

Atrocities in the Promised Land

"The Insane Brutality of the State of Israel"

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Words fail; ordinary terms are inadequate to describe the horrors Israel daily perpetrates, and has perpetrated for years, against the Palestinians. The tragedy of Gaza has been described a hundred times over, as have the tragedies of 1948, of Qibya, of Sabra and Shatila, of Jenin — 60 years of atrocity perpetrated in the name of Judaism. But the horror generally falls on deaf ears in most of Israel, in the U.S. political arena, in the mainstream U.S. media. Those who are horrified — and there are many — cannot penetrate the shield of impassivity that protects the political and media elite in Israel, even more so in the U.S., and increasingly now in Canada and Europe, from seeing, from caring.

But it needs to be said now, loudly: those who devise and carry out Israeli policies have made Israel into a monster, and it has come time for all of us — all Israelis, all Jews who allow Israel to speak for them, all Americans who do nothing to end U.S. support for Israel and its murderous policies — to recognize that we stain ourselves morally by continuing to sit by while Israel carries out its atrocities against the Palestinians.

A nation that mandates the primacy of one ethnicity or religion over all others will eventually become psychologically dysfunctional. Narcissistically obsessed with its own image, it must strive to maintain its racial superiority at all costs and will inevitably come to view any resistance to this imagined superiority as an existential threat. Indeed, any other people automatically becomes an existential threat simply by virtue of its own existence. As it seeks to protect itself against phantom threats, the racist state becomes increasingly paranoid, its society closed and insular, intellectually limited. Setbacks enrage it; humiliations madden it. The state lashes out in a crazed effort, lacking any sense of proportion, to reassure itself of its strength.

The pattern played out in Nazi Germany as it sought to maintain a mythical Aryan superiority. It is playing out now in Israel. "This society no longer recognizes any boundaries, geographical or moral," wrote Israeli intellectual and anti-Zionist activist Michel Warschawski in his 2004 book *Towards an Open Tomb: The Crisis of Israeli Society*. Israel knows no limits and is lashing out as it finds that its attempt to beat the Palestinians into submission and swallow Palestine whole is being thwarted by a resilient, dignified Palestinian people who refuse to submit quietly and give up resisting Israel's arrogance.

We in the United States have become inured to tragedy inflicted by Israel, and we easily fall for the spin that automatically, by some trick of the imagination, converts

Israeli atrocities to examples of how Israel is victimized. But a military establishment that drops a 500-pound bomb on a residential apartment building in the middle of the night and

kills 14 sleeping civilians, as happened in Gaza four years ago, is not a military that operates by civilized rules.

A military establishment that drops a 500-pound bomb on a house in the middle of the night and kills a man and his wife and seven of their children, as happened in Gaza four days ago, is not the military of a moral country.

A society that can brush off as unimportant an army officer's brutal murder of a 13-year-old girl on the claim that she threatened soldiers at a military post — one of nearly 700 Palestinian children murdered by Israelis since the intifada began — is not a society with a conscience.

A government that imprisons a 15-year-old girl — one of several hundred children in Israeli detention — for the crime of pushing and running away from a male soldier trying to do a body search as she entered a mosque is not a government with any moral bearings. (This story, not the kind that ever appears in the U.S. media, was reported in the London Sunday Times. The girl was shot three times as she ran away and was convicted to 18 months in prison after she came out of a coma.)

Critics of Israel note increasingly that Israel is self-destructing, nearing a catastrophe of its own making. Israeli journalist Gideon Levy talks of a society in "moral collapse."

Michel Warschawski writes of an "Israeli madness" and "insane brutality," a "putrefaction" of civilized society, that have set Israel on a suicidal course. He foresees the end of the Zionist enterprise; Israel is a "gang of hoodlums," he says, a state "that makes a mockery of legality and of civil morality. A state run in contempt of justice loses the strength to survive."

As Warschawski notes bitterly, Israel no longer knows any moral boundaries — if it ever did. Those who continue to support Israel, who make excuses for it as it descends into corruption, have lost their moral compass.

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