

Palestinians: 70 Years of Suffering

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To date, 62 Palestinians have been shot dead in the Gaza Strip by the Israeli army and over 5,500 wounded by gunfire. Their crime: protesting the loss of their ancestral homes in the West Bank.

Here was an example of Gandhi-style passive resistance that failed. Israeli sniper teams just fired at will at the protesters, some of who were throwing rocks or firing sling shots. High concentration tear gas was dumped by drones on the demonstrators. Israel claimed it was killing 'terrorists.'

The United States, Israel's patron and financier, reveled in the move of its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, a move seen by Bible Belt religious fundamentalists as a key step to the return of the Christian Messiah and Armageddon. The rest of us, Jews included, are fated to be burned alive. The American Republicans, who have become a far-right theocratic party, cheered this good news. The Trump administration, by now an extension of Israel's hard right Likud Party, was cock-a-hoop.

There was no joy in Gaza. This miserable, squalid human garbage dump is a giant open-air prison packed with 2 million Palestinian refugees driven from the newly created state of Israel in 1948. Israel and its close ally Egypt keep Gaza bottled up on its land and sea borders. Palestinians are only allowed to fish along the shore. Coastal gas and oil reserves have been expropriated by Israel and Egypt.

Gaza's two million people subsist on the edge of starvation. Israel openly boasts that it allows just enough food into the enclave to prevent outright starvation. Chemicals to treat water are banned. Electricity runs only a few hours daily because the power plant was bombed by Israel's US-supplied air force. Hospitals have almost no medicines. In short, wartime conditions in the open-air prison. Even the wretched animals in Gaza zoo are starving.

The intensive punishment of Gaza, a crime under international law, began after its people voted in a free election for the Hamas movement over the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) which is more or less run by Israel and the United States. Israel helped found Hamas in 1987, but then sought, with the US, to destroy the organization, branding it 'terrorist.'

Israel has extensively used US-supplied arms and money to fight Hamas in Gaza, a clear violation of the Arms Export Control Act of 1976 that bars the use of American weapons against civilian populations.

The question remains, where did all the Palestinians come from? Israel long claimed there

were no such people, or a made-up nationality. This was a pretty rich claim coming from Israelis, many of whom hailed from Russia, Poland and Eastern Europe and who had assumed biblical identities and asserted a direct link to the Hebrews who had lived two thousand years earlier in the Levant.

When Israel was created by the US and UN (with Soviet support) in 1948, from 750,000 to one million native Palestinians were driven from their ancestral home at gunpoint or panicked to flight by massacres and ethnic cleansing. Their villages were bulldozed.

When Israel conquered and annexed the West Bank and the Old City of Jerusalem in 1967, another 500,000 Palestinians were made refugees. Some 50,000-250,000 Syrians were driven by Israel from the strategic Golan Heights. Bedouins were driven from Israel's Negev Desert.

By our era, the number of homeless Palestinians has grown to 5 million refugees helped by the UN and at least another million scattered about the Mideast. The actual number could reach as high as 8-9 million thanks to the Palestinian's high birth rate and strong family values.

Half of Jordan's people are Palestinian refugees. Kuwait had 400,000 Palestinians until they were expelled in 1990-1991 after their leader, Yasser Arafat, foolishly backed claims by Saddam Hussein that he was occupying Kuwait in order to trade it for a Palestinian state. This was the biggest Palestinian expulsion since 1948. Egypt's brutal dictator, Gen. al-Sisi, is now the biggest persecutor of Palestinians after Israel, keeping them locked away in the Gaza prison.

The Arab states have done very little for the Palestinians save slogans and hot air. The Saudis are now in cahoots with Israel to repress the Palestinians lest they spread modern secular ideas in the medieval Mideast. Interestingly, some of the most extreme Palestinians, like George Habash, were Arab Christians. Palestinians remain some of the best educated and most commercial of the Mideast's peoples. For a long while they ran most of the Gulf Emirates until replaced by Indians.

'Sand in the eye of the Mideast' is what I called this oppressed people without a home. Their plight could be greatly eased by the creation of a Palestinian state on the West Bank. But this would interfere with plans for Israel's right-wing government for planned expansion. So, the future for Palestinians is bleak.

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