

# VICTORY IS OURS



A BRIEF GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING

- AND WINNING -

THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT

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## DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the Palestinian children who have endured unimaginable horrors, loss of loved ones, physical and emotional scars, and psychological trauma. May they one day be able to experience the uninhibited joy and freedom of being a child. Ameen.



## DISCLAIMER

The opinions offered in this book are the author's alone and do not necessarily reflect those of a larger organization or religious group.

## NOTE TO NON-MUSLIM READERS

While the primary audience for this book is Muslim Americans, thank you for reading this book! Please note that I will occasionally use Arabic terms, such as the following:

Allah = God

Alhumdulillah = All praise be to God

Dua = Prayer, or supplication

Masjid = Mosque

SWT (Subhanahu wa ta'ala) = The most glorified, the most high

Tahajjud = Optional night prayers

Ummah = Community

Waqf = Custodian

I will also quote from the Islamic holy book, the Quran, which will be referenced as “chapter:verse(s)”.

I will also reference hadith. Whereas Muslims consider the Quran to be the literal word of God, hadith are sayings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who we consider to be the last in a long line of prophets including Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon, and Jesus (peace be upon them all).

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## 1 THE BEGINNING?

On October 7th, 2023, Hamas fighters managed to break out of the open-air prison called Gaza and attacked Israeli communities, killing 1,139 people (of which 373 were soldiers and police) and taking over 200 people hostage.

According to *The New York Times*, Israel knew about the planned attack more than a year before it occurred, but apparently felt it was too bold of a plan to actually materialize. Some have even suggested that a portion of the Israelis killed that day were killed by the Israeli military because it couldn't accurately differentiate between people in all of the chaos, so they allegedly employed a military policy called the Hannibal Directive.

In any case, the nature and scope of the attack understandably left the world angry and in shock. However, despite Israel's claim that this was their 9/11, this conflict did not begin on October 7th. While that would be convenient for the anti-Palestinian narrative, the truth is far from it.

Think about it. Israel has basically kept over 2 million people locked up in about 141 square miles of land, unable to travel freely, lacking employment, depending on international aid to survive, surrounded by the Israeli military and subject to "targeted assassinations". They can't even venture out too far by boat off the coast or else they will be shot by Israeli naval forces. Israel has also damaged or destroyed water desalination plants, so the people of Gaza struggle for the basic right of potable water. They're not allowed to bring in construction materials to rebuild everything that was destroyed in previous Israeli bombings.

Just across the perimeter fence, Israelis live a relatively cushy life, while the Gaza Strip has been under blockade since 2007. Little gets in, little gets out. Life has long been miserable. Israel has made Gaza a living hell.

What did people think was going to happen? That the Palestinians would simply be content and happily rot away? Did Israel think they could brush this issue under the rug and pretend like everything was okay?

Here's a challenge for you: Watch the 2019 documentary *Gaza Fights for Freedom*. Then imagine 2 million Americans living in that situation for a decade or longer. What do you think they would do? I've spent most of my life in the US and know veterans. I could tell you exactly what they would do, and it would make Palestinian resistance look mild in comparison.

For anyone who read *On Palestine* -- which is essentially a conversation with Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé after Israel's 2014 attack on Gaza known as Operation Protective Edge -- the aftermath of the October 2023 war must have felt like *deja vu*. What Israel did during its latest war was essentially a carbon copy of what it did about a decade prior. It's uncanny. To borrow the authors' phrase, it's a continuation of the "incremental genocide" of Gaza.

I used to be part of an organization a couple decades ago that focused on ending the Israeli occupation of remaining Palestinian territories. It was an interfaith group with meetings held at a church and its members included Christians, Muslims, and Jews. Even back then we knew the eventual plan was to push the people of Gaza into Egypt and to scatter enough settlements in the West Bank so as to make a two-state solution impossible. We knew part of the goal was to make life so miserable that people would just leave. We knew that this was a slow form of ethnic cleansing, one that was backed by a very good strategy and lots of patience. We certainly weren't psychic; it was just common sense based on facts on the ground.

The purpose of this book is to provide the truth about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in bite-sized pieces. The aim is to be brief and tell the other side of the story, to whet one's appetite and encourage readers to research further, as there is much the corporate-sponsored Western media is unable or unwilling to say. Rather than give a detailed history of the conflict, my hope is to arm readers with the information they need to



know in order to intelligently and productively engage in discussion and activism.

There are plenty of books that delve deeper into the history of the conflict, such as works by Rashid Khalidi, Edward Said, Norman Finkelstein, and Ilan Pappé. Think of this as more of a quick-start guide. There are also myriad books, websites, videos, and social media channels voraciously debating this conflict. However, they do more to create confusion than provide clarity. This is by design.

It's impossible to write a book on such a contentious topic that will be agreeable to everyone. Some will say this book is too soft on Israel, while others may claim it's anti-Semitic. Everyone is entitled to their opinion, as am I. To be clear, this is not a pro-Hamas or anti-Israel book. If anything, this is a pro-human rights and anti-genocide book coming from an Islamic perspective. Clearly there has been violence committed by both sides of the conflict, but it's far more disproportionate than the Western media would have you believe.

We will never reach a resolution unless people can overcome their collective amnesia and go back to the roots of the problem. Only when people look at the facts and history can we move towards a resolution. An *equitable* solution is impossible unless we could turn back the clock, but a resolution is possible once we get past the lies and propaganda. Not likely, but possible.

Unfortunately many people are in denial about actual historical events that occurred. Some people know deep inside what is happening, but are so emotionally invested in Israel that they just further lean in when presented with facts. They're suffering from cognitive dissonance. Generally speaking, admitting you're wrong is difficult. When admitting you're wrong would result in an existential crisis, it's nearly impossible.

If we are to ever have hope of peaceful coexistence, we absolutely have to look at the history going back to the ideology of Zionism, the Balfour Declaration, the UN partition of Palestine, the displacement of Palestinians from their homes, the demolition of countless Palestinian homes, the continuous building of Israeli settlements, the indefinite imprisonment of Palestinians without charge or trial, the dearth of food and water in the Gaza Strip, the lack of consistent electricity, the constant monitoring of people, the restriction on movement, etc.

Some will be flustered by the preceding statements, thinking, “How dare you try to justify the Hamas attack?!” It’s not justifying, but elucidating. Unless we let go of the hatred, anger, and blind one-sidedness we will never truly understand the situation and we will never resolve it.

Even if Hamas was eliminated, it wouldn’t resolve the conflict. Palestinians would silently suffer while Israel continues building settlements in the West Bank and continues its long-running blockade on Gaza. The world would forget what’s going on there and carry on with their lives, while Palestinians slowly fade away into the annals of history.

It’s mind-boggling how some people appear to be brainwashed or blind to reality. Either that or they are simply driven by prejudice and/or pride to hold certain views. Human nature is such that people see what they want to see; they believe what they want to believe.

Sometimes it feels like we’re living in the Twilight Zone. Let’s unlock this door with open-mindedness and a willingness to see the truth.

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- *On Palestine* (2015) by Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé

## 2 BROKEN HEARTS

After Israel's latest war against Gaza commencing in October 2023, I asked a Palestinian living in the US if he and his family were doing okay. He said, "No, we're being killed." I followed up by asking if he has family in Gaza. He said, "They're all my family."

You see, the Ummah is like one body. The Ummah is a global Muslim family. Even if one small part of it is injured, the whole body is affected. We feel it. It hurts.

The pain you feel from seeing the suffering of people in Palestine is legit. The hurt you feel from seeing celebrities, coworkers, and even friends blindly jump on the "I stand with Israel" bandwagon is justified. The shock and disgust from watching countless unarmed civilians bombed and buried beneath rubble are understandable. The level of moral depravity and bankruptcy we saw in the early days of Israel's invasion of Gaza were unfathomable.

One heartbreaking story I saw was when CNN was able to get into Gaza and visit a field hospital. They showed a 2-year-old injured boy in a hospital bed with his aunt, and he didn't even know his entire family had been killed by Israeli shelling. One day he saw a male nurse who resembled his dad and yelled for him. I don't think I realized what true pain and depression were until I saw this.

As counterintuitive as it may sound, pain can actually be a good thing. In a world that has become desensitized to violence, it shows that you still have humanity and empathy. The agony may also be a blessing in disguise if it brings you closer to Allah (SWT). If you've found yourself

praying more, doing tahajjud, going to the masjid more often, and/or being more fervent in your dua, this is all good. Sometimes, unfortunately, we need a kick in the butt.

Pain drives us to take action. If you injure yourself or feel sick, you will likely go to the doctor or do some self-treatment. Likewise, when we see injustice and evil in the world, it's our duty as Muslims to stop it. If not with our hands and tongues, we should at least dislike it in our hearts.

The irony of tragedy is that it tends to bring people back to their faith. It reminds people that life is temporary and that the things they thought were important are maybe not so important after all.

“Did We not soothe your heart? And lift from you your burden. Which weighed down your back? And raised for you your reputation? With hardship comes ease. Verily, with hardship comes ease. When your work is done, turn to devotion. And to your Lord turn for everything.” - Quran 94:1-8

The tears you shed are not in vain.

**Sources:**

- CNN visited a Gaza hospital. This is what we saw | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SdIZmZr29L0>

### 3 CAN'T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG?

During the time of the Ottoman Empire, Palestine was a beautiful place where Muslims, Christians, and Jews lived in relative harmony. How could the Holy Land turn into the chaos we see today?

To make a long story short, the British unilaterally declared support for a Jewish state in Palestine without consulting the people actually living in Palestine; the United Nations partitioned Palestine without the approval of the people living there; hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were driven out of their homes by Zionist militias, never to be allowed to return; the remaining Palestinians have been subject to imprisonment, harsh treatment, blockades, restriction on movement, and demolition of their homes, all while Israel continues building illegal settlements (under UN Resolution 2334) and chewing up the last bit of remaining land that the Palestinians have.

It's estimated that 7 million Palestinians are in the diaspora, having been exiled from their homeland. What's left of Palestine is the tiny Gaza Strip and the West Bank, the latter of which is being broken up little by little with the building of Israeli settlements. The roughly 2 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and 3 million in the West Bank live under military occupation. The Gaza Strip is closed off (by Israel and Egypt) and has been called an open-air prison, while people in the West Bank live under the control of Israeli forces and the constant fear of being harassed, arrested, or made homeless.

During quiet times when we hear nothing about this conflict in the news, there isn't actually peace, although the rest of the world seems content. No news is good news, right? But the daily struggles of the Palestinians

continue as they vie for employment, basic necessities, and humane treatment. They are humiliated daily at checkpoints controlled by the Israeli military, designed to stifle Palestinian movement. And, as mentioned, illegal settlements continue to be built in the West Bank while Palestinian homes are razed.

Every now and then, Palestinians rise up and try to fight for their human rights. Peaceful attempts by Palestinians to stand up for themselves, such as the Unity Intifada in 2021, have been anything but effective. Activists in the West Bank are routinely beaten and arrested. When they exercise peaceful resistance, such as the Great March of Return in 2018 (which involved demonstrations held every Friday in Gaza), they literally get shot down by Israeli forces. Many unarmed Palestinians, including children, were shot in the head by Israeli snipers. As you can see around the 47:30 minute mark of the 2019 documentary *Gaza Fights for Freedom*, the Israeli snipers seem to enjoy killing. It's a war crime, but they know they can get away with it. Other war crimes during the Great March include Israel's use of a poisonous gas against unarmed Palestinians and the deliberate targeting of journalists and medics.

When a minority of armed Palestinians fight back with mediocre weapons, collective punishment is imposed on the Palestinian civilian population by the Israeli government and Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Palestine has no military of its own to fight back in an official capacity and Palestinians are called "terrorists" for resisting the illegal Israeli occupation, even though occupied peoples have a right to armed resistance under international law (Article 1.4 of UN Treaty No. 17512).

It seems like every few years things reach a boiling point and violence flares up yet again. As it turns out, the IDF has a process called "mowing the grass" in which it attacks Gaza periodically to keep it "neat and tidy". When Palestinians attack, Israel invokes its right to defend itself and responds (ineffectively, I might add) with a heavily disproportionate amount of violence. The "right to defend itself" argument is flawed because it's defending itself against a problem it created. Palestinian attacks aren't unprovoked; you have to put yourself in their shoes to understand why they would resort to violence. The solution is to rectify what led up to the violence in the first place, as summarized in the preceding paragraphs.

Palestinians are fighting for survival. Not just in the literal sense of trying to stay alive, but for the existence of their identity as a distinct group of people, and as a state. Statehood was taken away from them, and they are being denied their legal right to self-determination. They are also fighting against the illegal military occupation of their country and the building of settlements that make statehood all but impossible.

This is a fight against an extremist political ideology that calls for the expulsion and/or subjugation of an entire group of people in order to achieve the end goal of having an exclusive, Jewish-majority state in a land where just a century ago Jews comprised less than 10% of the total population.

This is not some millennia-long fight between Muslims and Jews. This is not an attempt to drive Jews into the sea. The Palestinians would resist regardless of who was inflicting this treatment on them, even if it were aliens from another planet.

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## 4 A QUICK GEOGRAPHY & HISTORY LESSON

Historical Palestine is located in the western part of Asia and is surrounded by Lebanon to its north, Syria to its northeast, Jordan to its east, and Egypt to its southwest. Off its west coast is the Mediterranean Sea. This small piece of land is often referred to as the Holy Land and is significant to Jews, Christians, and Muslims.



*Credit: Friends of Sabeel North America*



Palestine has evolved quite a bit over the past century. While the preceding map is outdated, it clearly shows how Palestine has been shrinking while Israel has been growing. Make a mental note of this as we briefly review the history of Palestine.

There is, of course, a lot that has happened over the past 100+ years related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but I didn't want to turn this chapter into a history book. Thus, following is only a high-level timeline of the conflict and related events to provide history and context before we expand into other topics.

1890: Nathan Birnbaum founded the concept of Zionism.

1896: Theodor Herzl, who became the face of modern Zionism, published a pamphlet titled *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State) which expressed the desire to create an independent Jewish state.

1897 - August: The First Zionist Congress was held in Basel, Switzerland to build support for the Zionist agenda.

1914 - July: World War I commenced.

1917: The Balfour Declaration was issued by the British government expressing support for a Jewish state in Palestine.

1918 - November: World War I came to an end. As a side note, there were an estimated 700,000 Arabs and 56,000 Jews living in Palestine at this time.

1920: The British Mandate went into effect and Palestine became "Mandatory Palestine" under British control.

1933 - August: The Haavara Agreement was signed between Nazi Germany and the Zionist Federation of Germany to help facilitate the relocation of Jews to Palestine.

1939: The White Paper of 1939 was issued by the British government, once again supporting the idea of a Jewish state in Palestine, but limiting Jewish immigration.

1939 - September: World War II commenced.

1942 - May: The Biltmore Conference took place in New York City where Zionism was turned up to 11 and it was decided that unlimited Jewish immigration should be allowed to Palestine to overturn the Palestinian majority in demographics.

1945 - September: World War II ended. Britain initially funded and supported the takeover of Palestine, but after the Holocaust the US basically replaced the UK as the backer of the Zionist movement under Harry Truman. The British Empire was already in decline by this time. As the US ramped up its support for the soon-to-be-established foreign nation of Israel, African Americans in the US were still facing racism, violence, and segregation. Go figure.

Below is a screenshot from a video with Harry Truman standing next to a map of the Middle East. Note that Palestine is recognized as Palestine.



*Credit: Harry S. Truman Library*

1946 - June: British troops launched Operation Agatha (a.k.a. Black Sabbath) to arrest a large number of Jewish terrorists and confiscate incriminating documents from the Jewish Agency.

1946 - July: A Jewish terrorist group bombed the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, which was being used by the British as their administrative headquarters, as retaliation for Operation Agatha.

1947 - November: The United Nations (UN) decided, against the will of the native people, to partition Palestine and give away 56% of the land to the Jewish minority.

1948 - April: Shortly before the British Mandate over Palestine was to end, Plan Dalet was executed in which Jewish terrorist groups attacked a variety of Palestinian villages to ethnically cleanse them.

1948 - May: The British Mandate came to an end and Israel declared independence. Following this declaration, Israel's new Arab neighbors (understandably unhappy about the UN partition) invaded and failed in their lackluster attempt to liberate Palestine. This war also led to an estimated 750,000 Palestinians being expelled and becoming refugees; this event is known as the Nakba, or Catastrophe.

1948 - December: The UN General Assembly passed Resolution 194 calling for the repatriation of Palestinian refugees, which has never transpired.

1949: The 1949 Armistice Agreements were signed between Israel and its Arab neighbors to formally end the previous year's war. This also established what are known as the Green Line borders to demarcate Israeli land vs Arab land.

1964 - June: The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was officially formed to represent the nationalist goals of the Palestinian people. (The names and terminology can get confusing, but currently the PLO is basically an umbrella organization with a few groups under it, with Fatah being the big one.)

1967 - June: The Six-Day War took place in which Israel launched a preemptive attack against Egypt. Israel initially lied and claimed it was responding to an Egyptian attack, but it was soon obvious that Israel initiated the war. This was more of a sucker punch than a valiant David-

vs-Goliath battle. Israel then took control of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Syria's Golan Heights, and Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. Israel wasted no time in colonizing and building settlements. During the course of this war, Israel also attacked an American naval ship, the USS Liberty, killing 34 Americans and wounding another 171.

1967 - November: The UN Security Council passed Resolution 242, calling out Israel's belligerence and requesting that it withdraw from newly occupied territories.

1973 - October: The Yom Kippur War took place, in which Syria and Egypt tried to reclaim territory stolen from them, as was required by UN Resolution 242. This latest war led to UN Resolution 338, which basically said that they need to implement Resolution 242.

1978 - September: A peace treaty known as the Camp David Accords was signed between Israel and Egypt.

1979 - March: Israel finally withdrew from the Sinai Peninsula, which it had stolen from Egypt in 1967 after a surprise attack. Thus began a normalization of the relationship between the two countries.

1982 - September: Ariel Sharon, who eventually became Israeli Prime Minister, helped orchestrate the Sabra and Shatila massacre in Lebanon in which thousands of Palestinians were murdered at refugee camps.

1987 - December: The First Intifada (Uprising) began after an Israel Defense Forces (IDF) truck crashed into a Palestinian vehicle at the Jabalia refugee camp and killed four Palestinian civilians. Palestinians, already fed up with decades of military occupation, engaged in widespread protest and civil disobedience. The common image from the time was hapless Palestinians resisting against a powerful military with nothing more than stones. Israel, as per the norm, responded with disproportionate violence and killed up to 1,300 Palestinians over the next six years. Israeli soldiers beat Palestinian protesters and even broke their arms and legs. This is also the time that Hamas was formed as a result of general dissatisfaction with the PLO.

1991: The al-Qassam Brigades was founded as the armed wing of Hamas.

1991 - October: The Madrid Peace Conference took place in which several countries engaged in talks to try and find a resolution to the conflict. Neither Israel nor Palestine seemed to budge from their positions, so the conference ended with nothing more than an agreement to continue talking.

1993 - September: Known as the Oslo Accords, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and the PLO's Mahmoud Abbas signed an agreement in which the PLO renounced terrorism and accepted Israel's right to exist. The Palestinian Authority (PA) was also established to act as the Palestinians' main political institution.

1994 - February: The Cave of the Patriarchs Massacre (a.k.a. Hebron Massacre) took place, in which the Jewish terrorist Baruch Goldstein gunned down 29 Palestinian civilians praying inside a mosque.

1994 - May: The Gaza-Jericho Agreement (a.k.a. Cairo Agreement) was established in which Israel agreed to withdraw its forces from the Gaza Strip and Jericho Area.

1994 - October: A peace treaty was signed between Israel and Jordan.

1995 - November: Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by a Jewish terrorist named Yigal Amir. Yitzhak Rabin was no saint and had plenty of Palestinian blood on his hands from his time as a militant, but as Prime Minister he gave the impression of negotiating a peace deal with Palestine, which is what led to his assassination.

2000 - July: The Camp David Summit took place in the US between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and the PA's Yasser Arafat with the goal of following through on the Oslo Accords.

2000 - September: To provoke the Palestinians, Ariel Sharon decided to visit the al-Aqsa compound where the Dome of the Rock is located. It wasn't a friendly visit that he arranged with leaders at the mosque. Rather, he showed up with hundreds of Israeli riot police ready to harm Palestinians. This event triggered the Second Intifada, which lasted till 2005.

2006 - January: Hamas won elections in Gaza by a narrow margin.

2007: Unhappy about Hamas' win in the Gaza elections, Israel and Egypt began a crippling blockade against the Strip.

2008 - December: Israel attacked Gaza and killed around 1,400 Palestinians in an operation known as Cast Lead. The official goal was to deter Hamas from launching rockets into Israeli territory, but there has been talk of "mowing the grass" as a periodic form of killing Palestinians and keeping them in check.

2010 - May: Israel attacked the Gaza Freedom Flotilla, six civilian ships aiming to deliver aid to the besieged Gaza Strip, killing 10 people.

2014 - July: Israel attacked Gaza again in what they called Operation Protective Edge, once again with the goal of stopping Hamas rockets.

2017 - December: To add insult to injury and further undermine the "peace process", the US, under Donald Trump, recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

2018 - July: The Basic Law was passed in Israel, stating that "the right to national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish People."

2019 - March: The US recognized and legitimized Israel's theft of the Golan Heights from Syria in 1967.

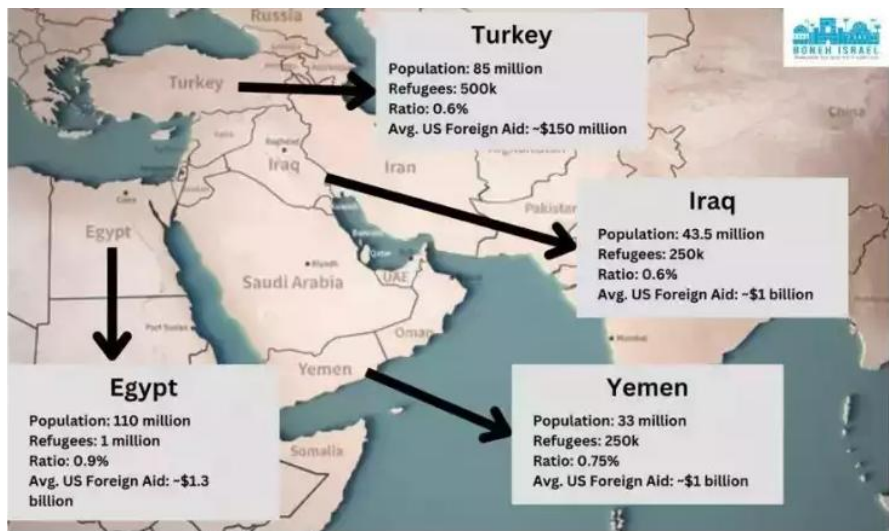
2020 - January: A flawed "peace plan" was proposed by the US to legitimize Israel's theft of additional land in the West Bank and make it officially part of Israel. It also denied Palestinian refugees' legal right to return.

2021 - May: The Unity Intifada took place in which Palestinians protested Israel's abuse after they tried to expel Palestinians from Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem.

2023 - October: The now-infamous Hamas attack took place in which Hamas resistance fighters broke through the cage that is the Gaza Strip and reportedly killed 1,139 Israelis (including soldiers and police) and took more than 200 people hostage.

2023 - early-November: Israel announced that it would split north and south Gaza. By this time, Israeli forces killed more than 10,000 Palestinian civilians, with the number of children killed exceeding 4,000.

2023 - late-November: Hamas and Israel entered into a temporary truce during which Hamas released a number of Israeli hostages for the release of some Palestinian women and children being held hostage in Israeli prisons. Unfortunately Israel continued arresting Palestinians during this time, so it wasn't exactly a win for Palestinians. Also at this time a plan was released to relocate the refugees of Gaza to Turkey, Egypt, Iraq, and Yemen, in short paving the way to cleanse Gaza of Palestinians and allowing Israel to annex it.



*Credit: Boneh Israel*

2023 - late-December: South Africa accused Israel of committing genocidal acts and filed a case with the International Court of Justice. The Christmas Eve Massacre took place in which an Israeli air strike killed at least 70 Palestinians in the Maghazi refugee camp. By the end of 2023, Israel killed an estimated 30,000 people in Gaza; this figure includes those presumed dead but buried beneath rubble. Most of Gaza's population had been displaced, tens of thousands of homes were destroyed, tens of thousands of people were injured, and hundreds of schools and mosques were damaged.

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## 5 HUMAN RIGHTS FOR WHOM?

For reference, following are few of the articles from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

- Article 5: No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
- Article 9: No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.
- Article 13.1: Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State.
- Article 13.2: Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.
- Article 15.1: Everyone has the right to a nationality.
- Article 17.2: No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

Somewhat ironically, the United Nations' (UN) Declaration of Human Rights was published the same year as the Nakba, or Catastrophe, when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were driven from their homes so Israel could apparently claim its independence from them as well as from Britain.

Contrary to what this declaration calls for, Palestinians have been subject to degrading treatment and punishment, as well as arbitrary arrest and detention (sometimes without due process), which former Israeli soldier Eran Efrati has detailed. Palestinians' movement is restricted, and those in the diaspora have been blocked from returning home. The Palestinian national identity is being erased. As Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich once said, "There is no such thing as a Palestinian people."

Last but not least, Palestinians have been robbed of their homes, possessions within those homes, farmland, and financial assets.

So much for the “universal” application of these human rights. Unfortunately the United Nations has become a bit of a lame duck. The concept of the UN was good in that it could create global cooperation and collaboration between countries on a variety of issues. It should, in theory, help build equality, peace, and justice. In practice, however, the UN has too often been ineffective.

To begin with, the UN is largely responsible for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict because of its partition of the land against the will of the people already living there. Doesn't sound too democratic to me.

Further, the UN has condemned actions by Israel over the years, but to what effect? UN Resolutions opposing Israel's actions are often rejected by the US, effectively giving Israel a blank check to operate with impunity. Statements by the UN about potential war crimes do not deter Israel from doing what it does.

UN Security Council resolutions are legally binding, but so far the US has vetoed more than 40 resolutions related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In early December 2023, there was a resolution presented to the UN Security Council calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, which was voted on by a council of 15 member states; 13 voted in favor of, one abstained, and one vetoed it. You can guess who vetoed it.

It only takes one veto from any of the UN Permanent Member States to nix a resolution. The Permanent Members include the US, UK, France, Russia, and China. In my opinion it should be “majority rules”, in which case at least three of these five would need to veto a resolution.

It seems to me that the UN needs an overhaul. But it's the closest thing we have to international law. Its pillars and objectives make sense, and it has helped resolve conflicts in some countries. I also like the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The UN just needs to be made more effective somehow.

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## 6 HOW WOULD YOU LIKE IT?

Let's play a game...

Suppose you live in a nice, big house with your family. It's you, your spouse, two girls, and two boys. One fine evening the family is relaxing and having fun playing board games. Snacks aplenty. Hot cocoa. Wood burning in the fireplace.

Then all of a sudden you hear *bang, bang, bang!* A group of three armed intruders forces its way into the home and pushes your entire family out at gunpoint. Your oldest son, a high school athlete, decides to fight back, but he is shot dead for being a "terrorist". How dare he resist?

You, your spouse, and your three remaining children leave the premises and call the police. Thankfully you had your mobile phone in your pocket. The cops come but claim they cannot do anything.

You try to leverage the judicial system. To resolve the conflict the judge grants you and your family the privilege of living in the basement, while the intruders get to live on the ground floor and second floor of the home. You cannot go to either floor to retrieve your possessions. You must remain in the basement.

Since you can't leave and you can't go to work, you rely on a local church to provide daily meals for you and your family. It's tough, but at least you're alive, right? You should be content.

And don't even think about escaping. At any given time one of the three armed intruders will be guarding the basement door. If you try to leave

the basement, the new residents of the home may shoot you because they have a right to self-defense. Oh, and there are cameras in the basement so the intruders can watch your every move. Don't complain. Just be quiet and peaceful.

How would you like it?

## 7 ONE MONTH IN

Following the October 7th Hamas attacks, Fox News commentators were quick to remind viewers that Palestinians in Gaza elected Hamas in 2006 (albeit by a narrow margin -- 44.45% of the votes vs 41.43% for rival Fatah), and therefore no Palestinians in Gaza were innocent. They used this as justification to wipe out all of them, and repeated the age-old lie about Palestinians wanting to push Jews into the sea (even though the opposite has been happening on the ground).

Do you see the absurdity of the argument made by Fox News and others? That would be like holding all Americans responsible for their government's actions, such as the killing of civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the torture of prisoners in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay. And let's not forget that the US encouraged the 2006 elections in Palestinian territories.

What's more, if you look at the demographics of Gaza, you'll see that about 40% of the population is 14 years old or younger, with a median age of 18. Most of the people living in Gaza weren't even around when Hamas was elected, or were very young. And according to Rashid Khalidi in *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine* (Chapter 6), the people who voted for Hamas were more interested in change than in armed resistance.

In any case, this chapter is for data nerds, though we should remember that numbers lack empathy and should not cause us to forget the real human suffering taking place. Following is a glimpse of the damage Israel caused just one month into its 2023 invasion of the Gaza Strip:

- Over **10,000 Palestinians** in the Gaza Strip were **killed** and over 25,000 injured according to the Palestine Health Ministry and Gaza health authorities; these are conservative figures, as Euro-Med Monitor reported higher numbers
- Over **4,100 children** were **killed** and over 6,300 injured according to the Palestine Health Ministry and Gaza health authorities
  - This doesn't even include children who were missing and whose dead bodies may be buried under rubble from all the buildings Israel bombed
- **60 schools** were **destroyed** and 160 schools were damaged according to the Palestine Health Ministry and Gaza health authorities
- **175 medical staff members** were **killed** and **31 ambulances** were **hit** by Israeli shelling according to the Palestine Health Ministry and Gaza health authorities
- **16 hospitals** and **32 healthcare centers** were **forced to stop operations** due to continued Israeli shelling and restriction of electricity and fuel for generators according to the Palestine Health Ministry and Gaza health authorities
- **47 journalists** were **killed** with another 20 injured according to the Committee to Protect Journalists
  - What's more, nine journalists were arrested and a number of offices were destroyed
  - The Israeli military restricted access to the Gaza Strip by journalists, except in cases where they were embedded with the military and agreed to submit footage for approval before publication according to *The New Republic*; this effectively made them mouthpieces for Israeli propaganda
- **89 United Nations members** were **killed** and 50 UN facilities were damaged in Gaza according to UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency)
- Over in the West Bank, **more than 100 Palestinians** (including around 30 children) were **killed** by Israeli forces and illegal settlers according to *The New York Times*

These are human beings we're talking about, not to mention basic services and rights that all people deserve. Mothers, fathers, children. Doctors and healthcare staff. Journalists trying to get the truth out for the world to see. Schools. Hospitals. *Hospitals* for crying out loud. Is nothing off limits?

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## 8 WHAT MAKES THIS ONE DIFFERENT?

Israel and its allies have done a tremendously good job of portraying Israel as the perpetual victim and as the beacon of freedom and democracy in the Middle East. But once you look at undisputed historical facts, a different picture starts to emerge.

What makes this conflict different from the many other conflicts that have taken place (or are still taking place) in the past few decades? What is it that fuels the United States' unwavering support for Israel? How did this "climate of impunity" come to exist that basically gives Israel a blank check to do as it wishes? It's a combination of things, including but not limited to the following:

- **Ignorance/Lack of Intelligence:** There's a lack of understanding about what's really going on and the decades of history behind it, thanks in part to disinformation and propaganda, as well as one-sided media coverage. People in the US have been fed a specific narrative, but they deserve to know the whole story.
- **Racism:** The victims of this conflict are primarily of Arab descent, who have historically been portrayed as villains in film and media. The word "terrorist" is sprinkled liberally in news reports, sometimes with a harsh tone for embellishment. In the US we've been led to believe that all Arabs are Muslim, who have also long been portrayed as villains, but some of the victims are actually Christian Arabs. The amount of pure, unadulterated hatred is palpable. They think we're lesser humans (if humans at all) and think our religion is false. A simple Google search will bring up plenty of anti-Arab and Islamophobic vitriol. Yet they think they are

people of love, peace, and good values.

- **Reporting:** There has long been a lack of journalistic integrity when it comes to reporting on this conflict and other news related to Arabs. Just look at the language used in reporting about Arab countries for the past few decades. Arabs and Muslims have routinely been demonized as “terrorists”, while white mass murderers merely had mental health issues. There are also double standards about who we believe; for example, whatever Israeli officials state is taken as fact by US media (barring certain outlets like National Public Radio), but data released by Palestinian officials is doubted and questioned.
- **Religious Extremism:** There are powerful, elite Evangelical Christians who believe Jewish people must be returned to the Holy Land in order to initiate the Second Coming of Christ and the Rapture, which is when Christians (both dead and alive) will supposedly ascend into Heaven. (By the way, what do these Christians believe will happen to Jews during the Rapture?)
- **Political Extremism:** Going back to the time of Harry Truman, the US has gone well beyond being an ally or friend to Israel. It has essentially given it cover to do what it wants, and provides the funding to do so. And if the United Nations presents a resolution to condemn Israeli war crimes or human rights violations, the US will swiftly use its veto power to shoot it down. As President Joe Biden said: “And let there be no doubt: The United States has Israel’s back.”
- **Strategic Interests:** Having a military outpost in the Middle East is not just good for keeping Arabs and Persians in check militarily, but it’s also good for business. American defense contractors have benefited tremendously, while American tech companies have leveraged Israel as sort of a secondary Silicon Valley. As Biden has said multiple times in his long political career, “If there were not an Israel, we’d have to invent one.” Back in 1986 he said, “It is the best \$3 billion investment we make.”
- **Excellent Public Relations/Propaganda:** Israel has portrayed itself as “the people of light” in the Middle East, as the nation at risk of annihilation. It’s all about owning the narrative and countering opposing views by equating them with anti-Semitism. This makes any sort of healthy debate or dissent very difficult, if not impossible. Even innocent, positive phrases like “From the river to the sea” have been flipped around and painted with a negative connotation. Anti-Palestinian propagandists have become masters of spin and

character assassination. They are good at manipulating facts, rewriting history, gaslighting people, and putting others on the defensive.

The US and Israel are two peas in a pod. Both are settler colonial nations. Both have utilized segregation and denial of rights to certain people in their histories. Both have employed police brutality against certain groups of people. And both have executed merciless bombing against largely civilian populations.

“And they attribute to God what they themselves dislike, while their tongues utter the lie that theirs is the goodness. Without a doubt, for them is the Fire, and they will be neglected. By God, We sent messengers to communities before you, but Satan made their deeds appear alluring to them. He is their master today, and they will have a painful punishment. We revealed to you the Scripture only to clarify for them what they differ about, and guidance and mercy for people who believe.” - Quran 16:62-64

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## 9 THE GENESIS OF THE PROBLEM

What is Zionism? Depending on the source, the definition will vary slightly based on the source's bias. One of the more neutral definitions I found is from Harvard University:

“Zionism is a political movement that was initiated in the late 19th century with the aim of actualizing the Jewish sense of peoplehood in a physical nation, leading to the creation of the state of Israel in 1948.”

While Theodor Herzl is often cited as the founder of modern Zionism in 1896, it was actually Nathan Birnbaum who coined the term in 1890, although he worked on nationalism even before then. A few years later Herzl became a staunch proponent of this ideology, but interestingly, Birnbaum eventually turned his back on Zionism as he became more religious. Some say the true timeline began even before 1890 with John Nelson Darby's teachings followed by the Scofield Reference Bible, but we'll use 1890 as our starting point since that's when the term was coined.

The concept of a Jewish homeland is fine, but why Zionism turned out to be such a key component of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is how the State of Israel was created. And other world events that took place during the birth and rise of Zionism only exacerbated things. It was basically a perfect storm.

In 1917, Arthur James Balfour of Britain issued the Balfour Declaration in which he declared support for “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.” Winston Churchill was also an

ardent supporter of this idea. The problem? People were already living in Palestine, and this declaration was made unilaterally without the Palestinians' input.

As anti-Semitism grew in Europe, support among Jews for a homeland naturally increased. As horrific as the Holocaust was, it did in essence prove the need for a Jewish state. One could even argue that the Palestinians were punished for Hitler's crimes, but to be fair, the concept of Zionism existed before Hitler came to power.

While the Zionist movement was building up its case, and while Palestine was under British control (as of 1920), there was a large amount of illegal Jewish immigration from Europe to Palestine. When Palestinians objected, they were violently crushed by British forces, often with the help of Zionist terrorist groups.

With the Palestinians thoroughly beaten and battered by the British and the Zionists, Britain wiped its hands clean and handed Palestine off to the United Nations, which (again, without the input of the Palestinians) decided in 1947 to partition Palestine and give 56% of the country to the Jewish people.

After Britain ended its mandate over Palestine in 1948, Israel declared independence, which unfortunately led to war with its Arab neighbors, Israel's annexation of more land, and the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homes. Over the next few decades, Israel continued its aggression by attacking neighboring Arab countries, carrying out assassinations through its intelligence agency Mossad, theft and demolition of Palestinian land and homes, building of illegal settlements in Palestinian territory (or what remained of it), and general oppression of Palestinians.

Fast forward to recent years, Israel established a nation-state law in 2018 giving the right of self-determination exclusively to Jewish people, not too long after the US recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital towards the end of 2017. Since then, Israel has continued building settlements in the West Bank, and has continued its blockade of Gaza since 2007.

This is, of course, a condensed history of Zionism, but the establishment of a Jewish state at all costs has been detrimental to the existence of Palestine and its inhabitants' identity. Zionism didn't take into consideration the rights or desires of people living in whichever land it

wanted to establish its Jewish state in. It didn't incorporate a concept of peaceful coexistence.

Zionism turned a religion -- Judaism -- into a nationalist ideology. It gives the privilege of Israeli citizenship to Jewish people anywhere in the world, even if they've never been to Israel, while Palestinians born on the land but expelled are denied repatriation. And it's based on the concept that Jewish people have a God-given right to this land, a belief that others might not share and a belief that has led to the violent expulsion and oppression of people.

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## 10 JUDAISM VS ZIONISM

Some people try to claim the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is a thousand-year war between Muslims and Jews, but that's not true. For starters, indigenous Palestinians consisted of Muslims, Christians, and Jews, and prior to the Balfour Declaration all three faiths lived peacefully in this land.

Jewish people are by and large good people. Muslims consider Jews and Christians to be People of the Book and relatives in the Abrahamic tradition. Moses (peace be upon him) is mentioned by name in the Quran more than any other prophet.

True followers of Judaism follow the commandments given to them, including "You shall not murder" and "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor". Additionally, Jewish people have been allies in the fight against apartheid, racism, and genocide.

There are Jews in Israel who disagree with their government's actions, and there are Jews in other parts of the world such as Jewish Voice for Peace and Independent Jewish Voices of Canada who also stand against anti-Arab bigotry and oppression. There's a group called Breaking the Silence that consists of Israeli soldiers who detail the grim reality of occupying Palestinian civilian territories and the abuse that takes place. We also have to give credit to B'Tselem for capturing and publishing data on human rights violations.

To be sure, Judaism and Zionism are not one and the same. Just as not all Palestinians or Muslims are Hamas, not all Israelis or Jews are Zionists. Further, there are liberal Jews and overzealous Jews, just as there is a

spectrum in any religion or political group.

To oppose Judaism and Jewish people is wrong, but to oppose a political/nationalist ideology like Zionism is no different than opposing any other extremist ideology such as fascism. Being morally opposed to Zionism or the actions of the Israeli government does not make one anti-Semitic.

If someone finds themselves with negative feelings toward Jewish people during their activism for the rights of Palestinians, they should take a breather and reevaluate what they are fighting for. It's not about opposing Judaism or Jewish people. It's about human rights and the God-given right to simply live.

“O you who believe! Be upright to God, witnessing with justice, and let not the hatred of a certain people prevent you from acting justly. Adhere to justice, for that is nearer to piety, and fear God. God is informed of what you do.” - Quran 5:8

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## 11 TEMPLE MOUNT

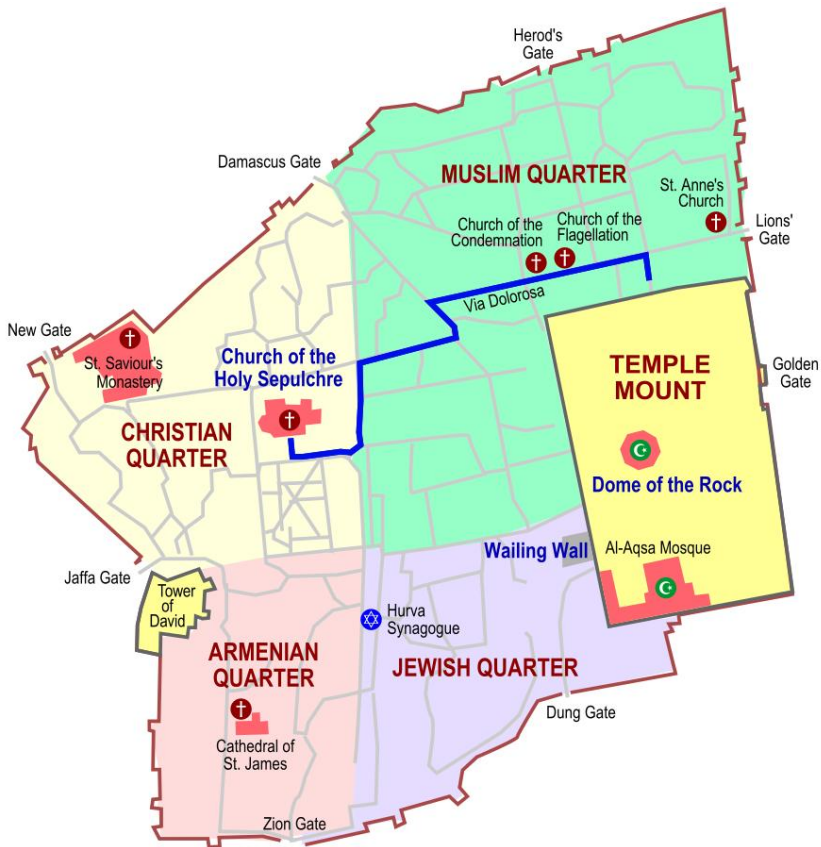
Jerusalem is a holy city important to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. At roughly 48 square miles, it's not a huge city. There's a small walled-off portion in the east of the city known as Old City. Here lie some very important historical and religious sites, such as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre where Christians worship, the Western Wall (a.k.a. Wailing Wall) where Jews worship, and both the al-Aqsa Mosque (a.k.a. Qibli Mosque) and Dome of the Rock where Muslims worship.

The mosque is fairly nondescript, while the Dome of the Rock is an iconic shrine with a shiny golden dome. The significance of this shrine is that Muslims believe this is the location from which Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) ascended to Heaven in what is known as the Night Journey.

Jordan acted as waqf (i.e. custodian) of al-Aqsa after the 1967 war. The arrangement is supposed to be that Muslims can pray there and non-Muslims can visit. However, since East Jerusalem is under illegal Israeli occupation, the Israeli police control access to al-Aqsa.

The Jewish and Muslim sites are all part of one compound, which is where things get a bit complicated. Muslims refer to this whole area as the al-Aqsa Mosque compound or Haram al-Sharif (i.e. Noble Sanctuary), while Jews refer to it as Temple Mount.

Following is a map of the Old City:



*Credit: Wikimedia Commons*

Two ancient Jewish temples were previously in this location over two millennia ago, the first of which was destroyed by the Babylonians and the second of which was destroyed by the Romans. Muslims had nothing to do with the destruction of these temples, as Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) had not even been born yet.

Jews believe this is the precise site where a third temple should be built either before or after their messiah is sent by God. There are varying beliefs. One school of thought is that the temple must be rebuilt before the Messiah arrives, while another school of thought is that the Messiah will arrive and rebuild the temple himself.

In any case, hopefully you're starting to see the problem here. How is the Third Temple going to be built when they believe that the Muslim sites are sitting atop the grounds where this temple belongs?

Apologists claim that it's just hearsay or a conspiracy theory that people want to destroy the Dome of the Rock to build the Third Temple. However, it would be naive to think this couldn't happen. I don't want to sound alarmist and claim that it will happen, but I do believe it's likely. We simply need to look at what people are saying publicly. The Temple Institute is already preparing for it. For example, they imported red heifers from Texas, appropriated a piece of land called the Mount of Olives from Palestine, and have the requisite priests ready.

One group called Boneh Israel (Building Israel) would apparently allow the al-Aqsa Mosque to remain (south part of the compound), but would tear down the Dome of the Rock to build the temple. They also want the people of Gaza "resettled" (i.e. ethnically cleansed) to other countries, and want full control over the West Bank (what they call Judea and Samaria).

*Credit: facebook.com/BuildIsrael/*

The terrorist group Lehava (sometimes spelled Lahava) literally called for the demolition of the Dome of the Rock in May 2022. They even made a poster envisioning their dream of such an event. Still a conspiracy theory? This is the same group whose leader suggested several years prior that Palestinian Christians were "blood-sucking vampires" who should be expelled from the country, and the same group that has been caught chanting "death to Arabs".



*Credit: Lehava*

Israel has already been testing the waters for decades. On more than one occasion Israeli settlers and Israeli police forces have raided al-Aqsa. Despite its human rights violations and violations of international law, Israel has never been held accountable. UN resolutions, condemnations, and protests have no material impact. Despite its illegal annexation of the entirety of Jerusalem in 1980 and the proclamation that it would “remain forever under Israel's sovereignty”, nobody stepped in to stop them; on the contrary, the US accepted Jerusalem as Israel’s capital in 2017. Despite stripping Palestinians in East Jerusalem of their permanent residence status, in some cases deporting them, and restricting them from accessing the al-Aqsa Mosque, the world has allowed it to continue. Despite Israel destroying 66 mosques in the Strip just one month into the 2023 war on Gaza, there were no repercussions. Israel even destroyed the oldest mosque in Gaza.

Remember also Ariel Sharon's bellicose visit to the compound in 2000, as well as Itamar Ben-Gvir's contentious visit in 2023. They showed no indication of wanting peaceful coexistence.

There might be global outcries and rallies if the Dome of the Rock and/or al-Aqsa Mosque are torn down, but they know Muslims won't actually do anything. If/when the Dome or Mosque are demolished, apologists will likely claim something like, "Well, synagogues were torn down in the past."

True prophecies will materialize according to Allah's (SWT) schedule and His will. If people try to rush or force prophecy, who knows what the unintended consequences will be.

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## 12 MESSIAH

Religion is a fascinating thing. Evangelical Christian Zionists in the US embrace Israel because they want to fulfill prophecy by returning Jewish people to the Holy Land, which will allow for the Second Coming of Jesus (peace be upon him) as Messiah. Jews also believe a messiah will come to the earth, but they rejected Jesus (peace be upon him) as the Messiah and are still patiently waiting.

The funny thing is that Israel is using the US to get what it wants, while American Evangelicals are using Jews to get what they want. Yet they have conflicting beliefs about what is going to happen once the puzzle pieces are in place. An unholy alliance, if you will. In the meantime there's a group in the middle watching both of these groups amusedly.

Little do they know that Muslims also believe in a messiah. According to Islam, Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) was indeed the Messiah and will return to the earth. His return will be based on Allah's (SWT) will, not by forcing all Jews into a specific piece of land nor by building a temple. Muslims believe in his virgin birth and a variety of miracles.

However, Islam rejects the belief that Jesus (peace be upon him) was the son of God or God-incarnate. I believe the latter Christian belief is one reason Jews rejected Jesus (peace be upon him), but there's also debate in Judaism about Jesus' fulfillment of certain messianic prophecies. Muslims believe that all prophets were sent by Allah (SWT) to preach monotheism, even if certain practices varied based on culture, location, and time.

Following is what the Quran says in Chapter 3 (Family of Imran):

45. The Angels said, “O Mary, God gives you good news of a Word from Him. His name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, well-esteemed in this world and the next, and one of the nearest.

46. He will speak to the people from the crib, and in adulthood, and will be one of the righteous.”

47. She said, “My Lord, how can I have a child, when no man has touched me?” He said, “It will be so. God creates whatever He wills. To have anything done, He only says to it, ‘Be,’ and it is.”

48. And He will teach him the Scripture and wisdom, and the Torah and the Gospel.

49. A messenger to the Children of Israel: “I have come to you with a sign from your Lord. I make for you out of clay the figure of a bird, then I breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by God’s leave. And I heal the blind and the leprous, and I revive the dead, by God’s leave. And I inform you concerning what you eat, and what you store in your homes. In that is a sign for you, if you are believers.”

50. “And verifying what lies before me of the Torah, and to make lawful for you some of what was forbidden to you. I have come to you with a sign from your Lord; so fear God, and obey me.”

51. “God is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. That is a straight path.”

55. God said, “O Jesus, I am terminating your life, and raising you to Me, and clearing you of those who disbelieve. And I will make those who follow you superior to those who disbelieve, until the Day of Resurrection. Then to Me is your return; then I will judge between you regarding what you were disputing.”

People are entitled to believe what they want, but if Christians had accepted Jesus (peace be upon him) as a prophet and not as God or son of God, and if Jews had accepted Jesus (peace be upon him) as the



Messiah, perhaps all three of these religions would be on the same page and there would be less turmoil in this world. And perhaps Christian anti-Semitism wouldn't have developed to the point that it has if there were no concept of Jewish deicide against Jesus (peace be upon him).

I can't dictate what people believe; I'm just saying it could have been a different world, one that is more tolerant and peaceful than what we ended up with.

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## 13 HELL ON EARTH

The October 2023 Hamas attack and subsequent Israeli invasion of Gaza led to many news headlines and reports. It put Gaza in the spotlight. However, Gaza has long been a living hell. As stated before, this didn't start on October 7th, 2023. While the heavy Israeli shelling in the latest war was horrific, it was nothing new.

Hamas won elections in Gaza in 2006 and took full control of the Strip in 2007. In response, Israel and Egypt initiated an indefinite blockade against Gaza, which for all intents and purposes is the moment Gaza became an open-air prison. Over 2 million people were locked into 141 square miles with limited resources, mostly having to rely on international aid to survive. Unemployment was high, and air and sea shipments were restricted.

As if the above living conditions weren't bad enough, Israel launched air and ground assaults on Gaza in 2008, 2012, and 2014, turning the Strip into a hellscape of rubble, affecting the power grid and contaminating the water supply. According to *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine* (Chapter 6), 3,804 Palestinians were killed in these three attacks with nearly a thousand of those minors.

When 1,139 Israelis (including soldiers and police) were killed in the 2023 Hamas attacks, the world was understandably shocked and outraged. But when 3,804 Palestinians are killed, barely a peep from the media or world leaders.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention that many of the air attacks were committed using American F-15 and F-16 jets, American Apache helicopters, and American Hellfire missiles. In 2014, there was a two-month span in which Israel launched more than 6,000 air attacks and fired about 50,000 artillery and tank shells. Combined, this amounted to roughly 42 million pounds of explosives...all on a piece of land the size of Detroit.

This is beyond inhumane. Aside from the indiscriminate killing of human beings and other living things, consider the damage to infrastructure and the environment. Is this how humans should be treating the Holy Land, let alone the planet? Environmental concerns seem trivial during a war when so many civilians are being killed, but surely all this weaponry is causing harm to the earth.

Can you imagine having to live like this, living through years and years of bombing? What would that do to your mental health? How would it affect you psychologically? What would you do if Hell was the only life you knew? How would it impact your children?

Some of the people who committed these atrocities against Gaza have parents and/or grandparents who were put in concentration camps in Europe decades ago. For Jewish people to create inhumane living conditions for others while destroying the earth seems counterintuitive.

The suffering the Jewish people endured during the Holocaust does not give Israel the right to inflict the same type of suffering on others. How much more Palestinian blood must be shed before they are satiated? These are supposed to be God's chosen people, but one could be led to wonder if they are doing Satan's work.

“When he gains power, he strives to spread corruption on earth, destroying properties and lives. God does not like corruption.” - Quran 2:205

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## 14 RIGHT TO EXIST

“A land without a people for a people without a land.”

This was a popular Zionist refrain while drumming up support for a Jewish homeland with sights set on Palestine as the destination. The only problem is that Palestine was not a land without people. Native Palestinians -- consisting of Muslims, Christians, and Jews -- lived there in harmony.

Israel, as we know it today, did not exist a century ago. Through the Zionist movement and with violent support from the British, Jewish settlers from Europe were able to occupy a good portion of this land. And they continue expanding by appropriating what little is left of Palestine.

But still, after what the Jewish people went through with the Holocaust and a history of anti-Semitism, do they not have a right to live in peace and have their own homeland? The idea of a Jewish homeland makes sense considering persecution of Jews in Europe, but the irony is how much violence and persecution was involved in establishing Israel. Since Germany was largely responsible for the suffering of Jews during the Holocaust, it seems like a portion of Germany should have been partitioned to create Israel, but too late for that now.

Besides, there is a widespread belief that Palestine is/was the promised land for Jewish people. As Pastor John Hagee stated in 1999, “God sent

Adolf Hitler to help Jews reach the promised land.” What a bizarre thing to say.

The problem isn't Israel's existence; it's how it was created. We can't reverse the creation of Israel and send colonial settlers back to Europe, New York, and other locations, just like we can't expect Americans to go back to their ancestral countries and give the land back to the indigenous peoples who have true rights to the land (but have been mostly wiped out, sadly).

There has been plenty of talk about the need for Palestinians and other Arab countries to recognize Israel's right to exist, yet there is no discussion about Palestine's right to exist. Additionally, there is no consideration given to Palestinians' right to return to the country they were born in, to the homes they and generations of ancestors lived in.

This statement by former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir may explain why: “It was not as though there was a Palestinian people in Palestine considering itself as a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them. They did not exist.” This is coming from someone born in Ukraine and who changed her name to make it sound more Hebrew.

To put it bluntly, Jewish people came from Europe thanks to a generous immigration policy, terrorist militias (such as Haganah, Stern Gang, and Irgun) killed and drove Palestinians out from their homes and villages, then they established a new country and renamed it; the explicit goal was to fundamentally shift the land from a Palestinian majority to a Jewish majority state. Not that it was okay in the past, but this type of European conquest should simply not be a thing in the post-Enlightenment world.

Israel was created undemocratically and against the will of the existing inhabitants. Britain, and subsequently the United Nations, had no right to give away or partition the land without consent of the people living there. The UN partition plan went against their own charter (Chapter 1, Article 1) which states “Equal rights and self-determination of peoples”. And Israel continues to be in violation of international laws and moral standards, such as the building of the wall in the West Bank that the

International Court of Justice deemed illegal.

Regardless, the people are there in what we now call Israel. There are people born in Israel whose parents and even grandparents were born in this land. Israel is all they know. They can stay. A Palestinian has literally told me “they can stay.” We’re seeking liberation from oppression, apartheid, injustice, and ethnic cleansing, not from the Jewish people.

We can’t do to them what they did to us. Forgiveness is better than “an eye for an eye.” However, they need to recognize Palestine’s right to exist and allow Palestinians to return to their ancestral homes. We, on the other hand, need to recognize that some Jewish people still have a sense of insecurity due to European anti-Semitism that culminated with the Holocaust, although the Palestinians weren’t responsible for that and shouldn’t have had to pay the consequences.

There needs to be a reconciliation process. Israel should apologize for the war crimes it has committed such as the displacement of people from their ancestral homes, demolition of their homes, bombings of hospitals and mosques, killing of thousands of innocent children, and denial of basic necessities like food & water. At the very least, reparations should be paid for homes that were illegally demolished. The younger citizens of Israel also deserve an accurate retelling of their country’s history, and there needs to be some reeducation process to eliminate the hatred and dehumanization of Arabs.

Perhaps the saying should be revised to: “A land with a people for a people without a conscience.”

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## 15 RIGHT TO RESIST

While I don't condone violence and find it to be counterproductive, occupied peoples do technically have a right to defend themselves against occupiers via armed resistance.

According to the United Nations General Assembly 45th session, Resolution 45/130, the UN: "Reaffirms the legitimacy of the struggle of peoples for independence, territorial integrity, national unity and liberation from colonial domination, apartheid and foreign occupation by all available means, including armed struggle".

Following is some guidance from the International Committee of the Red Cross:

- "The civilian population of an occupied territory owes no allegiance to the occupying power."
- "Civilians are at all times entitled to respect for their persons, honour, family rights, religious convictions, and manners and customs. Their private property is protected."
- "After effective occupation of territory, members of the territory's armed forces who have not surrendered, organized resistance movements and genuine national liberation movements may resist the occupation."
- "Moreover, the deliberate destruction of civilian property is itself a violation of the law of armed conflict and constitutes a war crime."
- "Collective punishment is a violation of the law of armed conflict. It

is unlawful to apply physical or mental coercion to protected civilians to obtain information from them.”

Needless to say, Palestinians’ homes have been destroyed to make way for illegal settlements, Palestinians have long been victims of collective punishment, and Palestinians have been tortured and interrogated.

It should also go without saying that civilians should never be deliberately targeted in the course of armed resistance. When civilians are purposely targeted by resistance groups, it can irreparably damage the group’s image and undermine the cause, even though state-sponsored militaries almost always cause a lot more civilian deaths than ill-equipped militias could possibly cause.

For some reason the public has an easier time justifying military-caused civilian deaths (what they call collateral damage). One could argue, “Well, the military wasn’t purposely targeting civilians,” but that’s a weak argument when carpet-bombing an area with a high density of civilians using highly destructive weaponry. One only needs to look up civilian casualty figures for the Vietnam war, Iraq war, or Afghanistan war.

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## 16 RIGHT TO RETURN

People who were born in Palestine and had generations of family members living there are not allowed to return to their homeland. They live as refugees either in their own country or in neighboring countries, or are part of the large global diaspora of Palestinians. Yet Jewish people anywhere in the world have a “right to return” to Israel even if they or their parents had never been there previously. Their religion alone gives them a “right to return” while natural-born Palestinians with a birthright who were expelled from the land cannot return because they belong to the “wrong” religion or race.

If we get into a debate about who has more right to the land, there’s no contest. The indigenous people who have been living there for centuries or millennia have a natural right. The indigenous people of Palestine include people from all three Abrahamic faiths.

While the anti-Palestinian movement tries to claim there is no such thing as Palestinians, research seems to indicate that Palestinians of all faiths have roots going back to the Canaanites and Philistines. The debate over roots misses a key point, though. The indisputable fact is that people were living in this land prior to the Balfour Declaration and prior to the United Nations partition of Palestine, yet their human rights have been trampled on for decades.

The Jewish settlers who came to Palestine were mostly from Europe. It would be nice if we could take a large sampling of Palestinians and

Israelis and have them take DNA tests to gather data about their ancestral roots. However, under the Genetic Information Law, Israelis cannot take DNA tests unless they receive court approval.

If we say Jews have a Biblical right to the land, then we risk getting into religious extremism. Isn't there supposed to be a separation of church and state in democracies? Didn't the US fight wars against things like "Islamism"? Yet Israel gets a pass for imposing Jewish exclusivity, going so far as implementing The Basic Law in 2018 stating "the right to national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish People."

Under Article 13.2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country." Under UN Resolution 194, "refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours 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 which, under principles of international law or equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible."

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## 17 SETTLE DOWN

The West Bank is not huge, but it is a much larger piece of Palestinian land than the Gaza Strip, measuring about 2,180 square miles. That's a tad bigger than Delaware, which is one of the smallest states in the US. But get this: Delaware has a population of roughly 1 million people, while the West Bank's estimated Palestinian population is 3 million. As if that wasn't enough of a snug fit, there's at least half a million illegal Israeli settlers living in the West Bank. Some estimates are around 700,000.

I wish this was an uplifting story of Palestinians and Israelis coexisting, but the latter group isn't there in a friendly, neighborly type of way. Israeli hardliners refer to the West Bank by the Biblical names Judea and Samaria, and they believe they have a right to it. This is why the argument that "Palestinians should have accepted the 1947 UN Partition" doesn't hold water. After Israel's aggression in 1967 and illegal takeover of the West Bank, they began formally using Judea and Samaria to refer to this land. They believe the entire piece of land "from the river to the sea" belongs to Israel. (Well, let's hope that's all, as proponents of "Greater Israel" want to annex land from neighboring Middle Eastern countries as well.)

Settlements are basically communities created within the West Bank on Palestinian-owned land for Israeli citizens, and they are protected by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Thanks to government subsidies, housing in these settlements can be quite affordable for Israelis. As of this writing,

there are about 200 Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Settlements help break up the West Bank and make a future contiguous Palestinian state difficult, if not impossible, to create.

Settlements are illegal per the Fourth Geneva Convention (Article 49): “The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.”

Israel has demolished thousands of Palestinian homes in the West Bank, as tracked by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). One excuse Israel uses is that Palestinian homes were built “illegally” without the proper permits, but this is a lame excuse considering that Israel has no legitimate legal jurisdiction over the West Bank. It’s not only a violation of international law, but of human rights. Imagine if you had small children and your family was forced out of the home only to watch it being torn down by a Caterpillar bulldozer. Wouldn’t it be traumatic?

The Palestinian Authority (PA) is supposed to be the governing body in the West Bank, but some see it as a shill for the Israeli government and therefore illegitimate. The Palestinians who are still allowed to live in the West Bank live under Israeli military occupation, which is not pleasant. They have to pass through Israeli checkpoints, and their movement is impeded. They are under constant surveillance by Israeli forces, metal detectors, and cameras (including facial recognition) using a system called Mabat 2000. To protect illegal settlements, Palestinians are prohibited from driving on certain roads reserved for Israelis only. Some Palestinian farmers can’t even access their own farmland without Israeli approval. The situation has been described as apartheid.

As if life wasn’t miserable enough in the West Bank, Palestinians are subject to violence by Israeli settlers and soldiers. Palestinians have been shot, their crops have been destroyed, and their homes have been burned down. Violence against Palestinians escalated after Israel’s attack on Gaza in October 2023, but it has always been there due to a sense of entitlement and racial superiority by Israelis. Even if they are God’s chosen people, the rest of us are still God’s creation and we deserve to be treated with dignity. We’re all descendants of Adam (peace be upon him),

and all human beings have been honored by Allah (SWT).

“We have honored the Children of Adam, and carried them on land and sea, and provided them with good things, and greatly favored them over many of those We created.” - Quran 17:70

As Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said in his final sermon: “All mankind is from Adam and Eve; an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a White has no superiority over a Black nor a Black has any superiority over a White except by piety and good action.”

Not that this justifies the October 7th Hamas attack, but Hamas did state that -- along with aggression against al-Aqsa Mosque and the imprisonment of innocent Palestinian women and children -- its attack was due in part to violence against Palestinians by Israeli settlers and due to restrictions on Palestinian movement.

As stated before, the timeline did not begin on October 7th. In September 2023, just weeks before the October 7th attack, the UN reported that over 1,100 Palestinians in the West Bank had been displaced since the previous year due to violence by Israeli settlers. Yet people just expect the Palestinians to be “peaceful” and not engage in “terrorism” while they’re being driven out of their homes. They’re simply supposed to grin and bear it. Meanwhile the belligerent settlers are somehow the innocent victims. It’s a farce.

After Israel’s attack against Gaza in October 2023, things only got worse for Palestinians over in the West Bank with Israeli settlers becoming more emboldened. Jewish terrorists ramped up attacks against unarmed Palestinians, while IDF soldiers stood by idly (or worse, took part in the aggression). Within a month of this latest war, Israeli settlers and troops had killed over 100 Palestinians in the West Bank, including children.

Even before 2023, settlers have been forcing Palestinians out of their homes at gunpoint in East Jerusalem. Would it be okay if armed mobs stormed an American neighborhood and forced people out of their homes so they could occupy them instead? If not, why is it okay to do this to Palestinian Christian and Muslim families?

This is a truly sickening world that we live in. Israel actually armed the settlers with assault rifles! It's despicable. They can literally get away with murder. But they can only get away with murder in this life. Our deeds are being recorded. On Judgement Day there will be no escaping our sins.

“And the book will be placed, and you will see the sinners fearful of its contents. And they will say, ‘Woe to us! What is with this book that leaves nothing, small or big, but it has enumerated it?’ They will find everything they had done present. Your Lord does not wrong anyone.” - Quran 18:49

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## 18 HEROES & VILLAINS

In the US, Israel is portrayed as the David in a sea of Arab Goliaths. Israel is portrayed as mighty and heroic. However, Israel has not always acted righteously.

As detailed earlier in this book, many civilians were killed by Israeli forces in the October 2023 war against Gaza. By the end of December 2023, around 30,000 Palestinians were killed (including those presumed dead but buried under rubble), with about 59% of those women and children. And it's not like the men were all militants. By this time in the war, 101 journalists had been assassinated as well. Why? To prevent the truth from getting out.

The death toll is only part of the story. Tens of thousands were injured, some permanently disabled. Israel's war against Gaza also resulted in a humanitarian crisis with many people displaced from their homes and lacking food, water, and proper medical care due to a number of hospitals being shelled or otherwise shut down by the Israeli military. People in Gaza were starving, and they were being exposed to dirty water and disease, including diarrhea and respiratory illnesses. The psychological trauma is immeasurable.

Not even churches and mosques were spared from shelling. If someone so much as threatened to blow up a synagogue, they would be lambasted and punished to the full extent of the law. Yet when dozens of mosques and churches were destroyed or damaged in Gaza, it was pretty much

radio silence from world leaders.

In December 2023, just days before Christmas, an Israeli sniper shot and killed a mother and her daughter who were sheltering at the Holy Family Parish in Gaza. Many Christian families were using this parish for refuge. Did the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) really think they were a threat?

Electricity, phone lines, and internet were cut off, not only literally keeping Palestinians in the dark, but keeping the world in the dark about the goings-on in Gaza. We hold Israel's security in high regard in the US, but no mention of or concern about Palestinian security or their right to defend themselves.

Meanwhile, over in the West Bank, thousands of Palestinians were arrested during the course of this latest war. They are handcuffed and blindfolded, and often walked very roughly with their heads pushed down. They are sometimes stripped and beaten as well. They are humiliated. In some cases it's not just abuse; it's downright torture, as documented by Amnesty International.

One particularly disturbing event took place in mid-December 2023 when Israeli police ruthlessly beat Anadolu Agency photographer Mustafa Alkharouf in the streets of East Jerusalem. Thankfully this was captured on video, and it's tough to watch. Think about all the incidents not filmed.

Talk about a power trip. And this is behavior by Israeli police, people who should be operating with at least a modicum of integrity. Police are supposed to protect and serve without prejudice. Illegal settlers also attack and abuse Palestinians, but their rabid behavior is almost expected.

Another disrespectful act by Israeli soldiers in the West Bank took place in December 2023 when they entered a mosque in Jenin with their boots on, recited Jewish prayers over the loudspeaker, and mocked Islam. Imagine if the opposite happened, if Muslims raided a synagogue and did something like this. The world, rightly so, would be appalled. Yet in this case, where was the outrage? Places of worship should be off-limits.

“Those who were unjustly evicted from their homes, merely for saying,

‘Our Lord is God.’ Were it not that God repels people by means of others: monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques—where the name of God is mentioned much—would have been demolished. God supports whoever supports Him. God is Strong and Mighty.” - Quran 22:40

Many Israeli soldiers and police are not the heroes or beacons of freedom that the Western media makes them out to be. They are not people of honor and dignity. They are people who are in violation of international law and ethical standards, not to mention religious principles.

While the Israeli military and police bombed, destroyed, or otherwise abused Palestine and its people, Palestinian doctors worked tirelessly to save lives with minimal resources (and during times of war, minimal security). Doctors Without Borders also had volunteer doctors helping treat patients. There were civilians helping dig people out from the rubble and transporting them to the hospital, if possible. And let’s not forget the aid workers who sometimes waited for days to get their trucks into Gaza so they could deliver food, water, and other necessities. There were journalists who gave their lives to get the story out from Gaza about what was taking place there. These people are selfless and courageous. They are the true heroes.

“Because of that We ordained for the Children of Israel—that whoever kills a person—unless it is for murder or corruption on earth—it is as if he killed the whole of mankind; and whoever saves a person, it is as if he saved the whole of mankind...” - Quran 5:32

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## 19 PRISONERS

Gaza is often referred to as an open-air prison, considering the fact that it contains over 2 million people and is only about 141 square miles in size (about the size of Detroit, which has a fraction of the population). Israel tracks the population in Gaza (and the West Bank) through a population registry and keeps them under surveillance using drones and balloons.

Gaza has been under siege since June 2007. Even before the October 2023 war, movement of people and goods was restricted. The humanitarian situation was already dire. Israel even controlled how many calories of food entered Gaza. Only in rare cases was anyone getting out of Gaza, and only with Israeli approval.

But...let's not forget about the other prisoners. A lot of media coverage was given to the hostages taken by Hamas during the October 7th attack, but in all the years I've been following this conflict there has barely been a peep about Palestinian hostages held by Israel. Where were the tears for them? Where were the posters saying "Bring Them Home"? Not that this justifies the October 7th attack against Israel, but Hamas stated this was one of the reasons for its attack.

Israel holds thousands of Palestinians in its prisons (either within Israel or the occupied West Bank), including hundreds of children. Exact numbers vary depending on the source, but it's estimated that anywhere from 4,800 to 7,200 Palestinians are being detained in Israeli prisons, with anywhere from 170 to 250 of those being children.

What's more, a sizable percentage of these Palestinians are being held under what Israel calls "administrative detention". That is, Israel holds them indefinitely and without charge based on "secret evidence". These people are unable to have family visits. These hostages don't know why they're being detained, nor if or when they will be charged, tried, or released.

Young adult men are seen as higher risk in terms of committing violence, but what ever happened to "innocent until proven guilty"? By detaining young men indefinitely, it prohibits them from building families. It prevents them from reproducing. This is a form of population control. I suppose it's one way to address the "demographics problem". If these Palestinians were actually guilty of a crime, why not charge and try them?

As Human Rights Watch stated in its scathing 1994 report on Israeli human rights abuses in its prisons:

"Although the specific guidelines have never been revealed, government approval of the techniques of hooding, position abuse, sleep deprivation and confinement in closet-like spaces is made abundantly clear by the system-wide employment of specialized equipment (such as tiny chairs, mechanically refrigerated stalls, and shackle attachments built into walls), and by the fact that interrogators admit in open court, readily and without fear of sanction, to practicing these techniques. As this report argues, a calibrated system of what could be characterized as 'low-intensity torture' operates under government supervision."

"The IDF [Israel Defense Forces] uses techniques of position abuse and sensory deprivation similar to those used by the GSS [General Security Service], albeit in a less systematized fashion. Army interrogators employ brute physical force, including severe beatings, more routinely than does the GSS. Interrogators at both agencies routinely threaten detainees, for example, that they will kill them or demolish the homes of their families."

Palestinians released from Israeli prisons have reported being beaten, tortured, given short shower times, being denied water and electricity, and given minimal food. Child prisoners have reported being strip-

searched and touched or hit on their genitals, according to Save the Children. Disgusting. And we live in a world that not only tolerates this, but financially and “morally” supports and promotes it.

This is Israel we’re talking about, not Nazi Germany. Isn’t Israel supposed to be a vibrant democracy and a beacon of freedom, not some backwards dictatorship or theocracy? Aren’t human rights and due process a part of democracy? Perhaps when you dehumanize a population to this extent and don’t even consider them to be human, etiquette and morality don’t apply.

It’s sickening. It’s stuff like this that makes me look forward to Judgement Day.

“When the disbelievers plotted against you, to imprison you, or kill you, or expel you. They planned, and God planned, but God is the Best of planners.” - Quran 8:30

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## 20 WE ALL HAVE BLOOD ON OUR HANDS

“O you who believe! Stand firmly for justice, as witnesses to God, even if against yourselves, or your parents, or your relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, God takes care of both. So do not follow your desires, lest you swerve. If you deviate, or turn away—then God is Aware of what you do.” - Quran 4:135

It's time for a reality check.

Britain has blood on its hands. The British Empire colonized tens of countries in the past, exploited those countries' resources, and massacred countless people. They put people in concentration camps, shot and killed unarmed civilians, raped and tortured people, and allowed famine to occur.

As for Britain's role in Palestine, aside from the Balfour Declaration and basically giving away the country to others, Britain beat down and crushed the Palestinians during its Mandate, destroying their leadership and national aspirations. Then they wiped their hands of “the Palestine problem” and handed it off to the nascent United Nations. By that time the Palestinians had little strength and will to fight, giving ample leverage to the Zionist movement to make their case with the UN for a Jewish state. Basically, Britain thoroughly tenderized and seasoned the meat, so the Zionist movement had the relatively easy task of grilling it.

But you know what? The rest of us also have blood on our hands.

Those of us who live in the US and enjoy relatively comfortable lives are beneficiaries of an ethnic cleansing. European settlers wiped out tens of millions of indigenous people in order to form what we now call the United States. Because of those past actions, we now have the privilege to live in nice homes in nice neighborhoods, enjoy museums and nature preserves, and take cross-country road trips.

We also pay tax dollars that go towards “defense” spending, a good amount of which has led to the killing of tens of thousands of civilians in Iraq, Afghanistan, and of course Palestine. To be fair, our responsibility as average civilian citizens is indirect versus direct, but it’s still there. Likewise, there are people living in Israel who pay taxes but don’t necessarily support everything their government does.

Arab leaders seem to care more about retaining power over their countries and maintaining good standing with the US than about the plight of the Palestinian people.

And guess what... Palestinians aren’t entirely innocent, either. Early on there were Palestinian informants who worked with Zionists to take out fellow Palestinians they disliked by accusing them of being nationalists. Even today there are purported informants on the Palestinian side due either to threats by Israeli intelligence or incentives.

There was even a group of Palestinians known as the Druze who betrayed their people and joined the Jewish militias, going on to kill their fellow countrymen.

We should also remember the suicide bombings carried about by some Palestinians in the 1990s and early 2000s. Suicide is forbidden in Islam, and civilians cannot be targeted.

Of course, other countries aren’t innocent. There’s plenty of blame to go around. Canada and Australia also ethnically cleansed indigenous peoples. France colonized a number of countries in Africa. Germany perpetrated the Holocaust against Jews. Serbian forces killed thousands of Bosnians during the Kosovo war. Hutu militias massacred hundreds of thousands of people belonging to the Tutsi ethnic group in Rwanda. China has oppressed the Uyghur minority by putting people into camps,

using them for forced labor, and restricting their religious practices. Myanmar (Burma) has been persecuting the Rohingya people for decades. Many countries have committed atrocities throughout history.

And let's not dismiss the people who work for, or invest in, companies that make the deadly weapons that have killed millions and will likely continue to kill millions in the future. Companies like Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, Northrop Grumman, and BAE Systems. They, too, are culpable.

Whether indirectly supporting something (maybe not even knowing that funds were used to harm others) or simply allowing it to happen without saying or doing anything to stop it, we all bear some blame.

“...God does not change the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves...” - Quran 13:11

While humanity has done horrible things throughout its history, I also believe that Allah (SWT) is the Most Forgiving and Most Merciful. I believe that if we want things to get better in the world, we have to pray for forgiveness and try to improve ourselves, striving to become better individuals and better communities.

“The evils of their deeds caught up with them. And the wrongdoers among these will also be afflicted by the evils of what they earned, and they cannot prevent it. Do they not know that God extends the provision to whomever He wills, and constricts it? In that are signs for a people who believe. Say, ‘O My servants who have transgressed against themselves: do not despair of God’s mercy, for God forgives all sins. He is indeed the Forgiver, the Clement.’” - Quran 39:51-53

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## 21 LEARNED BEHAVIORS

While Israel has long depicted the big, bad Arabs as wanting to drive all Jews into the sea -- nothing short of a “second Holocaust” -- Israel has historically displayed some very disturbing behavior that makes one wonder where they learned it from.

During a “flag march” in Jerusalem that took place in June 2021, Israelis chanted things like the following, directed towards Palestinians and more broadly towards Arabs:

- “Go from here, go and die.”
- “Death to the Arabs.”
- “A good Arab is a dead Arab.”
- “The second Nakba is on its way. Just wait, it’s near. The second Nakba will send you all to refugee camps.”
- “Palestine is dead. There is no Palestine.”

Sadly, this is what innocent Israeli children are indoctrinated with. This is the environment they’re brought up in. These children are taught to view Palestinians negatively through the school system. Once they grow up and begin their mandatory military service (assuming they’re not exempt), how do you think they will interact with and treat Palestinians?

We don’t even need to hypothesize. In late 2023, we got to see social media videos uploaded by Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers in which they burned food in Gaza, destroyed shops, and desecrated peoples’

personal living spaces. For example, they pulled a prayer rug into a washroom, and showed someone's personal lingerie. It was abhorrent. One could even argue that this is the least moral army in the world.

After the October 2023 Hamas attack, we heard (debunked) claims from Israel about Hamas members killing, beheading, and burning babies. News outlets passed it off as fact despite no independent verification. Hamas rejected such claims. Even the IDF wouldn't confirm the report.

What's interesting about this claim from Israel is that 1) it would certainly rile people up and build support among its own population and the world at large for the military onslaught that was about to ensue and 2) the Nazis made similar bogus claims against Jews. This concept, known as blood libel, existed before Nazi Germany, but the Nazis used this propaganda technique to claim that Jews were using Christian childrens' blood for rituals.

Another example is when local Jews in the city of Lydd (a.k.a. Lod) spray-painted red marks on Arab homes so that when roving mobs came in, they knew which homes and people to attack. Truly repugnant behavior. It's not terribly different from when Jewish homes in Budapest were required to display a yellow Star of David in 1944, or when the Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass) event took place in Germany in 1938 when Nazis destroyed Jewish homes and businesses.

The IDF Operations Directorate runs a social media account called "72 Virgins - Uncensored" on Telegram in which they showcase the murder and torture of Palestinians. (If you don't already know, the "72 Virgins" reference is an anti-Islamic trope.) Sharing such inhumane material is bad enough, but they actually find pleasure in it and see it as entertainment. The people committing these acts, posting these videos, and enjoying the content are deeply depraved.

It's not even conjecture at this point. When Jewish extremists teamed up in 2021 to attack Palestinians, one Telegram message that was intercepted stated: "We are no longer Jews today... Today we are Nazis." There are videos you can find of vicious mob beatings by Israelis against Palestinians. These attackers know they can get away with it, so why not?

Check out this headline from *The Jerusalem Post* in mid-December 2023: “Israel should make Gaza look like Auschwitz - council head”. A regional council member named David Azoulai suggested sending Palestinians to Lebanese refugee camps and flattening Gaza to turn it into some Auschwitz-like museum. Auschwitz was an infamous death camp. People like this are extraordinarily evil. They are saying this stuff openly, yet the world still has wool over its eyes.

In a repulsive children’s song published by Rosenbaum Communications, it was sung by innocent Israeli children: “Within a year, we will annihilate everyone...” referring to the people of Gaza. They had the gall to call it “The Friendship Song 2023”. These kids weren’t born with this hatred; they were simply singing the song taught to them by adults.

As Rabbi Yaacov Perrin once said: “One million Arabs are not worth a Jewish fingernail.” Once people are dehumanized to this level, it becomes easy to treat them worse than animals, to keep them under military occupation, to restrict their water and electricity, and to kill them.

What saddens me about all this is knowing what the Jewish people endured during the Holocaust. Having grown up in the US, we were taught about the Holocaust from elementary to high school, watched films about it, and took field trips to a Holocaust museum. I would expect Jewish Israelis to be at the forefront of preventing and opposing such despicable statements and actions, not carrying them out.

Never again?

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## 22 NIGHTMARE

Ilan Pappé details many massacres, expulsions, and abuses in his book, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. It explains in great detail how Jewish militias executed numerous cleansing operations in many Palestinian villages as ordered by David Ben-Gurion. Many of these incidents involved execution-style murders of adult males and boys as young as 10.

These attacks on villages were carried out by terrorist groups like Irgun, Haganah, and Stern Gang. One notable massacre was at Deir Yassin in April 1948, where more than 100 Palestinians were killed.

Another horrific massacre, but one less talked about, took place in October 1948. Figures vary depending on source, but anywhere from 80 to 100 Palestinians were killed, including women and children. One Israeli soldier later testified: “There was no battle and no resistance. The first conquerors killed 80 to 100 Arab men, women and children. The children were killed by smashing their skulls with sticks. There wasn’t a house without people killed in it.”

Pappé’s book discusses how Palestinian civilians were taken prisoner and put into camps, beaten and abused, and used as forced labor. They were given very little food, too.

It also talks about how women and girls were raped by Jewish “soldiers”. (I felt compelled to use quotes because soldiers are supposed to have honor; these people had no honor.) There’s one story about a 12-year-old

girl who was captured and used as a sex slave; her head was shaved, she was gang-raped, and eventually murdered.

There was widespread looting by Jewish militias during which furniture, clothes, and other items were stolen in hopes of providing those items to incoming Jewish immigrants. What's more, as if being kicked out of one's home wasn't bad enough, they seized Palestinian banks that housed their financial assets. Their fertile farmland was stolen, as well. Not even mosques and churches were safe; some of them, such as al-Ahmar Mosque, were turned into shops and bars.

One disturbing account that wasn't a violent attack was when a couple of Jewish terrorists (David Horin and David Mizrachi) were found injecting water supplies with typhoid in the wells of Gaza. Biological warfare? But Jews suffered in gas chambers during the Holocaust. It doesn't make sense they would attempt to harm others in such a way.

These were deeply evil actions by deeply evil people. The irony is that Jewish people endured similar evil in Nazi Germany, so it's baffling that they would inflict the same on another people. These are supposed to be God's chosen people. Maybe it was a sort of revenge for the Holocaust or provided some sick satisfaction in being able to do unto others as was done unto them. It's hard to say. But for the Palestinians who suffered these atrocities, it was a nightmare.

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## 23 NOWHERE IS SAFE

Early in its invasion of Gaza in October 2023, Israel urged the civilians in the northern part of Gaza to flee south. However, with a lack of fuel and destroyed infrastructure, how exactly were they supposed to flee, especially considering the large number of people that would have to be moved (or permanently displaced)?

Worse yet, some civilians were shot dead when trying to obey orders and flee south, while others were shot in the legs. One has to imagine that some Israeli soldiers were either “having fun” with target practice or taking out their rage against innocent civilians for the October 7th Hamas attack.

As if murder and torture of civilians weren’t bad enough, a number of schools and hospitals were attacked. Not only were they shot with missiles from the air (which Israel tried blaming on errant Hamas or Islamic Jihad rockets), the Israeli military also invaded al-Shifa Hospital (Gaza’s largest hospital) with the unsubstantiated claim that Hamas was using the hospital as a command center.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) even produced a shoddy video purporting to show a Hamas hideout with weapons and such, but there was no way to independently verify this; it could have been completely staged. BBC was only allowed into certain areas, and they found some inconsistencies, such as one gun behind an MRI machine in the IDF’s video and two guns in the same location once the BBC reporter was

allowed in. With the reporting restrictions imposed on them, journalists basically became mouthpieces for Israeli propaganda when it came to reporting on this story.

In regards to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said at a UN Security Council meeting in February 2023: "Bombing schools and hospitals and apartment buildings to rubble is not normal." If only this applied across the board instead of giving certain countries impunity to do just that.

The UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) reported in November 2023 that a couple of schools it ran were attacked, killing dozens of people. Why were these schools good targets? Because thousands of people were sheltering in them, assuming UN-designated buildings would be safe. A video was released in December 2023 in which a UN school in northern Gaza was bombed to smithereens, after which Israeli soldiers cheered. This brings them joy? The level of moral corruption is unbelievable. This is far from being the most moral army in the world.

Days after Israel attacked al-Shifa Hospital, the World Health Organization (WHO) managed to visit it and found a mass grave at the entrance. They called it a "death zone". There was only a small staff left to care for the patients who remained in place; other patients, who were able to, fled south.

Per the 4th Geneva Convention, Article 18: "Civilian hospitals organized to give care to the wounded and sick, the infirm and maternity cases, may in no circumstances be the object of attack, but shall at all times be respected and protected by the Parties to the conflict."

Air assaults and ground attacks by tanks should never be used against hospitals. Not only is it a violation of the Geneva Conventions, it's just plain wrong. Hospitals in Gaza were already struggling with an influx of patients, limited resources, limited electricity, and limited fuel for generators. In addition, people were camping out at hospitals because homes and apartment buildings were not safe from Israeli shelling, or their homes were already destroyed by Israeli bombardment. Civilians were using hospitals as a safe haven.

The message from Israel is clear: If you are Palestinian, nowhere is safe.

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## 24 A GRAVEYARD FOR CHILDREN

“Gaza is becoming a graveyard for children.” - António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General (November 2023)

“When the sun is put out, and when the stars fall down, and when the mountains are blown away, and when pregnant camels are left untended, and when wild beasts are gathered together, and when the seas are set on fire, and when the souls and their bodies are paired once more, **and when baby girls, buried alive, are asked for what crime they were put to death**, and when the records of deeds are laid open, and when the sky is stripped away, and when the Hellfire is fiercely flared up, and when Paradise is brought near — on that Day each soul will know what deeds it has brought along.” - Quran 81:1-14 (emphasis added)

Can you imagine growing up locked into a space the size of Detroit with 2+ million people; where water, food, and electricity are restricted; where you can't leave; where you can't even venture too far out into the water despite living right next to the sea? Can you imagine seeing your loved ones shot, bombed, and buried under rubble? Can you imagine every few years having to live through heavy bombing by fighter jets, all before you reach adulthood? What kind of a life is this, if it can even be called living? It's a nightmare. But it has been reality for the children of Gaza.

According to the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), about 40% of

the population of Gaza is aged 14 or younger, and the median age is 18 years old. For comparison, the median age in the US is about 39 years according to the US Census Bureau. That's more than double the median age in Gaza. Gaza has been under a blockade since 2007, so many of these children have only known life under siege.

About two months into Israel's October 2023 war against Gaza, Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor found that Israeli forces had killed over 9,000 children. This figure doesn't even account for bodies buried under rubble who haven't been retrieved yet. Even with a much larger area and population, can you imagine if 9,000 kids in the US were killed in a span of two months? It would be unimaginable.

According to Human Rights Watch in November 2023, on average, one child in Gaza was being killed every 10 minutes. That's sickening. Add to that the comparatively paltry but still significant 63 children killed in the West Bank less than two months into this war. Is this really the kind of world we want to live in, where 63 children killed in eight weeks seems like a trivial number?

And what about the trauma that these children are surely experiencing? Even as an adult it would be disconcerting to see and hear fighter jets fly overhead throughout the day, even if no missiles or bombs were released. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 9.4% of American children (aged 3-17) suffer from anxiety and 4.4% suffer from depression. I don't even want to know what the figures are for Palestinian children because those figures would be depressing.

Countries have a right to defend themselves, but normally wars take place between two countries, two equal or somewhat equal parties. And self-defense must be proportionate according to international law. Palestine is no longer a country. It has no military. It barely has enough resources to survive. Much of the population is young. Children don't have tanks, fighter jets, or guns. Yet a heavily funded, high-tech military is waging war against these impoverished, occupied people. This is what they consider strength and valor? Israel is defending itself against the people it's oppressing and imprisoning? If it wasn't so tragic, this whole



thing would be hilarious.

But you know what? Simply by staying alive, by playing in the rubble with what little they have and keeping a smile on their faces, the children of Gaza are engaging in an act of resistance. They are defying those who wish to wipe them off the face of this earth. This is a form of victory.

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## 25 IS IT GENOCIDE?

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the October 2023 invasion of Gaza a "holy mission" in a speech and said "you must remember what Amalek has done to you, says our Holy Bible."

Here are the relevant verses from the Bible, 1 Samuel 15:

3. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

4. And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah.

5. And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley.

6. And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them: for ye shewed kindness to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.

7. And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt.

8. And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.

9. But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of

the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.

Insinuations about violence aside -- not even women and children were spared according to verse 3 -- invoking the Bible may have been a clever move to win over Christian Americans. If you're wondering how this pertains to Israel's conflict with Hamas, look up the concept of "herem" in the Bible.

US Senator Lindsey Graham said in October 2023: "We are in a religious war here. I'm with Israel. Do whatever the hell you have to do to defend yourself. Level the place."

Some other interesting quotes from Israeli politicians:

"We are fighting human animals and we act accordingly. We are imposing a complete siege on Gaza. There will be no electricity, no food, no water, no fuel. Everything will be closed." - Israeli Defense Minister, Yoav Gallant (October 9, 2023)

"Erase all of Gaza from the face of the earth. That the Gazan monsters will fly to the southern fence & try to enter Egyptian territory or they will die & their death will be evil. Gaza should be erased!" - Israeli Member of Parliament, Galit Distel Atbaryan (November 1, 2023)

"North Gaza, more beautiful than ever. Blow up and flatten everything, delightful. After we are done, we allocate the lands of Gaza to the soldiers fighting and the settlers who lived in Gush Katif." - Israeli Minister of Heritage, Amichai Eliyahu (November 2, 2023)

In reference to Palestinian civilians who had been sheltering at a UN school and were subsequently stripped, restrained, and blindfolded by IDF soldiers: "...If I had made the decision, I would have jumped 4 D-9s [bulldozers] and put them behind the mounds of dirt and given the order to cover all these hundreds of ants, while they are still alive...They are not human beings and not human animals, they are subhuman and that is how they should be treated." - Arie King, Deputy Minister of Jerusalem (December 8, 2023)

In a radio interview with National Public Radio's Steve Inskeep in mid-November 2023, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu made a number of unsubstantiated and debunked claims to further dehumanize Palestinians. He referred to them as "these animals, these monsters, who mutilated babies, who beheaded women, raped and murdered women, who burned people alive..." Not terribly different from the dehumanization Nazis engaged in against Jews. The funniest part was when Netanyahu said, "My passion is unlimited for justice and for truth." Does anyone see the irony here considering his long tenure as Prime Minister and lack of credibility?

Vile statements like this are nothing new. Following are some quotes by Israeli demographer Arnon Sofer from a *Jerusalem Post* interview in 2004:

"Second of all, when 2.5 million people live in a closed-off Gaza, it's going to be a human catastrophe. Those people will become even bigger animals than they are today, with the aid of an insane fundamentalist Islam. The pressure at the border will be awful. It's going to be a terrible war. So, if we want to remain alive, we will have to kill and kill and kill. All day, every day."

"If we don't kill, we will cease to exist. The only thing that concerns me is how to ensure that the boys and men who are going to have to do the killing will be able to return home to their families and be normal human beings."

"The population increase of Israeli Arabs [Palestinians living in Israel] is going to present a major problem. But, if we no longer include the Palestinians, and we begin embracing immigrants, foreign workers, Druse, and Christians - who are now on our side, because they see what crazy radical Islam is - then there won't be an Israeli Arab problem."

It gives you a glimpse into his mindset on demographics. Contrary to Sofer's insult of Palestinians being animals, these are real human beings we're talking about, not numbers. Is this Sofer's version of the "Final Solution"? Scary stuff.

In November 2023, TV anchor Shay Golden made some interesting

statements on Israel's Channel 14:

“And we keep telling every day, we are coming. We are coming. We are coming to Gaza. We are coming to Lebanon. We are coming to Iran. We will come everywhere... Can you imagine how many we are going to kill, how many of you we will slaughter...? You will not witness these killing in all Arab history... [W]e are prepared to fight the United States and the entire world. As many of you as we need until all of you, including the ones who support you, will go and meet Allah. That's for sure.”

The comment about fighting the United States is funny considering the amount of military aid and weaponry that has been supplied to Israel. Talk about biting the hand that feeds you. And what happens after killing off the rest of the world? They will enjoy the earth all to themselves? Have fun with that.

Even normal people who you wouldn't expect to say such crazy things were using platforms like X (formerly Twitter) to spew their hatred, like the following example:



They reproduce like rabbits and raise them to be terrorists, creating more poverty misery and terrorism. Why should we allow that. The world would be a much better place if they didn't reproduce.

11:10 PM · 11/11/23 from Earth · 10.2K Views

For those of us who grew up in the US, this may bring back memories from history class where we learned about the displacement and decimation of Native American tribes. They, too, were called savages and were treated as pests that needed to be exterminated.

Even animals are treated better than Israel has treated Palestinians. Here in the US, if someone withheld food and water from a pet cat or dog and let it die, they would be punished. We have the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture (PACT) Act. There are organizations like American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) that fight for animals' rights. Yet what about the Palestinian children? Who is protecting their rights?

International law defines genocide as:

*In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:*

- A. *Killing members of the group;*
- B. *Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;*
- C. *Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;*
- D. *Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;*
- E. *Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.*

Concerns about genocide against the Palestinians have been raised before. In July 2014, late attorney Michael Ratner stated:

“Genocide has two elements. One element is the mental element, the intent to destroy the whole or in part a national or ethnic or racial or religious group. Palestinians are clearly a national and ethnic group. And you don't need to kill them all. You just need to have the mental intent to kill part of them.”

Note the key word there: *intent*.

Remember that the end goal of Zionism is a Jewish-majority state. Palestine already had people living in it prior to waves of immigration from Europe. In July 2018 Israel passed into law that national self-determination was reserved for Jewish people and that Hebrew was the official language, despite Arabic-speaking Palestinian Muslims and Christians having lived there for centuries. The only sustainable way to create an exclusively Jewish or Jewish-majority state would be to get rid of the indigenous population.

It's no anti-Semitic conspiracy theory to suggest that Israel wants to pilfer the entirety of Palestine "from the river to the sea". Prime Minister Netanyahu confessed as much at the UN General Assembly in September 2023, during which he unashamedly displayed a map of "The New Middle East" that erased the existence of Palestine. Note that this was roughly two weeks before the October 7th Hamas attack. If Israel has a right to exist, does not Palestine also have a right to exist?



*Photo Credit: Yousef Munayyer*

Remember also that in the wake of the October 2023 war, supplies were further cut off from Gaza despite it already having been under siege for 16 years. Food, water, medicine, and fuel shipments were restricted. Electricity, internet, and phone lines were cut. Gaza was being further isolated from the world with basic necessities not getting in, and on-the-ground information not getting out.

To quote Craig Mokhiber, who worked for the United Nations as Director of the New York Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights:

“This is a text-book case of genocide. The European, ethno-nationalist, settler colonial project in Palestine has entered its final phase, toward the expedited destruction of the last remnants of indigenous Palestinian life in Palestine. What’s more, the governments of the United States, the United Kingdom, and much of Europe, are wholly complicit in the horrific assault.”

Let’s also quote Raz Segal, an Israeli historian who teaches about the Holocaust:

“But the assault on Gaza can also be understood in other terms: as a textbook case of genocide unfolding in front of our eyes. I say this as a scholar of genocide, who has spent many years writing about Israeli mass violence against Palestinians.”

So yes, it is genocide. The mantra of “never again” is a mockery of justice. It should be revised to “again and again”.

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## 26 MIDDLE EAST MAYHEM

One might reasonably wonder: “If Palestine is surrounded by all these Arab and Muslim-majority countries, why aren’t they helping save Palestine?”

It’s easy for armchair politicians to suggest countries do this or that, but real life is not so simple. While this is admittedly an oversimplification, the answer to the above question has a lot to do with authoritarian regimes wanting to retain their own power and a focus on other priorities like their own economies. These two things typically go hand in hand.

These countries know that if they take Palestinians in as refugees, Israel will never allow them to return home, and it could be a burden on their economies. It also sets a precedent for other belligerent regimes to appropriate land by forcing existing residents to flee to adjacent lands. In the first place, Palestinians want to remain in their home country, not be forced to relocate to another country.

The Middle East countries also know that there is a cost of going to war. Not just the monetary cost of warfare and the loss of life, but the political cost and post-war cost. Going to war can hinder ties with other countries who may end up backing off of investments, it can lead to cutting off of economic and/or military aid, and it can even lead to sanctions. Post-war, there are the financial costs of rebuilding infrastructure, as well as the challenge of rebuilding diplomatic and economic ties with allies and other countries who were opposed to their involvement in the conflict.

And, of course, these countries know that the US -- with the most powerful military in the world -- will protect Israel with its own blood and treasure. After Israel's invasion of Gaza in October 2023, the US quickly sent a number of US troops and military resources to the Middle East, including an aircraft carrier and a nuclear-powered submarine.

To provide some context on how and why the Middle East is what it is today, I'll provide a bit of history.

Prior to World War I in the early 20th century, a good portion of what we call the Middle East was under the control of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire was already in decline by the 17th century. Capitalizing on a growing desire by Arabs for independence, the British Empire enlisted Arab leaders to help take down the Ottoman Empire. This was known as the Great Arab Revolt. The Arabs thought they would get a large, independent state. The British promised them independence, and the Arabs were foolish enough to believe them despite having known the history of British imperialism. Little did the Arabs know that this would prove to be the initial blow to Palestine.

After the Ottoman Empire fell, Britain showed its true colors by entering into a secret agreement with France known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement in which they divided the Middle East into various zones and split up control of them (i.e. divide and conquer). Britain took control of Palestine, and basically promised the land to the Zionist movement to establish a Jewish state.

A lot happened in the following decades, including Israel's official establishment of statehood in 1948, followed by a retaliatory attack by its Arab neighbors. Israel handily defeated them. The relatively young Arab countries were not united nor well-equipped, while the newly established Israel Defense Forces (IDF) had a lot of troops and illegally obtained weapons from Czechoslovakia. The IDF wasn't exactly new, though; it already had a lot of experience with killing, as it was spawned by Jewish terrorist groups like Haganah and Irgun.

To make matters worse, King Abdullah of Transjordan (now called Jordan) was concerned more with expanding his kingdom than with

liberating the Palestinians. He wanted the West Bank. He colluded with Jewish Agency leaders, but was assassinated in 1951.

While not directly related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, an interesting aside tied to the chaos of the Middle East is when the US CIA helped overthrow the democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh in Iran in 1953. This was due to oil concerns. The US reinstated the Shah of Iran. The Shah was eventually overthrown in 1979, and Iranian relations since then with the US and Israel have been adversarial.

Saudi Arabia, a monarchy with a King and a Crown Prince, also seems to have a perpetual concern about Iran. It's not as simple as Sunni vs Shia. There are other geopolitical and economic issues at play. On top of that, Saudi has beef with Yemen's Houthi rebels.

Egypt has had its own issues with internal political battles between those who sided with Muslim Brotherhood and those who leaned towards secular nationalism. The Muslim Brotherhood was eventually banned, which would explain Egypt's dislike of Hamas because it was an offshoot of Muslim Brotherhood. The Camp David Accords were signed between Israel and Egypt in 1978, which led to normalized diplomatic relations by 1980. Egypt gets a substantial amount of aid from the US -- about \$1.37 billion in 2022, with the bulk of that military aid -- so it has reason not to get into fisticuffs with Israel. Egypt collaborated with Israel on the 2007 blockade against Gaza.

Lebanon is another French imperialist product of post-World War I. It has seen stability in the past, but also civil strife, political instability, and a crumbling economy. Lebanon is home to the group Hezbollah, which is backed by Iran and which considers Hamas an ally.

Syria has had major issues since 2011. People were protesting President Bashar al-Assad and government corruption, as well as economic issues. al-Assad employed heavy-handedness in response. Eventually this devolved into civil war with various factions fighting one another, only to be made worse by different countries backing different factions.

As for Iraq, we've seen two major invasions of the country by the US.

The first was in 1990-1991 after Iraq invaded Kuwait, and the second was in 2003 after false US claims about Iraq having “weapons of mass destruction”. (For full effect, you have to read that in George W. Bush’s voice.)

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain established diplomatic ties with Israel in 2020. Oman and Qatar have both been accused of human rights issues, but to its credit, Qatar did help negotiate hostage releases between Hamas and Israel after the October 2023 war.

Currently, the US has tens of military bases spread throughout the Middle East, along with more than 30,000 troops.

As you can see, even from this extremely concise and limited overview of the region, the history of the Middle East has been shaky. I know it seems like the situation of the Muslims is poor, that we lack leadership, and that perhaps things are hopeless. But we need to improve ourselves individually as Muslims, and from there the Ummah begins to strengthen as a whole. We can’t depend on leaders of Arab or Muslim-majority countries to save us. They’ve already shown that the plight of Muslims is not their top priority. We need to help ourselves and help one another.

Remember what Allah (SWT) told Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him):

“By the morning light. And the night as it settles. Your Lord did not abandon you, nor did He forget. The Hereafter is better for you than the First. And your Lord will give you, and you will be satisfied. Did He not find you orphaned, and sheltered you? And found you wandering, and guided you. And found you in need, and enriched you? Therefore, do not mistreat the orphan. Nor rebuff the seeker. But proclaim the blessings of your Lord.” - Quran 93:1-11

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## 27 DRINK THE KOOL-AID

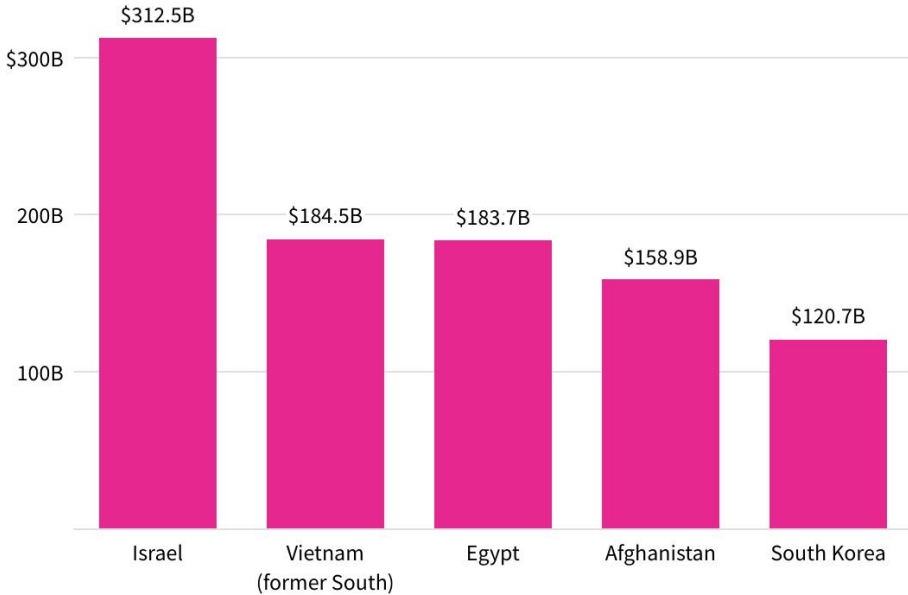
The infrastructure, public schools, and healthcare system here in the US are in disarray. Housing is unaffordable for some. There is rampant homelessness, drug addiction, and crime. There is also debt. Lots and lots of debt, as in *trillions* of dollars.

According to the US Census Bureau, in 2022 the poverty rate was 11.5% of the population, which works out to 37.9 million people. In 2022, an individual income of \$13,590 or less was considered the poverty line, while for a family of three (roughly the average family size in the US) the poverty line was \$23,030 or less. More than 10% of the population is living in poverty! That's not okay.

Yet we have plenty of money to give to other countries...

# Five countries have received over a quarter of all US foreign aid since World War II.

US foreign aid by top 5 recipient country, adjusted for inflation, 1946–2021



Inflation adjusted to 2022 dollars.

Source: [US Agency for International Development](#)

**USA FACTS**

*Credit: USA Facts*

According to the US government’s Foreign Assistance website, Israel received \$3,308,801,618 in 2022 despite being labeled as a High Income Country. Afghanistan has a population more than 4x greater than Israel and is labeled as a Low Income Country, yet only received \$1,389,022,902 of aid in 2022. I say “only” only to emphasize the difference, but that is a lot of money.

Now, not all aid is created equal. The aid given to Afghanistan is primarily for humanitarian and emergency food assistance. Keeping people alive is a good thing. As for the aid given to Israel, \$3.3 billion of the aforementioned figure was specifically for foreign military financing. That’s almost the entire amount! We’re funding a foreign country’s



military. Some justify this by parroting the oft-repeated phrase, “Israel has a right to defend itself.” Has the Israeli government only used those funds for legitimate self-defense in line with international law? American voters need to decide at the ballots if this is how they want their tax dollars distributed.

Any wealthy, first-world, developed country should be able to fund its own military. Shouldn’t the tax dollars we contribute to the government from our hard-earned money be used for, I don’t know, our country first? Perhaps it could go to schools, crime prevention, affordable housing, and infrastructure.

Do I believe the US should be an isolationist country and provide no aid to others? No. I think that as a prosperous country we have the responsibility to provide economic and humanitarian aid to developing countries. But we also need to take better care of our citizens and our country.

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## 28 I STAND WITH ISRAEL

Human rights activists around the world may be baffled by US politicians' undying, blind support for Israel despite what it does. The average citizen may wonder why we prioritize "Israel First" over "America First". What's behind this?

Yes, there is racism against Arabs; Jewish people of European descent are more similar to the white elites of America than are Arabs, not to mention a Judeo-Christian brotherhood that excludes Islam. Yes, there is religious extremism by Evangelical Christians who want to rush the Second Coming of Christ and need the pieces of the puzzle to be in place. Yes, there is a desire to have a strong ally in the Middle East to protect US interests such as oil and military hegemony.

But is that it, or is there something else at play? The above makes sense when considering far-right Republicans, but surely liberal Democrats wouldn't succumb to these beliefs, right? As it turns out, and as is often the case, the trail leads back to money. Oh, what people wouldn't give for money.

First let's talk about political action committees (PACs) in general. PACs are tax-exempt organizations formed around certain goals or ideologies. They collect contributions from people and/or organizations, then use those funds to support candidates they want to see elected and/or oppose candidates they dislike. The goal is typically to influence government legislative decisions by pushing for certain laws in Congress.

Side note to American voters: you can learn a lot about your preferred candidates by looking at which PACs donate the largest amounts to them. Websites like **opensecrets.org** document this data.

Now let's talk about AIPAC: the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. If you've been following the Palestinian-Israeli conflict for some time, surely you've heard of AIPAC. Much of their focus has been on passing legislation that benefits Israel, continuing military aid to Israel, cutting aid to Gaza and the West Bank, and generally anything that's anti-Palestinian or anti-Iran.

The "Israel lobby" isn't just AIPAC; it includes a host of other characters including J Street, Pro-Israel America, Republican Jewish Coalition, NorPAC, Democratic Majority for Israel (tied to AIPAC), Christians United for Israel, and Zionist Organization of America. But AIPAC is the most notable one.

As stated on AIPAC's website at the time of writing (emphasis added):

"The AIPAC PAC is a **bipartisan**, pro-Israel political action committee. It is the largest pro-Israel PAC in America and **contributed more resources directly to candidates** than any other PAC. **98% of AIPAC-backed candidates won** their general election races in 2022."

Well, well, well. Politicians on both sides of the aisle are being bought out. Party lines can be overcome with love; the love of money, power, and winning elections, that is. In short, if candidates don't explicitly express support for Israel, their chances of winning an election are slim. And this isn't some anti-Semitic trope or conspiracy theory. It's straight from the horse's mouth.

According to OpenSecrets, AIPAC made over \$13 million in campaign contributions to various candidates in 2022, and spent over \$2.7 million that same year on lobbying to influence specific legislation. The specific bills they lobby for or against are in the public record. Lobbyists get paid to advocate for or fight against specific laws/policies on behalf of their clients; they try to influence government officials.

Money is also spent on negative attack ads to prevent certain people from

getting elected. For example, AIPAC affiliate United Democracy Project attempted to do so by spending over \$1 million to attack Pennsylvania's Summer Lee in 2022. Lee ended up winning by a narrow margin. But why do I consider incidents like this bad for our democracy? Because AIPAC didn't really attack Lee because of her credentials. They attacked her because she took too balanced a stance in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in which she not only supported Israel but also supported Palestinians; it wasn't one-sided enough in favor of the former.

I don't want this chapter to sound too conspiracy theory-ish. It's not quite as simple as "the Israel lobby controls the US". It's not a black & white case of dual loyalty. Ultimately, it's a mutually beneficial relationship. Supporting Israel doesn't just come down to money or to beliefs by Christian radicals; supporting Israel also supports the United States' own imperialistic goals in the Middle East.

Still, while PACs and lobbying are legal under current US law and AIPAC is mostly operating within the law (barring incidents like the Lawrence Franklin espionage scandal), it's interesting that an organization representing a foreign country can have so much influence on the politics of our country.

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## 29 RHYTHM OF THE WAR DRUMS

Who benefits from war? To name a couple, sadistic people and weapons manufacturers (which can be one and the same).

Weapons manufacturers get big orders after a war commences. They can share feel-good stories about job creation and helping local economies. They can provide positive financial outlooks in their quarterly earnings calls. Investors will love it. Share prices will shoot up. The company wins. The employees win. Investors win. It'll be music to their ears.

But...people suffer. Men, women, and children who have nothing to do with government or military may lose their homes, become refugees, or lose their lives. Buildings, roads, and critical services are destroyed. Rebuilding can take years, which ends up benefiting contractors engaged in post-war reconstruction.

It's a shame, but this is how the world works. And we as a species have largely become desensitized to it. We see it in movies. We play it in video games. When fighter jets or drones are used to bomb other countries, the "enemy" is faceless. There is no feeling of humanity.

Not that I support violence in any form, but at least in the old days people had to fight person-to-person and look their enemy in the eye. War required skill and bravery. And primitive weapons like swords didn't create the widespread, wanton destruction that modern weaponry does.

In any case, I thought it would be interesting to look at some big weapons manufacturers' stock prices right before the October 7th Hamas attack, right after, and a month later. Here you go:

	Oct 6, 2023	Oct 9, 2023	Nov 7, 2023	% Increase
BAE Systems	\$48.86	\$51.12	\$53.90	10.32%
General Dynamics	\$219.94	\$238.48	\$242.73	10.36%
Lockheed Martin	\$400.73	\$436.53	\$450.15	12.33%
Northrop Grumman	\$423.24	\$471.61	\$467.70	10.50%
Raytheon	\$69.77	\$72.99	\$82.67	18.49%

One has to wonder how many government officials invest in these companies. Governments enter into contracts with these and other suppliers to purchase weapons. In 2022, the US Department of Defense spent over \$400 billion on its various military branches.

Who pays for this? We, the taxpayers.

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### 30 FREE SPEECH FALLACY

After the October 7th Hamas attack and Israel's subsequent response, both the pro-Palestinian and anti-Palestinian sides began discussing and debating the conflict. Politicians and celebrities spoke up. Talking heads jumped from network to network giving interviews.

But something interesting happened. Maybe *disturbing* is more accurate. People who spoke up in defense of the Palestinian people and their rights were accused of anti-Semitism (even though Palestinians can be considered a Semitic people). Or worse, they were accused of supporting terrorism, although in reality they were opposing the injustices that led up to the Hamas attack and the merciless killing of civilians in Gaza by the Israeli military. Even wearing a cultural scarf called a keffiyeh was getting people in trouble. The spinsters were on fire, perhaps desperate to deflect attention from what Israel was doing by stretching innocuous statements and actions so far that even Jean-Claude Van Damme would be impressed.

Organizations like the ironically named Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and Zionist propagandists like Ben Shapiro and Jordan Peterson went into attack mode. If you didn't stand with Israel, then you best shut your mouth; anything you say can and will be used against you. That was the overall message being relayed. And if you spoke up for Palestinian rights, you could be shamed, blacklisted, fired, and/or doxxed (i.e. your personal information released publicly as an act of revenge).

It wasn't a haphazard effort, either. It was a very well coordinated initiative by hundreds of people in the upper echelons of society to attack pro-Palestinian people online, get pro-Palestinian people fired from their jobs, and get pro-Palestinian speaking engagements canceled. They wanted to stifle free speech, intimidate people into silence, and prevent the public from hearing anything other than the pro-Israel narrative. I wish this was some kooky conspiracy theory, but Lee Fang and Jack Poulson published a fascinating piece detailing the evidence. The lengths to which the anti-Palestinian movement will go are simply astounding.

Groups like Canary Mission, J-Ventures Global Kibbutz Group, and Shirion Collective are actively hunting down pro-Palestinian activists and publicly shaming them. They want these people blacklisted for speaking out. Groups like these should be investigated for being potential foreign agents and for potential tax evasion.

We live in strange times. During Donald Trump's tenure as US President, he, his cronies, and supporters uttered all sorts of vitriol and innuendo. They not only spouted hatred, but repeated bizarre conspiracy theories they read online or heard on podcasts. All the loonies came out of the woodwork. Somehow that was all acceptable, yet now if someone stands up for Palestinian human rights, they are apparently anti-Semitic and pro-Hamas. It's insane.

Nowadays it's hard to even constructively criticize the Israeli government or Israel Defense Force's (IDF) actions without being labeled "anti-Semitic". The propagandists have conflated peaceful protest with calls for a "second Holocaust". It's disappointing because the anti-Palestinian trolls are watering down these terms, which is not fair to Jewish people who are victims of actual anti-Semitism nor to survivors of the Holocaust.

Sadly, we seem to be going through another phase of "McCarthyism" in the US. This term came about during the Cold War days when Senator Joseph McCarthy began falsely accusing fellow Americans of being Communist. We're seeing the same type of thing now. The goal, of course, is to silence people from speaking the truth and standing up for justice.



One has to wonder in such cases, what about free speech? Isn't healthy debate and dissent a critical component of democracy? This is America, for crying out loud! The First Amendment to the US Constitution gives us the right to speak our minds, does it not?

Well, yes and no. The First Amendment protects against *government* encroachment on speech. It does not protect against private backlash (including corporate backlash); not much can be done legally to prevent companies from firing people unless clear discrimination can be proven. Nor does it protect against political activism, although some states have limited protection laws.

Some basic tips to keep in mind when speaking up:

- Do not make threats or incite violence
- Do not say anything in support of Hamas or even post links to Hamas websites, as this will result in charges; the US government designates Hamas as a terrorist organization
- Be careful in your speech so there is clear distinction between supporting Palestinians versus supporting Hamas

Some tips in case the FBI approaches you:

- Request counsel and get a lawyer as soon as possible
- If any lies are told to the FBI, it will result in charges of “false official statements”
- If the FBI wants to interview you about someone else, they already have an agenda about what they want you to say; if you say something that doesn't agree with their narrative, they will pressure you
  - Your best option is to engage a lawyer, but you also have the right not to talk

Some things to remember if you attend protests:

- We only have the right to *peaceful* protests
- The government can limit where and when you can protest
- Stay safe; don't take the bait from anti-Palestinian infiltrators; don't become violent
- Do not engage in hate speech or anything that could be considered a

call to violence

- Do not engage in speech that identifies a specific person or target; focus on actions, not people

If you happen to be a non-citizen living in the US, you need to be extra cautious. Be especially careful about putting things in writing or having something you say be recorded. If you make a small infringement or get arrested during a protest, it can be grounds to deny your citizenship/naturalization based on “lack of good moral character”.

When it comes to text messages and group chats, you are generally not responsible for others’ speech, but the government can still charge you for conspiracy. If you disagree with something that someone else said or find it potentially harmful from a legal perspective, then express your concern within the message thread.

Be careful, as well, when it comes to donating money to help the innocent civilians in Palestine. Only send funds to US-based 501(c) organizations that operate in Palestine; a US-based charity can do anything in a foreign country that it can do here. Do not send individual donations to people in Palestine, as you can be charged with supporting terrorism. And do not send donations via sites like GoFundMe that claim to be using the funds to help Palestinian civilians. Better safe than sorry.

All of this is not meant to scare you or keep you quiet. Be courageous. Speak up. But do it in a careful and level-headed way based on facts and objectivity rather than emotion. If a few positive words or a single social media post is enough to rattle those in favor of genocide and ethnic cleansing, you’re doing something right.

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## 31 FAKE NEWS

As the old adage goes, the first casualty in war is truth.

We live in an age of information overload. There's a plethora of information available at our fingertips, and it's coming in fast and furious. Anyone with a mobile phone can be a de facto news reporter. However, journalistic integrity has largely been flushed down the toilet. There are double standards in what is reported, how things are reported, the language used, and sometimes the tone that is used.

Some examples to consider:

- After the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack, an Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldier was interviewed and talked about Jewish babies being beheaded by Hamas. He didn't even look like he believed what he was saying. It was more like reading from a script. The "40 beheaded babies" claim was false, but once the headline is out there it impacts people. This is the same kind of slander the Nazis used against Jews to demonize them by claiming Jews killed Christian babies. It's designed to get the general public outraged and accept the brutality that is going to ensue.
- On October 17, 2023, a rocket hit al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza, killing hundreds of people. The people there on the ground said it was an Israeli air strike. Palestinian officials stated that around 500 people were killed, but US officials didn't believe this figure was accurate

(rather, didn't want to believe). There was widespread outrage, but to deflect blame the IDF claimed it was an errant rocket from the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) group, which the latter denied. After this event, Israel posted on X (formerly Twitter) with a video purportedly proving it wasn't their forces that bombed the hospital, but someone noticed the timestamp didn't match up so Israel removed the post. Then there were video analyses trying to prove who was responsible, but one has to question whether these were objective or if the analysts had preconceived notions they were trying to justify (i.e. confirmation bias).

- In mid-November 2023, the IDF raided Rantisi Hospital in Gaza and showed a document that supposedly listed Hamas members' names in a room that supposedly held hostages. In reality it was a calendar listing the days of the week in Arabic. I know Mondays are scary, but come on.
- In mid-November 2023, the IDF invaded al-Shifa Hospital (illegal under international law) to try and prove their long-running claim that Hamas has been using hospitals as command centers. This hospital was not, in fact, the command center they alleged it was. The IDF released a laughable one-take video in which an Israeli soldier did a walk-through of part of the hospital and showed bags of weapons conveniently found behind an MRI machine, for example. This claim was not independently verified and we don't know if the weapons were planted there by the IDF, yet the Western media ran with the story as if it was fact. The bags they showed were already open, meaning they had a chance to set everything up before filming. The soldier, of course, spoke in English since the goal was likely to win support from Americans for this war crime. Plus, IDF spokesperson Daniel Hagari had the audacity to claim that it was Hamas violating international law, once again flipping the script. The hospital was full of doctors, patients, and people simply taking shelter from Israeli shelling. This was another way to spread terror among the Palestinian civilians, and another dark chapter in the history of this conflict. Sure, there were bunkers beneath the hospital, but these were built by Israel decades ago as admitted by

former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak in a CNN interview with Christiane Amanpour.

- In mid-November 2023, someone dressed up as a nurse posted a video on social media, with a fake Arabic accent and fake crying, claiming that Hamas was in her hospital and stealing supplies. There were even fake explosion sounds in the background for full effect. The video was hilarious, but it got over 1 million views. God only knows how many gullible people fell for it. The video was proven to be fake by France 24.

The danger of such garbage being passed on as news? A case in point is when three Palestinian students studying in the US were shot by Jason Eaton in Vermont during the Thanksgiving 2023 weekend.

Thankfully these three college kids survived, but a 6-year-old boy of Palestinian background named Wadea Al-Fayoume was not so fortunate. This little boy was stabbed to death in the Chicagoland area shortly after the October 2023 war began. He was just a kid, and he was stabbed 26 times! His mother was stabbed as well. What could have driven Joseph Czuba to commit such a heinous act of terrorism? Right-wing propaganda outlets such as Fox News.

The tentacles of anti-Palestinian propaganda have done a tremendously good job of controlling the narrative. From college kids to celebrities, people have been punished and scared into not speaking out for Palestinian human rights. News outlets that say the “wrong” thing get bombarded with phone calls and emails. Mehdi Hasan’s show on MSNBC got canceled two weeks after his tough interview with Mark Regev, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s advisor. Even someone as wealthy and influential as Elon Musk got put in his place after an anti-Semitic tweet with a propaganda trip to Israel, after which he quickly changed his tune. If you don’t toe the line, you will be canceled.

Sometimes it feels like we’re watching a bad satire or dark comedy. Between artificial intelligence and disinformation campaigns, it’s hard to even know what’s true anymore. And with so much to sift through, it

takes time and effort to verify information. Thus, if you care about truth and justice, I urge you to be cautious when digesting news because not everything we're told is truthful. And too often that's on purpose. Think about who is giving you information, who they are being funded by, and if they have a political agenda or ulterior motive.

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## 32 BDS

Not to be mistaken for BDSM, BDS stands for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions. This is a global movement that entails boycotting goods from companies with operations in illegally occupied territories. It also involves divesting from Israeli companies, something to keep in mind if you invest in stocks.

BDS was inspired by the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa and the purpose is to push Israel to comply with international laws. It's a peaceful way for anyone in the world to fight back with their dollars.

BDS has three main goals:

- To end the occupation of the remaining Palestinian territories (i.e. West Bank and Gaza Strip) and Syrian territory (i.e. Golan Heights), as well as dismantling the apartheid walls in the West Bank and around the Gaza Strip
- To end the discrimination and racial violence against Palestinians living within Israeli territory (known as Israeli Arabs)
- To allow Palestinian refugees to return to their ancestral homes, as called for by UN Resolution 194

Despite being a non-violent form of economic pressure, a number of US states have passed or are trying to pass bills that discourage BDS. Some other countries have also passed anti-BDS legislation by trying to claim BDS is anti-Semitic, which is ridiculous.



Consumers have every right to choose which companies they do or do not purchase from. It's no different than doing one's due diligence and purchasing from companies that make more sustainable goods and generate fewer greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

These draconian laws also extend to people trying to make a living. Some states require contractors to pledge that they will not boycott Israel nor refuse to do business in illegal settlements. It feels like certain Americans are being forced to pledge allegiance to a foreign nation in order to do business here in the US.

Check out **bdsmovement.net** to learn more and see which companies to boycott.

How effective is boycotting? It's hard to say. But you know what? You protested peacefully with your hard-earned money and you stuck with your values. You did your part, as small as it may have seemed. The overall results are out of your hands, but everyone's small efforts combined can make a big difference.

“When the earth is shaken with its quake. And the earth brings out its loads. And man says, ‘What is the matter with it?’ On that Day, it will tell its tales. For your Lord will have inspired it. On that Day, the people will emerge in droves, to be shown their works. Whoever has done an atom's weight of good will see it. And whoever has done an atom's weight of evil will see it.” - Quran 99:1-8

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### 33 GOT GAS?

I wish I didn't have to include this chapter because discussions about the Middle East all too often come back to energy, namely oil. In this case it's about natural gas.

As it turns out, a sizable reserve of natural gas was discovered off the coast of the Gaza Strip at the turn of the century. Not enough to turn Gaza into the next Abu Dhabi, but still a hopeful sign for boosting the Palestinian economy.

Initially the plan in late 1999 was for the Palestinian Authority (PA) to partner with British Gas (BG) to explore the waters, where BG did drill a couple of wells (known as Gaza Marine 1 and Gaza Marine 2) and estimated that those contained gas reserves of 1.4 trillion cubic feet. BG was to take care of development and operations in exchange for 90% of the revenues, while Palestinians would get a measly 10%.

Naturally (no pun intended), Israel was not a big fan of this arrangement. Former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak put a kibosh on this and sent the country's naval forces into Gazan waters to prevent development. Israel wanted control of the gas, so it unilaterally declared control over the Gaza Marine area in violation of international law, even though the Oslo Accords gave the PA jurisdiction over water 20 nautical miles out from the coast.

It's a shame that Israel wouldn't allow this for the Palestinians, but it's

part and parcel of its strategy of denying statehood and economic prosperity for Palestinians. Much of the population in Gaza lives in poverty, so this would have been a step in the right direction.

I don't like conspiracy theories and I don't think that stealing Gaza's natural gas was Israel's plan all along with the October 2023 war. Rather, I see it as a bonus, or spoils of war. Does that make it okay? Of course not. As much as the people of Gaza have suffered, at least they should have benefited economically from these gas reserves. Instead, it seems like Israel is rubbing salt in their wounds.

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### 34 GOING NUCLEAR

In November 2023, a right-wing Israeli minister named Amichai Eliyahu suggested that dropping a nuclear bomb on Gaza was an option. He said that “one of Israel’s options in the war in Gaza is to drop a nuclear bomb on the Strip.” Is that not a crazy thing to say, especially considering that the Gaza Strip was only about 141 square miles prior to Israel’s latest war and crammed with over 2 million people? Yet Eliyahu had the gall to refer to Palestinians as Nazis. I’m sure the irony flew over his head.

An interesting point about the nuclear bomb comment is that Israel doesn’t officially claim to have nuclear weapons and has not signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), although it’s been an open secret for decades. I suppose Eliyahu officially let the cat out of the bag.

That wasn’t the end of his racist, tyrannical comments, though. Eliyahu stated that no humanitarian aid should be allowed into Gaza, and that “there is no such thing as uninvolved civilians in Gaza.” By this logic, is everyone in Israel “involved” with and responsible for the Israeli military occupation of Palestinian territories, along with the demolition of Palestinian homes and murders of Palestinian civilians?

By the time he made the above statements, one month into the war, Israel had already killed over 4,000 children in Gaza. So Eliyahu is suggesting that these thousands of children (including infants) were “involved militants”?

How does someone spewing such idiotic vitriol get elected? People who say such things already harbored such views. Eliyahu was 44 years old when he made the above statements. He didn't change overnight. He was already a despicable individual.

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## 35 REMEMBERING RACHEL

When I was younger and more heavily involved in activism to end the occupation of Palestine, there was a notable incident that shocked the activist community. Younger readers are probably unaware of it, while others have long forgotten.

In 2003, a college student named Rachel Corrie from Olympia, Washington visited Rafah in the Gaza Strip. She was a pro-peace activist and member of the International Solidarity Movement (ISM). While in Rafah, she and fellow activists witnessed Israeli forces conducting illegal demolitions of Palestinian homes.

Rachel had the courage to stand in front of the bulldozers to try and stop the demolitions. Despite wearing a bright orange jacket with reflective strips, the Israeli driver of the bulldozer ran her over and killed her. Rachel's parents filed a civil lawsuit, but the Israeli court system rejected their lawsuit. No Israelis were ever brought to justice for this murder.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) may be delighted that the world has forgotten about Rachel and moved on, but we have not forgotten. Rachel is a reminder that we will not die on our knees. We will not let them forget that we fought them back. We will continue to fight for a better tomorrow.

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### 36 BORN TO BE RESILIENT

“But whoever endures patiently and forgives—that is a sign of real resolve.” - Quran 42:43

If there's one thing we can learn from the Palestinians, it's resilience. No matter the difficulties presented to them, no matter the hardship and loss of life, by and large they do not let Israeli oppression bring them down. Against all odds, they manage to survive. Merely surviving is an act of resistance.

I feel we also owe the Palestinians a debt of gratitude, for they have awakened us from our slumber, rejuvenated our faith, reminded us of what's truly important in life, and exemplified what it means to be steadfast.

Israel has the most powerful military in the Middle East thanks to American funding and suppliers. It has high-tech and massively destructive weapons. It has surveillance equipment. It has highly trained soldiers. The Israeli military has fired countless artillery shells and has launched thousands of air attacks against a largely civilian population without an army, navy, or air force. It has managed to kill thousands of Palestinian civilians, including many women and children.

But you know what Israel hasn't yet killed? It hasn't killed the Palestinians' will to survive. It hasn't killed their desire to be free. And it hasn't killed their faith.



*Credit: Musa Al-Shaer*

They may be impoverished and downtrodden, prisoners in their own land, but they remain resolute. When Palestinians' family members -- even children -- are killed, they say things like, "Alhumdulillah, they are martyrs." When Palestinian doctors are unable to save a patient's life who was shot or bombed by Israeli forces, the doctors say something like, "He's a martyr. We envy him."

A PBS *NewsHour* episode from November 15, 2023 showed an interview with Dr. Shadi Issam Radi at al-Shifa Hospital (which was attacked and raided by Israeli forces). He said:

"My wife was killed while I was working. I was obliged to bring the children with me, and I am still working. Thank God for everything."

Can you imagine that? Instead of staying home, he remained committed to his duty of saving lives by staying at the hospital and caring for the many, many patients who were coming in due to Israeli attacks. His wife was killed while he was at the hospital. He brought his two young boys there and continued working. What resolve.



And look at us. Those of us in wealthy, first-world countries get upset over little things, things that have no real significance. We chase after material things. We take things for granted and forget to be grateful for the little things. Compared to many in the world, we are spoiled.

The way of a believer is patience and gratitude.

“You will be tested through your possessions and your persons, and you will hear from those who received the Scripture before you, and from the idol worshipers, much abuse. But if you persevere and lead a righteous life—that indeed is a mark of great determination.” - Quran 3:186

**Sources:**

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### 37 HELP THE OPPRESSOR

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: “The world is a prison for the believer and a paradise for the unbeliever.” - Sahih Muslim Hadith

People and countries have committed atrocities for land and resources that they can't take with them to the grave. They're drunk with power, fueled by greed, hatred, and rage. Do they believe in the Hereafter? Not all people do, but Muslims believe the Hereafter is forever, so is it worth committing evil in this world for a few years of satisfaction? Are avarice, pride, and wrath worth sacrificing one's soul for?

“Successful is he who purifies himself. And mentions the name of his Lord, and prays. But you prefer the present life. Though the Hereafter is better, and more lasting. This is in the former Scriptures. The Scriptures of Abraham and Moses.” - Quran 87:12-17

Some people think their lofty aspirations are somehow good for the world, or at least for their people, regardless of the “collateral damage” caused.

“As for those who do not believe in the Hereafter: We made their deeds appear good to them, so they wander aimlessly.” - Quran 27:4

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: “Help your brother, whether he is an oppressor or he is an oppressed one.” People asked, “O Allah's Apostle! It is all right to help him if he is oppressed, but how should we help him if he is an oppressor?” The Prophet said, “By

preventing him from oppressing others.” - Sahih al-Bukhari Hadith

Helping the oppressed Palestinians makes sense. They have suffered for decades from having their homes and farmland stolen, from restriction on basic necessities, and from numerous military incursions.

What the European settlers did in the Americas when they wiped out tens of millions of Native Americans between the 15th and 19th centuries was wrong. But we're in the 21st century now. We live in a world that espouses democracy. Do we want to live in a world where barbaric colonialism and ethnic cleansing still take place, albeit with the help of technology and modern weaponry?

Millions of Palestinians are in diaspora, while millions are living as refugees in their own country. Thankfully, they haven't been entirely wiped out yet. Israel still has a chance to save its soul. It can stop its tyrannical behavior and perhaps even reverse some of the damage done.

The first step to recovery is admitting you have a problem. It takes a lot of courage to overcome pride and ego and admit that you've done something wrong. But once you do, it can be a huge weight off your shoulders and you can begin to heal.

How do we achieve this? How do we help Israel redeem itself? Those of us who are on the sidelines and have watched this conflict play out for decades need to continue speaking the truth and educating people on what has been happening. Many people are in the dark.

Through non-violent means we can try to reach the hearts and minds of the Israeli and American people, who can then speak with their votes. If they blatantly disregard international law and modern norms of humanity, we can remind them of their own teachings of love and compassion from the Torah and the Gospel.

"Those who believe, and those who are Jewish, and the Christians, and the Sabeans—any who believe in God and the Last Day, and act righteously—will have their reward with their Lord—they have nothing to fear, nor will they grieve." - Quran 2:62

Perhaps I'm naive, but surely there are still some rational, humane people left. Through guidance and patience, hopefully we can stop the bleeding and begin healing.

“By time. The human being is in loss. Except those who believe, and do good works, and encourage truth, and recommend patience.” - Quran 103:1-3

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### 38 IS PEACE POSSIBLE?

“And when it is said to them, ‘Do not make trouble on earth,’ they say, ‘We are only reformers.’” - Quran 2:11

Is a two-state solution possible? Probably not.

Considering all the settlements that have been built (which are illegal under the 4th Geneva Convention) and strategically scattered around the West Bank to fragment it, and with the settlements that will presumably be built in Gaza, there will really be no space left for another state. Besides, a two-state solution was never the desired end result. Demeaning remarks have been made to the effect that the Palestinians aren't capable of governing themselves.

“Peace” in the normal sense of the word was never the intent. The goal is to acquire at least all of historical Palestine. As it stands now, Israeli hardliners refer to the West Bank by the Biblical name Judea and Samaria; they don't even recognize it as Palestinian territory. According to Ilan Pappé in *The Biggest Prison on Earth*, the plan was to occupy the West Bank, split it into eight districts, and establish military rule.

As Knesset member Simcha Rothman of the Religious Zionist Party said: "I think that when we talk about a two-state solution...we are using three words and three lies. It's not two, it's not a state, and definitely not a solution." He believes all of the land “from the river to the sea” belongs to Israel.

At a press conference in mid-December 2023, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu couldn't be more clear: "I'm proud that I prevented the establishment of a Palestinian state because today everybody understands what that Palestine state could have been, now that we've seen the little Palestinian state in Gaza."

Is a one-state solution possible? Probably not.

Now, one may wonder if a *one-state* solution is possible. For the sake of argument, let's just say it will be called Israel, and everyone lives together under one government. Would Israel accept Palestinian Christians and Muslims as equal citizens with equal rights? Would all citizens of this new-and-improved Israel have the same types of IDs and same types of license plates on vehicles? Would they all be allowed to drive on the same roads? Unfortunately not, as this goes against the whole premise of having a Jewish-majority state.

Is peace possible? Yes, if Israel allows it.

The ball is in Israel's court. They can either form a single state for everyone, or give back stolen land that would allow for a separate Palestinian state.

If we establish a one-state solution, a lot of people would be unhappy that the Jewish identity of the state would be upset, and it's not likely that Palestinians would be given equal rights. If we establish a two-state solution, some will say it legitimizes the theft of Palestinian land. We also get into a debate once again about who has historical rights to the land, as well as trying to convince the illegal settlers to leave the West Bank.

If we go with a two-state solution, the Palestinians can have independence and identity, and the Jewish people can have their exclusive state. People from either side can choose to live in the other state and live under its government. This solution mostly comes down to Israel accepting a Palestinian state and their right to exist, and it would mean that Israel would have to give up some of the land it illegally annexed (ideally including Syria's Golan Heights). But, I'm also open to a one-state solution where everyone can be free and equal. If Palestinians

and Israelis can live in one state with equal rights for everyone, I'm all for it. So far, however, Israel has not capitulated and has not shown any genuine effort towards a peaceful resolution.

There have been many attempts at peace negotiations, from the 1991 Madrid Conference to the 1993 Oslo Accords to Camp David in 2000. Much has been written and debated about in regards to these negotiations, but no lasting solution has been found. I'll refrain from providing too much detail since that's not the purpose of this book, but I will say that negotiations typically favored Israel, such as forcing Palestinians to recognize an Israeli state without Israel reciprocating. Palestinian requests about the status of Jerusalem and about refugees being allowed to return to their homes were ignored. Plus, illegal Israeli settlements continued expanding during and after peace negotiations.

Sadly, the peace process has been a sham. Anti-Palestinian folks like to claim that such-and-such was offered to the Palestinians but it was rejected. But no serious consideration is given to Palestinian rights and requests, and no serious concessions are made by Israel. Perhaps they are banking on Palestinian desperation, thinking they will accept any deal offered to them, such as giving up refugees' right to return and giving up Jerusalem. These negotiations simply buy time for Israel to build more settlements, dashing any hopes of a viable solution.

Additionally, the US isn't exactly the ideal peace broker in this conflict. The US killed more than 46,000 civilians in Afghanistan and an estimated 200,000 civilians in Iraq. If we go back to Vietnam, the figures are even more mind-numbing; as many as 2 *million* civilians were killed. This is the same country that dropped atomic bombs in Japan on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing many and poisoning many others. If you really want to feel depressed, look up Henry Kissinger's actions around the globe. And this is the same country that has vetoed over 40 UN Security Council resolutions in order to protect Israel instead of holding it accountable.

Is it all Hamas' fault? Not really.

Hamas has been a convenient scapegoat for Israel. The anti-Palestinian

movement enjoys stating that peace is not possible because Hamas' *raison d'etre* is to wipe Israel off the map. A few clarifications need to be made, although this is not meant as a defense of Hamas. For starters, Hamas does not represent all Palestinians. Hamas won elections in the Gaza Strip in 2006, but it wasn't a landslide victory, and much of the current (and young) Gazan population had no involvement whatsoever with the 2006 elections. Hamas does not represent the larger Palestinian population that resides in the ever-crumbling West Bank.

Further, while the original Hamas charter from 1988 did call for destroying Israel and liberating Palestine, the anti-Palestinian movement conveniently ignores the fact that Hamas revised its charter in 2006 dropping this statement and accepting a Palestinian state within 1967 borders (that is, borders as of June 4, 1967, just before Israel annexed a good portion of land during its six-day onslaught against Arabs).

What's more, in 2017 Hamas again refreshed its charter requesting an independent Palestinian state within 1967 borders and the right of return for refugees. It also underscored that this fight is against Zionism, not against Jews or Judaism. On the other hand, Israel's leading political party, the Likud, believes: "...between the Sea and the Jordan there will only be Israeli sovereignty."

In hindsight, some may say that Palestine and its neighbors should have simply accepted the UN partition plan of 1947 which would have left them with 44% of their country because it sounds a lot better than what they have now. Think about it from their perspective, though. They'd be giving up more than half of their country (what's in it for them?), and would be legitimizing the concept of a third-party coming in and splitting up any country in the world. In a post-World War II world, that type of colonialism and imperialism is no longer acceptable.

What concerns me about the possibility of peace is that Israeli hardliners and their supporters simply refuse the notion of a Palestinian state or even a Palestinian people. As ardent Israel supporter, writer, and commentator Ben Shapiro stated on X (formerly Twitter) back in October 2011: "There should be no Palestinian state aside from Jordan. Ever."



Still, all hope is not lost. Regardless of how impossible or illogical it would seem that something like peace could come to fruition, it's well within Allah's (SWT) power. Any practicing Muslim has probably experienced themselves or knows someone who has experienced duas being fulfilled that seemed highly unlikely. Doors may be opened and opportunities may suddenly present themselves. Miracles can happen if we are ready and willing to accept them.

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### 39 WHAT'S YOUR FRONT LINE?

This is by no means a call to arms, but we all need to take part in this fight. The question is, how? We all have something we can contribute. Some people can volunteer with Doctors Without Borders or a charitable organization and actually provide hands-on help to the civilians of Palestine. Maybe for others it's easier to simply donate money to these organizations.

Perhaps you're comfortable contacting your local politicians and expressing your views, or better yet, running for office yourself. For others, activism may involve attending protests or giving speeches about the truth of the conflict. You could even create videos for social media platforms. Some people are more eloquent in writing than in speech, so writing blog posts or even a book may be their best option. At least pass on this book when you're done reading it.

We also need to respond, in writing or in speech, to the lies and misinformation being spread. You could contact media outlets to call out their misinformation, or respond with facts to social media posts. We can't change the minds of those who choose to be deaf, dumb, and blind, but we need to deliver the message and hope that it will get through to some. Information is a critical component of warfare. Crucially, we need to make sure the Israeli government and military know that we are watching them and documenting their crimes against humanity.

I don't believe there can be a military solution to this conflict. Violence

is counterproductive. But we can attain victory by spreading the truth, rebutting the lies and propaganda, calling our local politicians, writing to news outlets, boycotting goods or companies that support the oppression of Palestinians, donating to non-profit organizations that provide food and medical aid to Palestinians, or volunteering with organizations that provide aid. We can attain victory by keeping Palestine alive. If nothing else, pray. For a Muslim, dua is the most powerful weapon.

“And remember when you were few, oppressed in the land, fearing that people may capture you; but He sheltered you, and supported you with His victory, and provided you with good things—so that you may be thankful.” - Quran 8:26

## 40 VICTORY IS OURS

We have not lost. Only if we lose all hope and give up have we lost.

“And do not say of those who are killed in the cause of God, ‘Dead.’ Rather, they are alive, but you do not perceive. We will certainly test you with some fear and hunger, and some loss of possessions and lives and crops. But give good news to the steadfast. Those who, when a calamity afflicts them, say, ‘To God we belong, and to Him we will return.’ Upon these are blessings and mercy from their Lord. These are the guided ones.” - Quran 2:154-157

Such is the way of the believer. A true believer never loses.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "How wonderful the affair of the believer is! Indeed, all of his affairs are good for him. This is for no one but the believer. If something good happens to him, he is grateful to Allah, which is good for him. And if something bad happens to him, he has patience, which is good for him." - Sahih Muslim Hadith

The ruling elite may think they have won because they have money, political power, and destructive weapons. The neo-Crusaders may feel they have conquered the weak and defenseless. But look at the death and destruction caused around the world. Look at the wars waged and lives lost. People will have to answer for their actions on Judgement Day.

Leaders and countries sometimes think they are good and right simply because they have wealth, resources (or control thereof), military might,

and diplomatic pull. But these things are not proof of righteousness. Rather, they are a test from Allah (SWT). The gifts given to us by Allah (SWT) may be used for good or for evil. When used for the latter, eventually those nations will fall. Empires come, empires go. Many a despot has risen to power, only to come crashing down. Pharaoh was drowned. Hitler imploded. Mussolini was executed.

“Corruption has appeared on land and sea, because of what people’s hands have earned, in order to make them taste some of what they have done, so that they might return.” - Quran 30:41

This life is only temporary. It’s a test. True victory can only come in the everlasting Hereafter. We have free will and can choose either to do good, do evil, or stand by idly while allowing evil to take place.

There is a vast amount of evil in this world, more than could ever be toppled by mere humans. But our job is simply to *try*, to put in the effort. We can’t be resigned to the status quo. We must do our part. The rest is in Allah’s (SWT) hands.

To be sure, this is a lengthy battle with many fronts, including:

- **Information:** We need more books, blogs, and social media accounts sharing facts and dispelling lies; we also need to call out media bias and misinformation
- **Legal/Public Relations:** We need to take legal action against slander and cyber-bullying; we need more people working in media and we need to share stories of Palestinian lives to humanize them
- **Technology:** We need to protect against cyber-attacks, hacking, and doxxing by anti-Palestinian groups
- **Economic:** We need to build a self-sustaining economy with our own companies and support one another’s businesses, especially in light of people losing their jobs simply for showing solidarity with Palestinians
- **Political:** We need more outreach to our local and national

representatives; we also need more representation in government at the local, state, and national levels

“Those who repent, those who worship, those who praise, those who journey, those who kneel, those who bow down, those who advocate righteousness and forbid evil, those who keep the limits of God—give good news to the believers.” - Quran 9:112

There is a lot of work to be done, and it might seem daunting. But like I said earlier, we each simply need to do our part.

We win by keeping the Palestinian people and identity alive. We win by not letting Israel forget that Palestinians exist. We win by not falling for their propaganda. We win by speaking the truth and fighting against injustice. We win by exposing their human rights violations. We win by documenting their war crimes. We win by letting them know we are watching what they are doing. We win by saying “Alhumdulillah” in the face of adversity. We win by remembering that truth will be laid bare and justice will be served on Judgement Day. We win by never letting them break our faith.

Ours is a bloodless victory based on truth, justice, patience, gratitude, piety, and morality.

“God only made it a message of hope, to set your hearts at rest. Victory comes only from God. God is Mighty and Wise.” - Quran 8:10

Victory is ours.

“And say, ‘The truth has  
come, and falsehood has  
withered away; for  
falsehood is bound to  
wither away.’”  
- Quran 17:81

