

Palestine: Forty Years of Occupation

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This June will mark an anniversary that will live in infamy for the people affected by the event it commemorates following a far greater one 19 years earlier on May 14, 1948. On June 5, 1967, Israel launched its so-called "Six-Day (preemptive) War" against three of its neighboring Arab states – Egypt, Jordan and Syria – claiming it was in self-defense to avoid annihilation Israeli leaders later admitted was spurious and false cover for a large-scale long-planned, calculated war of aggression it believed it could easily win and did.

The New York Times quoted Prime Minister Menachem Begin's (1977 – 83) August, 1982 speech saying: "In June, 1967, we had a choice. The Egyptian Army concentrations in the Sinai approaches do not prove that (President Gamal Abdel) Nasser (1956 – 70) was really about to attack us. We must be honest with ourselves. We decided to attack him."

Two time Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (1974 – 77 and 1992 – 95) told French newspaper Le Monde in February, 1968: "I do not believe Nasser wanted war. The two divisions which he sent into Sinai on May 14 would not have been enough to unleash an offense against Israel. He knew it and we knew it."

General Mordechai Hod, Commander of the Israeli Air Force during the Six-Day War said in 1978: "Sixteen years of planning had gone into those initial eighty minutes. We lived with the plan, we slept on the plan, we ate the plan. Constantly we perfected it."

General Haim Barlev, Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) Chief told Ma'ariv in April, 1972: "We were not threatened with genocide on the eve of the six-day war, and we had never thought of such a possibility."

Other Israeli leaders and generals voiced the same sentiment that in June, 1967 Israel was under no threat, yet preemptively undertook a war of aggression falsely telling the world it had no other choice. It had a clear one. It could have chosen peace, but didn't and never did earlier or since to the present because discretionary aggressive wars of choice serve Israeli interests as they do its US imperial partner.

In 1967, it was the Jewish state's third major aggressive war that grew out of the founding of Zionism in 1897 by Theodor Herzl aiming to establish a permanent Jewish state. He planned the first Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland, became its first president, and envisioned a permanent Jewish homeland in Palestine justified by what Professor Norman Finkelstein called the "colossal hoax" Jews got there first establishing their ancestral home on "a land without people for a people without land." It became the state of Israel in May, 1948 during the new Jewish state's first preemptive aggressive so-called "War of Independence" Palestinians call "al-Nakba" – the catastrophe.

From it, Jewish forces seized 78% of British Mandatory Palestine establishing the state of Israel May 14 when the Mandate ended. It was 40% more territory than UN Resolution 181 of November, 1947 allowed with a 56 – 44% division that already gave Israel most of the fertile land, nearly all urban and rural territory, and 400 of over 1000 Palestinian villages their residents lost by UN mandate, with no right of appeal, to the Jewish population comprising one-third of the total at that time.

The 1948 negotiated cease-fire line became known as the “Green Line.” Egypt occupied Gaza, and Jordan controlled the West Bank. It was Israel’s moment of triumph. The war lasted six months, expelling and killing about 800,000 Palestinians. It destroyed 531 Palestinian villages, 11 urban neighborhoods, and was a clear case of ethnic cleansing international law calls a crime against humanity. Guilty Israeli leaders were never held to account for it or forced to admit what, in fact, they indisputably did according to recently declassified Israeli archival material Israeli historian Ilan Pappé used for his important new book, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. Noted British journalist and documentary filmmaker John Pilger calls him “Israel’s bravest, most principled, most incisive historian.”

In his book, Pappé documented Israeli crimes including cold-blooded mass-murder; destruction of homes, villages and crops; rapes; other atrocities; and massacres of defenseless men, women and children shown no mercy. It happened because British Mandate forces did nothing to stop it, and when neighboring Arab states finally intervened, they acted pathetically without conviction against a superior Israeli fighting force easily able to defeat the small, ill-equipped and unmotivated token forces matched against it.

Israel’s second war of aggression was launched along with Britain and France October 29, 1956 against Egypt following President Nasser’s decision to nationalize the Suez Canal. Invading forces gave in to US and Soviet pressure to cease fighting eight days later, and after the Federal Reserve began selling large amounts of British pounds undermining the dollar-pound exchange rate. It ended when Israel withdrew its last troops March 8, 1957.

On June 5, 1967, Israel launched its third major war of aggression but hardly its last with another one always planned and ready to unleash on the flimsiest pretext almost no other nation could get away with. It did it for the usual reasons nations go to war when under no external threat to do it – territory, resources (for Israel Golan’s water was key), and a desire for unchallengeable regional dominance. As it always did since, Israel falsely claimed its security was threatened by creating myths Syria was shelling Israeli farmers; legitimate, non-threatening Egyptian military exercises masked a preparation for war; and that “incendiary Arab rhetoric” proved it. With plans set and a date picked, Foreign Minister Abba Eban flew to Washington May 26 to inform Lyndon Johnson of Israel’s intentions and was assured the US backed them.

The war began preemptively June 5 and proved to be an impressive display of overwhelming power with Israel destroying 90% of Egypt’s 300 + aircraft on the ground and two-thirds of the Syrian Air Force the first day. After 24 hours of conflict, Israeli Air Force (IAF) Commander Mordechai Hod announced the combined Arab air forces were destroyed, and the devastating toll on them proved it. Israel lost a mere 19 fighter aircraft while Egypt lost about 300, Syria 60, Jordan 35, Iraq 15, and Lebanon one or more. The Palestinians were about to lose much more – the remaining Gaza and West Bank parts of their nation leaving them stateless.

On day 2, Israel invaded Gaza and the West Bank; on day three Israeli Defense Forces (IDF)

entered northern Sinai, devastated Egyptian brigades, captured Jerusalem, and got Jordan to surrender. On day four, the IDF invaded Haram Al-Sharif and central Sinai, and by day five had advanced to the Suez Canal, taking all of Sinai and the Syrian Golan Heights. The war was practically over before it began, but Israeli forces showed no mercy using their unopposed air power to massacre thousands of defenseless Egyptian troops on the ground. It was a turkey shoot made possible largely because Washington supported it providing Israel with the latest munitions including tarmac-shredding explosives preventing undamaged planes from taking off making them sitting ducks to follow-up attacks. In addition, a US carrier group provided intelligence and communications help standing ready to intervene if needed.

Though nothing like today, even then Washington showed its commitment to Israel, and ignoring and covering up the USS Liberty incident highlights it. The intelligence ship was in the Mediterranean about 13 nautical miles off the Sinai Peninsula when Israeli aircraft and torpedo boats attacked it with full knowledge it was a US vessel as the senior Israeli lead pilot later admitted. Thirty-four on-board were killed after which Johnson Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara ordered an inquiry that concluded the incident was a case of "mistaken identity" despite knowing full well it wasn't. Later, retired Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Admiral Thomas Moorer said the incident was "one of the classic all-American cover-ups" for a close ally Washington has made excuses and allowances for ever since along with providing huge amounts of financial aid and modern weaponry and munitions in near-limitless amounts.

Israel used what it got then for its one-sided blitzkrieg ending June 10 with Israeli forces completing the job left unfinished following their 1948 "War of Independence." They took the remaining 22% of ancient Palestine comprising Gaza and the West Bank, and on June 6, 2007 will have held the territories for 40 repressive years of the longest continuous illegal occupation in the world under which Palestinians (including Israeli citizens and Palestinian Christians) lost their personal, political and economic freedoms under Israeli rule affording those rights only to Jews.

Worldwide Solidarity Actions Opposing the Illegal Occupation

To commemorate this infamous anniversary, the International Coordination Network on Palestine (ICNP) was launched at the annual UN civil society conference in 2006. It supports the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people under their banner, "The World Says No to Israeli Occupation." ICNP called for global days of protest June 9 – 10 demanding an end to the occupation; the realization of the Palestinians' inalienable rights including their right to self-determination; their Right to Return to their homeland; and to establish an independent, sovereign Palestinian state with its capital in Jerusalem where it rightfully belongs.

ICNP is building nonviolent global action campaigns for boycotts, divestment and economic and political sanctions. In addition, it engages in a wide range of educational and cultural activities with the same aims in mind. It insists governments across the world stop providing Israel economic, political and military support and work instead together to end an occupation that never should have been tolerated in the first place. It wants it replaced with a "just and lasting peace."

Hundreds of other organizations, networks and groups across the world are also mobilizing for a global protest day June 9. One of them is the "Occupation 40" coalition calling for "six days" of actions (from June 5 – 10) marking 40 hellish years of occupation. In addition, a

Global Day of Action was called for on Saturday, June 9. The coalition is comprised of grassroots Israeli groups and organizations, peace activists, artists, student groups, internal Palestinian refugees, anarchists, animal rights activists, and leftist groups including socialists and communists. There will be a six-day convergence in Israel including demonstrations, direct actions, discussions and cultural events.

“Occupation 40” is also calling for international direct actions against the illegal occupation from June 5 – 10 including economic punishment against corporations profiting from an occupation that cost Palestinians their homeland. The planned agenda for these days is as follows:

- June 5: An international action day against militarization, wars and occupations in advance of the June G-8 summit in Germany.

- June 6 – 8: Protests against the G-8 by Palestinian and Israeli activists and Palestinian Solidarity groups across Europe where German authorities are already cracking down in advance of the June 6 – 8 summit of world leaders taking place at the German resort of Heiligendamm in the northern German state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern on the Baltic coast.

Wherever George Bush travels, unprecedented levels of security are needed the result of intense worldwide anger against him and his administration showing up in mass public actions justifiably protesting his presence. As a result, the Heiligendamm resort is being turned into a luxurious armed military fortress with a huge protective wall around it costing \$17 million a German newspaper called “the equivalent of a maximum security prison (in reverse) to keep people out.”

In addition, the Baltic Sea surrounding the resort will be patrolled by nine naval vessels supplementing 16,000 local police and 1100 soldiers guarding the area to keep protesters several miles from the meeting. Add to that the police state-style raids now ongoing targeting global justice and leftist organizations across the country on the phony pretext they’re involved in the “creation of a terrorist organization.”

- June 6 – 12: Protest action days against the occupation in Palestine, Israel and internationally.

- June 9: A mass rally in London along with a Global Day of Action Against the Occupation.

- June 10 – 11: A protest, teach-in and lobby in Washington, DC.

All these actions across the world are intended to send Israel, G-8 governments and all nations around the world “a message they cannot ignore.”

Life in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT)

IDF occupation forces continue assaulting Palestinian civilians and property daily in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), and while November 8, 2006 wasn’t typical, it shows how horrific some attacks have been. It began November 1 with Operation Autumn Clouds when Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) attacked Beit Hanoun in northern Gaza launching their largest assault on the territory since the late June Operation Summer Rains deadly one

killing at least 240 mostly civilian men, women and children. In one November, 2006 week, 80 innocent civilians were dead, hundreds wounded, and many bodies afflicted with terribly disfiguring cuts, burns and hard to explain loss of limbs unseen before that had to have been from experimental bombs and shells likely containing radiation or other chemical materials able to burn human flesh. More on this below.

The attack culminated November 8 when Israeli tanks shelled Palestinian homes killing at least 20 and wounding 60 more in what's now called the Beit Hanoun massacre. Ironically, or maybe intentionally, it happened the day after IDF forces withdrew following the week-long Operation Autumn Clouds operation that already devastated the town and its people. The Beit Hanoun massacre wasn't typical. But it highlights how, on any pretext at any time, Israeli forces freely attack defenseless Palestinians with unrestrained viciousness maybe just to show they can get away with almost anything.

Mel Frykberg in the April 26 – May 2 issue of Al-Ahram Weekly reports some of the worst of what Israel is doing (unreported in the West) in his article called Israel's lab in Palestine. He wrote about Gaza-based doctors recently reporting severe wounds clearly made by horrific experimental weapons inflicting shocking damage with graphic web site pictures painful to view:

- disfiguring burns caused by intense heat requiring amputation;
- legs sliced from victims' bodies "as if a saw was used to cut through bone;"
- the absence of shrapnel in or near wounds but the presence of a powder-like substance on victims' bodies and internal organs identified by lab analysis as carbon and tungsten (microscopic shrapnel) with many affected patients dying several days later; and
- internal organs severely burned in the absence of external wounds.

The article further explained Italian RAI News 24 satellite TV reported on a laboratory analysis of substances taken from victims alleging Israel used "dense inert metal explosives (DIME)" last summer in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) and that a high concentration of carbon, copper, aluminum and tungsten points to a DIME weapon this time. RAI News 24 indicated military experts said DIME weapons are "carbon-encased missile(s) that shatter on impact into minuscule splinters (simultaneously exploding with) blades of energy-charged, heavy metal tungsten alloy (HMTA) powder (like) cobalt and nickel or iron, with a carbon fibre casing. It turns to dust on impact....burning and destroying....everything within a four-metre range."

In addition to causing severe disabling and dismembering injuries, DIME weapons leave carcinogenic fallout (like depleted uranium – DU – or other toxic chemical pollutants) in areas targeted by them resulting in environmental contamination with virtually certain large increases in future cancers for people living close by and exposed.

The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) on the ground in the territories documents it all daily, and its weekly report ending May 17 reads like all others depending on how horrific each week is with some hugely more so than others as Palestinian victims can attest. PCHR (and other groups) publish an account of daily incursions, assaults, shootings, targeted assassinations, aircraft intrusions and attacks, arrests, torture, home demolitions,

restrictions on movement, crop destruction, land theft, and countless other types of harassment and humiliations making life in occupied Palestine repressive and unbearable for its residents who somehow resist and endure.

In nearly all cases, Israeli actions are unprovoked or barely so like responding with overwhelming force to children throwing rocks or Palestinians defending their homes, neighborhoods or communities from repeated IDF incursions. Palestinians only have crude and light weapons against the world's fourth most powerful military with nearly every imaginable modern weapon including sophisticated nuclear ones and delivery systems to use them effectively. Specifically during this one week, IDF ground forces killed six Palestinians in Gaza and a baby in his mother's womb in the West Bank. They also wounded 36 Palestinians and a French solidarity activist.

In Gaza on May 15, IDF border forces killed a Palestinian National Security Forces officer fleeing Fatah-Hamas armed clashes with US and Israeli fingerprints all over this renewed fighting aimed at toppling the unity government. To do it, Fatah security forces were supplied with millions of dollars in funding, weapons and Egyptian-based training for this type operation ebbing and flowing with renewed fighting erupting on any pretext when cease-fires break down.

On May 16, Israeli forces killed three Executive Force members of the Palestinian Ministry of Interior. They also wounded 27 other Palestinians (including two journalists and a civilian bystander) by Israeli air attacks on a Rafah Executive Force site. On the same day, two Hamas members were killed and three others wounded by air attacks in northern Gaza. Earlier on May 10, IDF forces near Khan Yunis burnt large areas of Palestinian agricultural land in Khuza'a village in a deliberate act of military vandalism.

Also, on May 10, the IDF attacked Israeli solidarity and Palestinian civilian and international activists' peaceful demonstration protesting the construction of the Annexation/Apartheid wall in Bal'ein village west of Ramallah wounding three Palestinian adults, one child and a Swiss solidarity activist. On May 13, an Israeli settlement guard shot from "zero range" wounding a Palestinian taxi driver.

From May 10 - 17, IDF forces conducted at least 26 military incursions into Palestinian communities in the West Bank arresting 41 civilians including seven children. That brings the number of Palestinians arrested in the West Bank alone this year to 1,164. Israeli forces also demolished one home and arrested two Palestinians in Gaza. Throughout this period, the IDF continued imposing a tightened siege on the OPT severely restricting movement including in occupied East Jerusalem and at border crossings through which essential humanitarian goods and services must have access but often don't when most needed.

The important Rafah International Crossing Point has been closed since June 25, 2006 except for three days. Because of this and other crossing point restrictions, markets aren't getting food, stores aren't getting goods, and hospitals don't have vital medical supplies, with most Palestinian patients unable to travel to them in Israel or the OPT anyway as needed. In addition, Palestinians have been prevented from fishing in the Mediterranean for nearly one year depriving them of their livelihood and the people of the food they harvest from the sea.

In recent days, Israel launched heavy air strikes against Hamas government Gaza targets killing 36 mostly Palestinian civilians and wounding 97 others through May 21 as well as

destroying dozens of homes and parliamentary sites. This is on top of renewed Israeli-instigated Fatah-Hamas armed clashes in Gaza killing 47 and injuring scores more through May 19. On May 18, independent Palestinian writer Laila El-Haddad wrote on the Electronic Intifada web site of a recent “terrifying 24 hours (with) sporadic gunfire and ghostly streets.”

She mentioned a phone call from her father describing a (US-supplied F-16-caused) “tremendous explosion (sending) intense shockwaves through our house....so powerful....it blasted off the windows from my cousin’s home in the neighbourhood behind us. This attack was followed by another then another, and then another.” There were six Israeli (F-16) air strikes in one morning with “Israeli tanks....amassing at Gaza’s northern border, and unmanned Israeli drones whirring menacingly overhead in great numbers patrolling ghostly skies....preparing..for yet another strike against an already bleeding, burning, and battered Gaza” from Israeli terror attacks.

Tony Karon, writing in the Electronic Intifada May 15, notes the current conflict “has assumed a momentum of its own” Palestinian leaders are unable to contain because Washington and Israel want it that way in the wake of Hamas’ victory in the January, 2006 elections. He then adds ominously this may end up “turning Gaza into Mogadishu” just the way the Bush administration is now “busy turning Mogadishu into Mogadishu all over again.”

The “If Americans Knew” web site also publishes and keeps current shocking information on the daily toll in the OPT. Some of its disturbing figures affecting Palestinians from September 29, 2000 (the first day of the Second Intifada) to the present at the hands of Israeli forces are as follows:

- 934 Palestinian children have been killed in most cases while engaging in normal daily activities like going to school, playing, shopping, or being in their homes. PCHR reports a total of 4284 Palestinian deaths through March 23, 2007.

- A known total of 31,307 Palestinians have been injured, mostly civilians, and mostly under the same circumstances children were killed. The B’Tselem Israeli Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories reports these numbers are extremely conservative while the internationally respected Palestine Red Crescent Society reports much higher totals that are likely more accurate. In addition, these figures exclude large numbers of Palestinians who die when unable to reach medical care in time because of Israeli checkpoints, road closures, curfews and other restrictions on mobility in the OPT. Also, no accurate records are available on the large number of avoidable Palestinian deaths resulting from deprivation and/or disease following the first time ever imposition of sanctions on an occupied people from early 2006 to the present.

- The cite reports US financial aid to Israel is \$7,023,288 per day, but the true number is far higher including:

- around \$3 billion or more annually in direct aid;
- billions more in loans as needed;
- millions annually for immigrant resettlement;
- multi-billions in waved loan repayments;
- billions more in military aid, financial help to develop Israel’s defense industry, transfer of state-of-the-art technology and the latest US weapons,

and US guarantees for Israel's access to oil;

- \$22 billion Israel got over the past 50 years through the sale of its below-market paying bonds that have financed half its development - meaning the colonization of annexed Palestinian land; military aid for its imperial aggressive wars; and still more as needed and requested.

Tiny Israel today (with six million Jews) gets more US financial aid (in all direct and indirect forms) than all other countries in the world combined.

In addition, a 2006 "Washington Report" piece by Shirl McArthur estimated the minimal amount of US aid to Israel since 1948 in an article titled "A Conservative Estimate of Total US Aid to Israel: \$108 billion." Again, the true number is far higher. Over the same period to the present, US aid to the Palestinians was "zero" except what's supplied for "security" for Israel and now to aid quisling Fatah forces fight the democratically elected Hamas government Israel, Washington and the West won't recognize.

- Israel has been targeted by at least 65 UN resolutions ignoring them all. The Palestinians have been targeted by none.

- One Israeli corporal is held prisoner by the Palestinians. At least 10,756 Palestinians are now imprisoned by Israel, most held on "administrative" or no charge, and according to the B'Tselem Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories the great majority of them are abused or tortured. PCHR reports from 1967 through 1994 alone, 775,000 Palestinians were imprisoned for periods ranging from one week to life.

The Israeli human rights organization HaMoked Center for the Defense of the Individual confirms this in an April, 2007 report it jointly published with B'Tselem titled "Utterly Forbidden - The Torture and Ill-Treatment of Palestinian Detainees. It's based on testimonies of dozens of Palestinians arrested, interrogated and tortured by Israel's ISA, formerly known as the General Security Service. In addition, even Israeli authorities openly admit using "exceptional" interrogation methods and "physical pressure" against Palestinian detainees that translated means "torture." However, B'Tselem reports the State Attorney's Office "covers up these illegal acts, thereby assisting in the breach of international law and of High Court of Justice's prohibitions."

It hardly needs mentioning international laws ban torture for any reason, but it never deterred Israel or the US from using it freely. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights outlawed it in 1948. The Fourth Geneva Convention banned any form of "physical or mental coercion" in 1949 requiring detainees at all times to be treated humanely. The European Convention affirmed this in 1950, and in 1984, the UN Convention Against Torture became the first binding international instrument dealing exclusively with banning torture in any form for any reason. Israel and the US both have contempt for international law mutually affirming the other's right to act as it pleases with no protests heard in the West or hardly anywhere else.

- 4170 Palestinian homes have been demolished according to a B'Tselem November 15, 2004 report titled "Through No Fault of Their Own." The Israeli Committee Against House Demotions (ICAHD) reports a far larger number calling them "the hallmark of the Occupation." It cites the demolition of around 12,000 Palestinian homes (on their own land in their own country) since June,

1967 to the present, leaving about 70,000 Palestinians “without shelter and traumatized.”

B’Tselem reports three types of demolitions:

- 1. As “clearing operations” to meet Israeli “military needs.”
- 2. Administration demolitions of houses built “without a permit” meaning Israel won’t let Palestinians build homes on their own land.
- 3. Demolitions for punitive reasons against Palestinians “suspected” of attacking Israeli (occupying) soldiers or civilians. In many cases, adjacent homes are destroyed as well.

PCHR reports other destruction of land and property from September 29, 2000 through June, 2005 including 31,500 dunums (31.5 million square meters) of mostly agricultural land in Gaza or 10% of the territory’s arable land total. Israel seized the land for illegal settlement development. In addition, 656 businesses, factories and schools were either destroyed or damaged over this period.

— World Bank data estimates Palestinian unemployment at 40%. The true figure, however, is much higher, at least 70% and likely higher still, while available employment is grossly inadequate to meet essential human needs in most cases. It’s the result of Israeli and western political and economic sanctions imposed on the democratically elected Hamas government after January, 2006. It was the first time ever an occupied people were put under a virtual medieval siege in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention obligating the international community to protect an occupied civilian population. Instead, a state of belligerency was imposed causing chaos and mass human misery, deprivation, starvation, illness and disease so far unaddressed and worsening. Almost none of this is reported in the dominant western media.

As early as June 28, 2002, PCHR reported 40 - 50% of Palestinians were living below the internationally recognized poverty line of \$2 a day with the figure in Gaza 81%. Two-thirds of them were called the “new poor,” having been impoverished since the outbreak of the Second Intifada September 29, 2000. Nearly five years later, the figures are far higher.

— Israel currently has over 400,000 Jews living in 121 Jewish-only settlements and 102 “outposts” on stolen Palestinian land violating Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention stating “The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population in the territory it occupies.” The number continues growing with deputy Jerusalem mayor Yehoshua Pollack announcing in May 20,000 new homes will be built in Arab East Jerusalem on more land annexed from its legal residents Israel is systematically ethnically cleansing toward making the entire city 100% Jewish.

In addition, 500 more houses will be built in Abu Dis village, southeast of Jerusalem with new home construction aimed at creating territorial continuity between Jerusalem and “Gush Etzion” settlement bloc, south of Bethlehem, and between Jerusalem and “Beit Eil” settlement, north of Ramallah. Toward the same end, the Israeli government allocated \$1.5 billion in US taxpayer aid May 13 to developing Jerusalem settlement neighborhoods to

reduce an increasing Palestinian population in the city.

At the same time, Palestinians in Salama and Fqaiques villages, east and south of “Noghohot” settlement, west of Hebron, were ordered to stop building 10 houses and a mosque on their own land in their own country. Then on May 11, Israeli settlers in “Sousia” settlement, south of Hebron, attacked Palestinian farmers on their agricultural land near the settlement without provocation.

End the Illegal Occupation Now

For 40 years under occupation on one-fifth of their original land and nearly 60 years after the “Nakba,” Palestinians are forced to endure the most appalling repression no one should have to face for a single day. Five million of them, including 1.4 million Israeli citizens, are denied all rights afforded Jews only and are subjected to daily abuse and neglect along with regular IDF assaults against which they’re defenseless. The Palestinians suffer for it, and the world community is silent except, like Israel, to shamefully call the victims the victimizers.

Then there are the five million refugees in the Palestinian diaspora (by some estimates the number is seven million) including 260,000 internally displaced and living inside Israel. Those outside the country are denied the absolute universal “Right of Return” affirmed in UN Resolution 194 passed in December, 1948 resolving that “refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property....made good by the Governments or authorities responsible.”

This “Universal Right” was also established in Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as various Geneva Conventions Israel won’t recognize just as it ignores over five dozen UN resolutions condemning or censuring it for its actions against the Palestinians or other Arab people, deploring it for committing them, or demanding, calling on or urging the Jewish state to end them. One of them was UN Resolution 273 passed May, 1949 giving Israel UN membership conditional on its implementing Resolutions 181 of November, 1947 partitioning Palestine 56 – 44% in its favor and 194 passed December, 1948 giving Palestinians their absolute universally accepted “Right of Return.”

From 1948, when Palestinians lost 78% of their homeland, to 1967 when they lost the rest to a hostile foreign occupier, to the present, life in the OPT has been oppressive, intolerable and criminally imposed on a defenseless people helpless against it and unsupported ever since in their courageous struggle for liberation one day they’ll achieve because they’ll never give up till they have what they rightfully and legally deserve. For 40 years under occupation they have no recognized state of their own, no right of citizenship, and no power over their daily lives.

They live in a constant state of fear in the virtual open-air prisons of Gaza and the West Bank under Israel’s racist apartheid laws even the Israeli High Court shamefully upholds. They’re strangled economically and politically; denied free movement in their own country from a structure of roadblocks, checkpoints, electric fences and a land-grabbing “Apartheid Separation wall” the World Court in the Hague ruled (14 – 1) is “contrary to international law” because it “destroyed and (illegally) confiscated” property, it greatly restricts Palestinian movement, and it “severely impedes the exercise by the Palestinian people of (the) right to self-determination.”

For its Jewish citizens, Israel is nominally democratic, although far from perfect at the least. For its Arab Muslim and small Christian population, it's a daily struggle for survival under the harshest conditions of all kinds imaginable those outside the territories and most Jews in Israel can't possibly understand and too few even try. For 40 brutal years, Israel has illegally controlled all aspects of Palestinian life in the OPT with an iron fist it freely swings on the slightest pretext. It cantonized the indigenous population under deplorable conditions in refugee camps and bantustans surrounded and cut off from all other ones. It rules defenseless people by intimidation and repressive military might. It denies Palestinian people their right to a truly sovereign independent state and won't allow Muslims, Christians and other non-Jewish legal residents in greater Israel the same rights as Jews including the right of citizenship and safety under one sovereign nation for everyone entitled to it.

Israel claims it wants peace but never negotiated in good faith to get it. The current so-called "road map" is a cruel hoax going nowhere. It's as fraudulent as all other phony peace efforts before it. Beginning with Camp David in 1978, the US bribed Egypt with billions in "baksheesh" in return for peace with Israel leaving Palestinians out in the cold. The predictable result was festering anger that exploded in what became the First Intifada in 1987 killing hundreds of Palestinians that finally led to the Oslo Accords and their so-called Declaration of Principles in 1993. Under them, Israel got what it wanted giving back nothing more in return than the right of Palestinians to be Israeli enforcers in their own land. So highly touted and praised when signed, it offered no Right of Return, no independent Palestinian state, no portion of Jerusalem as a capital, and no Palestinian control over their own daily lives free from a foreign occupier. From then till now, things only got worse.

Oslo I led to Oslo II in 1995 that divided the West Bank into the way it exists today in Areas "A," "B," "C," and "D"; "H-1" and "H-2" in Hebron; nature reserves (in the OPT) for Jews only; closed military areas; security zones; and "open green spaces" for Jewish-only housing developments in over half of Arab East Jerusalem (slowly being stolen entirely) leaving Palestinians confined to unconnected cantons surrounded by growing Israeli settlements, restricted roads, and all kinds of impediments restricting free movement preventing any semblance of normal daily life.

So-called "permanent status" talks then began in July, 2000 at Camp David resulting in another insulting betrayal. Portrayed in the West as a generous offer in good faith, it was, in fact, just another example of US-Israeli duplicity leaving out entirely what Palestinians most want – a free and sovereign state or a single multi-ethnic one with Jews and Palestinians having equal rights, the Right of Return, a portion of Jerusalem as a capital or the entire city as capital for both, and an end to foreign occupation. All that was offered in exchange for "peace" Israeli-style is what they now have – life locked down in unconnected cantons on mostly scrub land in virtual open-air prisons surrounded by expanding Israeli settlements continuing to encroach on Palestinian lands fast disappearing as Israelis take what they want dunum by dunum.

Again justifiable festering anger erupted into the Second (al-Aqsa Mosque) Intifada in September, 2000 following former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's provocative visit to the holy al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied East Jerusalem (the Noble Sanctuary for Muslims and Temple Mount for Jews and Christians). It became far worse following elections for Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) seats on January 25, 2006 when, fed up with years of Fatah-led corruption and betrayal, Palestinians democratically elected a Hamas government Israel, Washington and the West acted savagely against since to destroy because its leaders won't act as a quisling government the way Fatah's Yasser Arafat and current Fatah Palestinian

President, Mahmoud Abbas, and his powerful National Security Advisor and “Gaza warlord,” Mohammed Dahlan (controlling Fatah security forces), were always willing to do and Abbas and especially Dahlan still are. For Hamas’ courage and dedication to their people, the Palestinians have paid dearly ever since and still do. This must end.

It’s long past time people of conscience everywhere take a public stand and demand 40 years of illegal repressive occupation end so Palestinians can finally have what all people have a right to expect and demand – to live freely in their own land the way international law mandates with nations supporting it accepting nothing less.

Palestinians and their legions of supporters worldwide aren’t waiting for conflict resolution that won’t ever come unless enough committed people everywhere demand their leaders act on it. A growing effort is building to convince them by calling for an organized global campaign for boycott, divestment and political and economic sanctions against Israel the same way they developed in the 1980s against the South African apartheid state that finally brought results.

It must include a demand that the world community of nations ends the “last taboo” of silence when it comes to Israel. It must be willing to expose and denounce what no longer can be tolerated that current South African Intelligence Minister Ronnie Kasrils calls worse than apartheid saying Israel “behav(es) like fascists when they do certain things (like attacking Palestinians with helicopter gunships and tanks).” What better time to do what Kasrils is surely calling for than on the 40th anniversary of the longest continuous occupation in the world that no longer can be tolerated.

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