

# U.S. Hypocrisy Concerning the Golan Heights

Letters to the Editor: U.S. Hypocrisy Concerning the Golan Heights

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*The Israeli government has announced a plan to double the population of the occupied Syrian Golan Heights by 2030, thereby achieving a clear Jewish majority in light of the absence of any right of return for those driven out in 1967.*

I wish that some journalist would have the career-risking courage to ask President Joe Biden, Secretary of State Antony Blinken or the White House or State Department spokespersons to explain the principle on which the U.S. government (i) condemns and refuses to accept or diplomatically recognize the Russian annexation of Crimea, while (ii) accepting and recognizing the Israeli annexations of expanded East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan Heights (achieved by war and in defiance of the wishes of all the people who lived there prior to their conquests and occupations).

Of course, as always, what matters is not the nature of the act but, rather, who is doing it to whom. There are no principles involved.

—John Whitbeck, Paris, France

Few consequences for killers of Palestinian-American

This January in the occupied West Bank, Israeli soldiers dragged Omar Abdalmajeed As’ad, an 80-year-old Palestinian-American citizen from his car, handcuffed, gagged and blindfolded him and then beat him, leaving him to die on the ground while they drove away. It is an outrage that a foreign military that we give billions of dollars to every year can commit this atrocity against an American citizen and yet neither President Joe Biden nor U.S.

Ambassador to Israel Thomas Nides have condemned this murder nor called for a fair and thorough investigation. We must demand that the killers be brought to justice, tried, and if found guilty, spend the rest of their lives in prison. No more Israeli cover-ups. —Barbara Gravesen, Lady Lake, FL

*In late January, the Israel Defense Forces released a statement on the incident saying, "The soldiers did not identify signs of distress or other suspicious signs concerning As'ad's health. The soldiers assessed that As'ad was asleep and did not try to wake him. The investigation concluded that the incident was a grave and unfortunate event, resulting from a moral failure and poor decision-making on the part of the soldiers." Two of the soldiers involved were fired and a third was "reprimanded."*

*The Middle East Monitor was spot-on in noting, "The punishment issued is far more lenient than those handed down to Palestinians, including minors convicted of throwing stones. Even if no harm or damage is caused, they face penalties of up to 20 years in prison."*

Hold Israel accountable for its violence

The article by Dr. M. Reza Behnam in your [Jan./Feb. 2022 issue](#) about Palestinian life under Israeli [Zionism](#) was deeply moving. The article made clear the daily humiliation the Zionist regime imposes on Palestinians by naming public spaces after Zionist terrorists who have committed multiple atrocities, and proclaiming these racist terrorists national heroes.

Once again, secure in the knowledge that Western governments will not hold them accountable, the Israelis are accelerating their theft of Palestinian land and making more and more innocent indigenous people refugees in their own land.

I hope the *Washington Report* will continue to print strong articles like this to expose the truth and counter Israeli propaganda. The Palestinians continue to fight and we must join them in the name of justice, democracy and peace.

—Charles Dunaway, Portland, OR

Palestinians must not be deterred from non-violence

In response to Ramzy Baroud's article in the Nov./Dec. 2021 issue on political prisoner Zakaria Zubeidi: Zubeidi's disillusionment with both "peaceful diplomacy" and armed force for overcoming Israeli domination isn't unique. When I advocated for non-violence at a local college forum, a young Palestinian responded that no matter what they try, Israel crushes them. But they haven't given non-violent resistance a fair trial.

Though Palestinian leadership wanted the First Intifada to be non-violent, Palestinian violence increased as the Intifada wore on. Overall, 179 Israelis were killed and 3,100 were injured. This and greater subsequent Palestinian violence badly damaged their cause by obscuring the fact that they're the victims and Israel is the aggressor in the overall conflict. Palestinian violence has allowed Israel to turn this on its head so it appears to be the victim and the Palestinians the aggressor. This is simple, because real-time overt violence overshadows long-term seemingly low-level violence by the colonizer, and because Israel generally tends to be viewed as the victim in the conflict.

Through this role reversal, Israel whitewashes its brutal repression of Palestinian

violence—and all of its wrongs against the Palestinians—on the basis of security. By ceasing violence, the Palestinians can make it crystal clear that they're the victims. This would greatly amplify international grassroots and governmental support for, and collaboration with, Palestinian strikes, boycotts, security de-cooperation and other non-violent resistance. When this solidarity becomes strong enough to generate sanctions upon Israel, its colonial apartheid enterprise will be finished. Free at last, the Palestinians will be able to determine their own future, be that two states, one democratic state, or some other alternative.

—Gregory DeSylva, Rhinebeck, NY

*In a 2011 TED Talk, filmmaker Julia Bacha addressed the topic of violent and non-violent Palestinian resistance. Her conclusion was that the media's penchant for only covering violence gives legitimacy to aggression and undermines the work of non-violent movements in Palestine. She said: "I believe that what's mostly missing for non-violence to grow is not for Palestinians to start adopting non-violence, but for us to start paying attention to those who already are [resisting non-violently]....Violent resistance and non-violent resistance share one very important thing in common—they are both a form of theater seeking an audience to their cause. If violent actors are the only ones constantly getting front-page covers and attracting international attention to the Palestinian issue, it becomes very hard for non-violent leaders to make the case to their communities that civil disobedience is a viable option in addressing their plight....I believe that the most important thing is to understand that if we don't pay attention to these [non-violent] efforts, they are invisible, and it's as if they never happened. But I have seen first hand that if we do, they will multiply. If they multiply, their influence will grow in the overall Israeli-Palestinian conflict."*

Another story of atrocious torture

The Supreme Court justices recently heard oral arguments on the CIA's treatment of Abu Zubaydah, who is currently being held at Guantanamo Bay. Two psychologists, James Mitchell and Bruce Jessen, crafted a torture program to render Abu Zubaydah's life a living hell. Abu Zubaydah was waterboarded over 80 times while being held at a CIA black site in Poland.

All the justices on the Court described Abu Zubaydah's treatment as "torture." There were no euphemisms, no equivocation. Everyone understood that what happened to him was gut-wrenching torture.

Government cables obtained by the media confirmed waterboarding was almost benign compared to other more barbaric treatments the "good doctors" crafted. He was kept sleepless. They put him in a small coffin-sized box for hours, overnight. He couldn't move. They hung him by the cell bars with his feet dangling off the ground.

The CIA's determination to keep torture secret backfired and has brought great shame and dishonor to America. Abu Zubaydah should be released immediately and Guantanamo should be closed. We do not want our tax dollars to be used for such barbarism. The perpetrators of these monstrous crimes, including President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney, must be prosecuted.

—Jagjit Singh, Los Altos, CA

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