in administrative detention without trial or charge based on secret information, the highest number in more than 30 years, according to the Israeli human rights organization HaMoked. By Nov. 1, that number had jumped to 2,070, not including 105 “unlawful combatants” the Israeli military says it is detaining.

During 2022 and the first eight months of 2023, 1,105 Palestinians, including



Since the war between Israel and Hamas erupted on Oct. 7, at least 201 Palestinians, including 52 children have been killed in the West Bank.

four entire communities, were forced to leave their homes. Palestinians cited settler violence and prevention of access to grazing lands as the primary reason for their displacement. Nearly the same number—1,014 people—have been displaced since Oct. 7. Settlers have attacked 92 Palestinian communities during this pe-

riod, the Israeli human rights group Yesh Din found. Impunity fuels settler violence, which, as the Israeli human rights group B’Tselem has reported, “serves as a major informal tool at the hands of the state to take over more and more West Bank land.”

These abuses are a part of Israeli authorities’ crimes against humanity of apartheid and persecution, as documented by Human Rights Watch and other Israeli, Palestinian, and international human rights organizations. The roots of the violence in Israel-Palestine are multiple and run deep; ending the violence requires

Rescued from Beneath Gaza’s Rubble

By Sewar Elejla

In Gaza, a family’s world can be crushed in an instant.

On Oct. 10, Israeli warplanes attacked the home of the Ahmed family.

Israa Ahmed managed to survive. She was trapped under rubble for 13 hours before being rescued.

“I tasted death,” Israa said.

“My mother, brother and my nephew—a 5-year-old child—have been killed. My father and one of my other brothers were at the mosque. When they returned, the house was reduced to rubble.”

Israa is a doctor at Nasser hospital in Khan Younis, southern Gaza.

Israa’s mother was a school principal. Her late brother Bilal was a math teacher.

They are among the many teachers who have been killed during the current war.

Israa described her terrifying experience.

“Suddenly, everything collapsed beneath me. The ground shook, and things fell from the ceiling. I could not understand what was happening. Maybe a bomb mistakenly hit our house. Why is everything falling apart? Why is there so much gunpowder and dust filling my lungs? Yes, we’re in a war, but I was reassured that I wouldn’t die. I don’t know where this false sense of security came from.”

While beneath the rubble, Israa struggled to use her phone.

She could not see the numbers on the screen, so she tried face recognition. Covered in rubble, her face proved unrecognizable.

After a number of unsuccessful attempts to use her phone, she was locked out of it.



Israa Ahmed.

In an excruciatingly tight space, gasping for breath, Israa began to lose hope. She had no fractures or bleeding yet she feared that she would die by suffocation.

“I did not expect I would survive,” she said. “I recited the shahada [declaration of faith] and started to pray for forgiveness and a peaceful departure.”

Eventually, she heard a voice calling “Anyone here? Anybody alive?”

“I’m here,” Israa cried out.

“Al-Qahtani—the paramedic who came to the rescue—shouted, ‘You are safe. We will get you out.’ He told me his name. I will save his name in my memory and prayers forever.”

A small opening was made, giving Israa some air. Yet it also meant that the weight of the debris on her arms and legs intensified.

“My legs,” she shouted. “My arms. I did

not want to have to live without limbs.”

Finally, she succeeded in pulling her body out through the opening. She could not see anything but she could hear that the people surrounding her were praising God for her rescue.

With Gaza under relentless Israeli bombardment until the truce that has now come into effect, Israa has not yet had any space to grieve.

“We haven’t even cried yet,” she said. “We still haven’t shed tears. If the war ends and we’re still alive, I swear, we will cry. We will cry until our tears dry up.”

Her loss is incalculable.

“Our home was heaven,” she said. “We used to gather in the beautiful garden on the weekend—the grandparents, the fathers, the brothers and sisters, and the grandchildren. Now, the grandmother, a father and a grandson have been killed. The garden has disappeared, the family has been shattered and the house has been turned into a large pile of sand, stones and ash.”

Wherever she lives in the future, nothing will compensate for the destruction of her family’s home. “Any home without Mama and Bilal [her brother] would be empty,” she said. “Completely empty.”

Even though Israa has not recovered from her injuries—mainly to her forehead and arms—she has been working in a school where displaced people are sheltering.

Israa insists on fulfilling her medical oath—despite having been excused from doing so—and serving her people.

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Sewar Elejla was formerly a doctor at al-Shifa hospital in Gaza. She is now a Canada-based researcher.

As of Oct. 1, Israel held 1,264 Palestinians in administrative detention without trial or charge.

... That number jumped to 2,070, not including 105 “unlawful combatants” the Israeli military says it is detaining, by Nov. 1.

dismantling the systems of oppression that feed it, including in the West Bank.

Omar Shakir serves as the Israel and Palestine Director at Human Rights Watch, where he investigates human rights abuses in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza and has authored several major reports, including a 2021 report comprehensively documenting how Israeli authorities are committing the crimes against humanity of apartheid and persecution against millions of Palestinians. As a result of his advocacy, the Israeli government deported Omar in November 2019. Prior to his current role, he was a Bertha Fellow at the Center for Constitutional Rights, where he focused on U.S. counterterrorism policies, including legal representation of Guantanamo detainees.

Hebron

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shouting at us. Others went to the nearby cave [which the family uses] and started smashing all the furniture and contents. My family and I were in utter fear for an hour and a half. They stole our money, 10,000 Jordanian dinar (approx. USD \$15,000) I had saved from selling sheep and hoped to use to buy grain for my flock.”

Moments later, Shalaldeh said, “the settlers shouted and ordered us to leave the room. They chased us toward an area nearby and told us to stay away. I tried to talk to them, to no avail. I asked them, ‘Where do we go? This is my land, this is my house.’ They did not answer. But their screams in Hebrew did not bode well.

After walking a long distance in the darkness, Shalaldeh said, “we noticed a light from where we had lived. The settlers burned my house. Our life in Al-Qanoub ended.”

‘It Was Impossible to Convince Parents to Stay’

In the ensuing days, fear quickly spread across small Palestinian communities in Hebron’s southern region. In Umm A-Tiran, A’nizan, Maqatl Msalam, and ‘Atiriyah, a total of nine families making up more than 70 people, half of them children, began dismantling their own homes and moving their livestock to distant areas. Settlers have snuck into several homes under the cover of night, stealing sheep and assaulting residents while they slept.

Living in this violent nightmare, many more Palestinians are being forced to consider leaving their land for safety. One of them is Imad Abu Awad, from Maqatl Msalam. Although settlers from outposts like Asa’el and Havat Yehuda had violently attacked his village before, these assaults never included guns. But that has all changed since Oct. 7.

“They threw me on the stones and forced me to take off my shoes and coat,” said Abu Awad, describing his most recent encounter during an armed settler attack. “They told me, ‘If you don’t leave the area, we will kill you.’ The settlers left the place laughing and saying that soon they will take over all of this land.”

Similarly, more than 25 Palestinian families, making up about 250 people, have been displaced from Khirbet Zanuta, southwest of A-Dhahiriya. The village has been effectively besieged by settlers for years, who block residents from accessing their pastures. The residents have grown accustomed to sleeping in tents with watchful eyes, fearing that settlers may attack at any time. A 2012 Israeli High Court decision was not enough to protect the village, as settlers do not abide by any law.

On the morning of Hamas’ Oct. 7 assault, Israeli settlers attacked the residents of Zanuta, threw stones at their tents, and prevented them from leaving. While Israeli soldiers blocked the road leading to the village, the settlers smashed the fami-



Israeli soldiers speaks with a Palestinian man the Old City of Hebron in the West Bank, Jan. 14, 2018.

Photo: Wisam Hashlamoun/Flash90

lies’ solar panels. In the days afterward, the families began their exodus.

“There was total confusion; no one in the village could think straight,” said Adel a-Tal, a farmer from Zanuta. “Everyone was thinking about how to protect their children. It was impossible to convince the parents to stay in the village. There were no arguments that could be refuted. Now, the village is completely abandoned. The residents left in the hope of returning after the war ended—that is, if the settlers don’t take over the village and reside there.”

‘The Evenings Are Nightmarish’

It is not just the rural villages that have been consumed by fear. In the city of Hebron, many Palestinian neighborhoods have also been targeted by the Israeli army and settlers. These include the Tel Rumeida neighborhood—located within H2, which is controlled by the Israeli military—which has long suffered from continuous settler attacks but has seen an uptick in recent weeks.

“With the declaration of war on Oct. 7, there was a large deployment of Israeli forces in the neighborhood and in the nearby Shuhada Street,” said Imad Abu Shamsiyya, a resident of Tel Rumeida. “They closed the area and set up checkpoints, preventing all residents from entering or exiting the neighborhood, and imposed a curfew. The first week of the war was a nightmare. Life is not safe in the neighborhood.

“The army set up a post on my roof, and another one next to my house,” he continued. “Afterward, they informed us that we were allowed to leave the neighborhood between 7 to 8 a.m., and come back only between 6 to 7 p.m.. Ten families from my neighborhood decided to leave permanently; some of their family mem-

bers have cancer or kidney failure, and some have children. I do not blame them.

“Our suffering is not over,” Abu Shamsiyya went on, his face pale. “On the contrary, it begins when we reach the Itamar checkpoint, which is 70 meters from my house. They search and check our items, and we wait for a long time until we are allowed to enter. The children of the neighborhood have not gone to school since Oct. 7.”

Abu Shamsiyya added: “The evenings are nightmarish. No one can sleep because the settlers may attack us at any moment. The settlers even walk around in military uniform. About 120 families in the neighborhood are completely cut off from the outside world. It can take long hours to be allowed to take a person to the hospital or to get an ambulance. We can’t even bring a gas pipe through the checkpoint. We haven’t been able to get a permit from the Israeli Coordination and Liaison Office to enter our own house for more than 20 days.”

Many other Hebron neighborhoods are being subjected to the same curfew: Wadi al-Hussein, Jabira, Al-Ras, Ghaith, and Al-Salamiya. And as has always been the case in the city, whatever is forbidden to Palestinians is allowed for Israeli settlers.

Areej al-Jabari, a mother of five children, lives in Al-Ras neighborhood, which is also classified as H2. To the east of the house, not more than 100 meters, is a building seized by settlers. In front of the house is a road that she is now prevented from entering. When soldiers or settlers see her there, they run toward her and she runs away before they can assault her. “If the situation continues like this, what do we do?” she asked in a fearful tone.

Like all Palestinian children in the area, al-Jabari’s children are not going to school. A state of fear has taken over her

mind and her heart since Oct. 7, a day she remembers vividly.

“We woke up to the sound of loudspeakers—a curfew was announced,” she recounted. “We wondered what was going on. Soldiers were deployed everywhere, screaming, carrying their rifles. They assaulted anyone they found in the neighborhood. They were aggressive and hostile, cursing women standing at their windows and closing the doors of shops. We were shocked. I didn’t know what was going on.

“We turned on our TV and telephones and realized what had happened,” al-Jabari continued. “At that moment, I wondered whether the settlers would take revenge on us. Everything seemed different and scary. No one was on the streets. When night fell that day, I went to the window to see what was happening outside. I was surprised to find a soldier there screaming and pointing his rifle at me, ordering me to go back inside and close the window.

“As time passes, the situation is getting worse,” al-Jabari went on. “We ran out of water on the third day of the war. I sent my young sons to fill plastic bottles from the mosque near the house. Suddenly, I heard soldiers yelling. I ran to the door and found the soldiers pointing their weapons at my children. My kids ran toward me, and we entered the house and closed the door while the soldiers continued to curse us and shout at us.

“We have been at home ever since. The schools are closed, and everything is paralyzed. We live in an open prison! Food may run out soon. There is no way out. If you leave your house, you may get arrested or killed.”

Imad Abu Hawash is a Palestinian activist and researcher from Al-Tabaqa near Dura, southwest of Hebron.



'If You Don't Leave, We'll Kill You': Hundreds Flee Israeli Settler Violence in Hebron Area

Palestinian residents of Khirbet Zanuta pack their belongings and house materials as they flee their homes following a spike in Israeli settler violence Nov. 1, 2023. Photo: Oren Ziv

Seeing the Gaza war as a golden hour to fulfill their West Bank ambitions, Israeli settlers have chased out entire Palestinian communities

By Imad Abu Hawash Nov. 22, 2023

At 10 p.m. on Oct. 13, I received a phone call from Amer Abu Awad, a Palestinian resident of Khirbet Al-Radeem, a small rural community south of Hebron in the occupied West Bank. “The settlers attacked me,” he told me in a frightened voice. “Some of them were wearing army uniforms.” The assailants had come from the Israeli settler outpost of Havat Meitarim, led by Yinon Levy, who is known to the Palestinians of Al-Radeem; two months earlier, Levy had threatened another resident, forcing him and his family to leave his home.

“They assaulted me, beat my elderly father, pushed him to the ground, dragged him through the puddles, and pointed weapons at us,” Abu Awad continued, pausing to catch his breath. “They said I had to leave by morning, or my family and I will be finished.”

Early the next day, Abu Awad called me again. “I want to leave, but the roads are closed.” After hours of interventions, he managed to escape with his family of five along with his flock of sheep to the town of As-Samu, leaving behind his house, furniture, livestock barracks, and grain for the sheep. Abu Awad and his family had to carry all their belongings by foot; the Israeli army would not allow any vehicles to enter the area.

Later that night, settlers arrived in Al-Radeem with a bulldozer and demolished Abu Awad’s house and livestock barracks, destroyed his grain, and damaged his solar panels. Nothing remained except ruins.

For over a month, media attention has largely been drawn to Gaza after Israel declared war on the Strip in the wake of Hamas’ Oct. 7 assault. But many are forgetting that this declaration of war includes the West Bank, too. Since that day, Israeli settlers have teamed up with soldiers to attack Palestinian communities throughout the occupied territory; some settlers, as happened in Al-

Radeem, even wore army uniforms during their assaults.

This violent campaign is unfolding with full force in rural areas around Hebron in the southern West Bank. In multiple places, Palestinians were forced to leave their residences under the weight of settler attacks launched day and night. The settlers have burned homes, stolen sheep, blocked roads, and vandalized property. They have shot, beaten, threatened, and body searched Palestinian residents. Even the city of Hebron has not been spared from this campaign, with the Israeli army and settlers imposing a lockdown in the area known as H2, and emergency laws further extricating perpetrators from accountability.

As a result, several communities around Hebron in Area C—the two-thirds of the West Bank completely controlled by Israel, and where all Israeli settlements are located—have been completely evacuated and their lands seized by settlers. These include Al-Radeem, Khirbet Zanuta, ‘Atiriyah, Khirbet A’nizan, Maqal Msalam, and Al-Qanoub. Since Oct. 7, an estimated 400 Palestinians in the Hebron region—including more than 150 children and 100 women—have fled to escape the horrors.

Taken altogether, it appears that Israeli settlers are seeing this moment as the golden hour to eliminate Palestinians’ -but will the residents return?” Abu Awad asked repeatedly. There is no answer to his question. Right now, Palestinian life in Al-Radeem has ended. And the future does not bode well for its people.

Legalized Outposts

Not far from the Abu Awad family’s home in Al-Radeem, settlers attacked the family of Issa Abu al-Kabash. These settlers came from Asa’el, an outpost that was formally legalized under Israeli law by Benjamin Netanyahu’s government two months ago, one of 10 outposts legalized in the West Bank this year (all settlements in the occupied territory remain illegal under international law).

Asa’el’s newly acquired status appears to have emboldened its residents to intensify their assaults on Palestinians. For months, the settlers have been establishing vineyards in the area in their effort to control the land. Palestinian complaints to the Israeli authorities did not help.

On Oct. 19, settlers assaulted Abu al-Kabash and threatened to kill him if he did not leave his home; soon after, he fled with his family of 12, including six children. Since then, no Palestinian has been willing to return to the area.

The three-tiered classifications of the occupied territo-

ries, drawn up by the Oslo Accords in the 1990s, divided Palestinian land and population centers into different units, and allocated to the Palestinians in each unit a different package of rights—all of which remain vastly inferior compared to those granted to Israeli settlers living in the same areas. In Area C, the Israeli occupation regime is actively working to ensure the domination of settlers.

Despite this framework stripping Palestinians of almost all their rights and land, the settlers remained unsatisfied, and their patience wore thin. Then came Oct. 7, and with Israel’s declaration of war, the settler movement and their extreme-right supporters seized the opportunity to pursue their wildest ambitions, leading an aggressive surge against thousands of unarmed Palestinians. The impunity granted not just by the Israeli state, but by international actors, has only galvanized the settlers in their own war.

In the region of Masafer Yatta in the South Hebron Hills, the Israeli army has effectively besieged 12 Palestinian communities under the pretext that much of the area has been classified as a “firing zone.” In early 2022, Israel’s Supreme Court approved the army’s plans to expel over 1,200 Palestinian residents out of the designated zone. Since then, both military and settler violence have escalated against the villages, with the Palestinian families’ conditions becoming increasingly difficult to bear.

In the nearby village of Tuba, the night of Oct. 19 was not easy for Huda Zain Awad, 60, her daughter Dalal, and her teenage son Issa. Masked and armed Israeli settlers—hilltop youth from the Ma’on outpost—attacked their home, broke and scattered their belongings, and stole their sheep; even kitchen utensils were stolen.

The next morning, the family faced a similar attack when another group of settlers invaded their home; this time, two of the settlers were wearing army uniforms. They took Huda and her family at gunpoint, forcing them to sit in the hot sun for hours. As the settlers left, they chanted, “Next time, we will kill you.”

‘Our Life in Al-Qanoub Ended’

Palestinian residents have been powerless to confront or stave off the settler militias. On Oct. 9, more than 40 Israeli settlers attacked the community of Al-Qanoub, east of As-Sa’ir and north of Hebron. Some of the attackers were wearing masks and carried guns, while others carried batons.

Mohammed Shalalkeh, 76, and his family of 10, including five children, lived in the village for years. I have known the Shalalkeh family for a long time. They always spoke about their love of their land and their commitment to sumud, or steadfastness, in Al-Qanoub, so that settlers would not get their hands on it. But now, the family’s entire livelihood has been robbed.

“At 4 pm, settlers circled my family and began their attack by smashing the solar panels,” Shalalkeh recounted. “The settlers’ shouting as they broke into our living rooms was terrifying and caused the children to cry. We were scared, panicked, unable to move. We tried to stay away from them so that they would not harm us, so I gathered my family in a small room. It was an opportunity for the settlers. They smashed everything and left nothing untampered.”

When the settlers finally left, they stole Shalalkeh’s flock of 150 sheep, leading them toward the settlement of Metzad. Shalalkeh tried to follow them, but the settlers “pointed their weapons at me and threatened to kill me. I was in shock. The sheep were all we owned. Now they will never be returned to me. I’ve lost everything.”

Six hours later, at 10 pm, like a Hollywood movie, the settlers launched the final stage of their attack. “It was dark everywhere,” recounted Shalalkeh. “There were no lights as the solar panels that supply electricity to our house were smashed. We lit a fire, and everything was quiet.”

“Suddenly, masked settlers surrounded our house, making terrifying sounds from the trees as they approached,” he continued. “They broke into the house,

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