

"I am proud to join more than 250 Jewish holocaust survivors and descendents of survivors in condemning 'the massacre of Palestinians in Gaza'"

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I am proud to join more than 250 Jewish holocaust survivors and descendents of survivors in condemning "the massacre of Palestinians in Gaza" and "the ongoing genocide of the Palestinian people."

Our statement of solidarity calls for "an immediate end to the siege against and the blockade of Gaza" and a "full economic, cultural and academic boycott of Israel." [\[1\]](#)

We believe that "never again," the often repeated lesson of Hitler's holocaust, "must mean never again for anyone!" - especially the Palestinians.

We also protest the full-page advertisement published in the *New York Times* and elsewhere by Zionist Elie Wiesel that holds Palestinians responsible for the deaths of the hundreds of Palestinian children in Gaza killed by Israeli bombs. "Nothing can justify bombing UN shelters, homes, hospitals and universities," we say.

Wiesel, a Nobel laureate and holocaust survivor, accuses the Palestinian resistance group Hamas for having supposedly embraced a "death cult" of "child sacrifice" because Hamas has launched rockets against Israel [\[2\]](#).

In reality, it is Israel that has deliberately bombarded densely packed civilian residential areas, says, Raji Sourani director of the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights. Among Israeli targets was a UN school in Rafah being used as a shelter - an attack that even the U.S. State Department termed "appalling" and "disgraceful."

The 'Gaza Doctrine'

Sourani calls Israel's actions the "Gaza Doctrine" [\[3\]](#) - a "policy of collective punishment" in which "disproportionate force is used to cause terror among the civilian population to exert political pressure" on their government. "To bomb densely packed Gaza homes is a war crime," he says.

Such collective punishment was the Nazis' standard response to acts of resistance to their genocidal rule during World War II. When Czech resisters assassinated Reinhard Heydrich, a principal architect of the Jewish holocaust, the Nazis slaughtered more than 1,300 civilians in reprisal [4].

The Nazis took such actions in France, where I lived then as a child. In June 1944, the village of Oradour [5], about 100 miles from where I was hidden at the time, was attacked by a German Waffen-SS detachment, based on false reports that a German commander was held prisoner there. In a matter of hours 600 civilians were killed.

Jewish fighters were a leading force in the armed resistance in France, as they were in other countries across Europe. And even where Jews were isolated in ghettos and concentration camps, they nonetheless found ways to fight back.

In the celebrated 1943 Warsaw ghetto uprising, a mere 750 fighters, armed with primitive weapons smuggled along with food through hand-dug tunnels, held out for a month, before heavily armed Nazis extinguished resistance, bombing and levelling the ghetto to the ground.

There were Nazi reprisals across Europe. They killed 205 children at Oradour - but no one has ever accused the heroic resisters of being a "death cult of child sacrifice."

Solidarity in face of overwhelming odds

At the time of these events, I was marked for death by the Nazis. My story is an example of building solidarity in the face of overwhelming odds.

In 1942, the French police began rounding up Jewish residents by the tens of thousands - men, women, and children - handing them over to the Nazis to be killed at Auschwitz, the death camp in Poland. Among the victims was my mother, who died in Auschwitz in 1943. The Nazis' goal was to round up, deport, and kill all the Jews in France - as was being done throughout Europe.

But amid this terrible slaughter, a wave of revulsion grew in France against the attack on the Jews. Through the efforts of both social organizations and individual initiatives, thousands of Jews were hidden. Altogether, three-quarters of the French Jews escaped the Holocaust.

The first big raid of July 1942 caught Jewish organizations in France by surprise. It was only then that the Jewish population realized that their children had to be hidden. They embraced the slogan, 'Save the children by dispersing them.' Searches were initiated for safe havens, false papers were made, and transport arranged in an atmosphere of urgency and despair.

More than ten thousand Jewish children were taken from their families and hidden. I was among them. In 1943, when I was two years old, a resistance organization took charge of my care and placed me with a peasant family in Auvergne, a farming region in south-central France.

Recently, I went back to Auvergne with my partner, John Riddell, to learn how it was that I had been saved. I spoke to people in Auvergne who remembered those years.

The Jewish children were placed discreetly, away from the towns and sometimes in remote hamlets. Yet they lived in the open, going to school and to church. Why were they not betrayed to the police?

The villagers protected them, thus putting their own life and that of their families at risk. Despite the dangers, peasants took the children with love into their tightly knit communities.

The Power of Solidarity

The children were saved, in most cases, by the actions not of individual heroes but of entire communities, who hid them not in cellars but in plain view. They were saved by a resistance that embraced not only the guerrilla combatants, but those who set up civilian networks to defy anti-Jewish decrees, and, in a different way, by those who looked the other way, who did not ask questions, and who – even if hostile to the presence of Jews – did not betray them.

The resistance embraced French and immigrants; Christians, Jews, and Muslims; and refugees from Spain, Italy, and German-occupied territories. This was a solidarity born of common social experience of farmers, working people, and those that they influenced.

The situation in Gaza is unlike that faced by Europe's Jews under Hitler. The Israeli government has converted the territory into the world's largest concentration camp, sealed off and subjected to periodic and murderous bombardment. For the people of Gaza, there is no place to shelter their children; no friendly countryside that could provide refuge.

No wonder that Gaza, in the words of Raji Sourani, "a ceasefire is not enough. We demand justice. We demand to be treated like human beings. We demand an end to the closure of the Gaza Strip." [6]

And in the words of Tariq Ali [7], writer and journalist in London, England, our politicians "have to understand that there is no equivalence between the Palestinian resistance and the Israeli occupation. When a country is occupied, resistance emerges. If you want no rockets being fired, no tunnels being dug, get out of Gaza."

Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions

But the people of Gaza do not stand alone. To quote Barnaby Raine, a student organizer of a Jewish Bloc against Zionism addressing a solidarity rally in London August 9, "People from all backgrounds, from all walks of life, all over the world, come together and say in our thousands, 'We are all Palestinians.'"

Today, the peoples of the world are unequivocally vocal in their denunciation of Israeli apartheid and Israeli slaughter. They express this in repeated gigantic demonstrations with signs and banners calling out: end to the killing in Gaza, lift the siege of Gaza, freedom for Palestine.

Several governments – Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Peru, and Venezuela – have taken actions against the Israeli assault, including boycott and sanctions.

Today, our human dignity is challenged by Israel's cruelty towards the Palestinians. Palestinians call for a world movement of solidarity. We must speak out for their right to defend their lives and their homelands. We support their call to create economic pressure on Israel with a campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS).

The demands of this campaign are: For the right of Palestinians to return to their homeland; equal rights for Palestinians in Israel; and an end to the Israeli occupation. Today the boycott campaign is winning increasing support on several continents.

Let us redouble our efforts for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israeli apartheid.

Free Gaza! Palestine shall be free!

Suzanne Weiss

P.S.

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Footnotes

[1] This statement is available on ESSF (article 32765), [A call: Jewish survivors and descendents of survivors of Nazi genocide unequivocally condemn the massacre of Palestinians in Gaza](#).

[2] <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/elie-wiesel-accuses-amas-of-child-sacrifice-in-n-ews-ad/article19944809/>

[3] See available on ESSF (article 32778), [Israel/Palestine: Why a Gaza ceasefire isn't enough](#).

[4] <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lidice>

[5] <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oradour-sur-Glane#Massacre>

[6] See available on ESSF (article 32778), [Israel/Palestine: Why a Gaza ceasefire isn't enough](#).

[7] <http://mondoweiss.net/2014/08/solidarity-london-message.html>