

# May 14: Palestinian Morality – Israeli and U.S. Immorality

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On May 14, the world saw two starkly opposed moral cultures. On one side were unarmed Palestinian protestors in the Gaza Strip calling for the right of Palestinians to return to the homes and lands they were driven out of by the creation of Israel seventy years ago.

Palestinians call that the Nakba (“catastrophe”).

On the other side were Israeli snipers along one side of the Israeli “open air prison” of two million Palestinian inmates. The other side of this prison is the Mediterranean Sea, part of Israel’s border. A small part of Israel’s border is the crossing from Gaza to Egypt. Egypt’s dictator Sisi, a traitor to all the Arab people, keeps that virtually closed, under orders from Israel.

The Israeli snipers on this one day shot dead 62 Palestinians, and wounded some 2,000 others, many severely. The bullets the sharpshooters used to pick off demonstrators are of the kind that fracture inside the body, tearing more tissue and creating fist sized exit wounds.

There were no casualties among the Israelis. It was a massacre, an evil criminal action by an oppressor nation against its oppressed people.

This was the largest of the demonstrations in Gaza that started on March 30 to mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nakba. The Great March of Return would go each day up near the barbed wire prison fence to shout their demand, and be met with deadly sniper fire. The total murdered is at least 109, with 12,000 wounded.

During this time, the mainstream U.S. press would characterize the situation as “violence” or “clashes,” giving the false impression that there were two opposed armed forces in battle. Only slowly did only some of the truth dribble out. The right of return was hardly mentioned, if at all.

One had to turn to the small alternative press, such as Democracy Now! show on TV and radio, which had a reporter on the scene, Sharif Kouddous, in Gaza on May 14.

He reported, “There’s a simply massive protest all along the eastern [barbed wire fence] of Gaza, throughout the entire length of the Strip, from the north in Beit Hanoun, to the south in Rafah. I was at the biggest protest site, just east of Gaza City. There are thousands of people converging on the site – men, women and children. And it’s a really surreal scene. There are people gathering, mostly young men and boys, up near the [fence] of three sets of barbed wire.

“And you can see, just a couple of hundred yards away, Israeli soldiers, under canopies, on mounds of sand, sometimes in jeeps, and they are picking people off. I’ve seen people who weren’t even close to the fence being shot. Most of the people are being shot in the lower extremities, in their legs. I saw one person shot in the throat. The latest number of killed keeps going up, including a paramedic and a disabled person....

“No one is carrying weapons here. There are no bullets being fired by Palestinians on Israeli

soldiers.... People insist that this is peaceful. There are no military uniforms allowed [among the protesters]. There are no weapons allowed. Despite the fact that there are very heavily armed groups in Gaza, this was a decision made by the committees that are running this movement.... Hamas is involved, but so is Fateh, so is PFLP, so is Islamic Jihad, all those political parties. But more than that, there are women's committees, civil society committees, legal advocates. All of them are taking part and making these decisions ....

"There are no party flags allowed. Only the Palestinian flag. And in the back of the protest just a couple hundred yards away, there's a festive atmosphere. There's art. There's music. There's celebrations of Palestinian heritage. So, this is really a broad-based, grassroots movement. I don't think even if Hamas wanted this to stop, it could stop it.

Back at the front, some "people throw rocks. They burn tires, which send huge plumes of black smoke into the air to try to block the view of the snipers. They also send these kites and balloons with burning rags or improvised Molotov cocktails dangling off, and they try to guide it over the fence.

"What most people are doing is just walking to the fence. Some people place the Palestinian flag on the barbed wire. Some cut the wire and try to cross, saying they are implementing the right of return themselves. We have to remember that people are trapped in Gaza. There is really no way out. Most have never left the Strip. So this is a way of pushing their bodies up against their confinement.

"This is happening in a buffer zone. Israel imposed a buffer zone a couple of hundred meters inside Gaza from the fence. And so, over the years, farmers and people living on that side of the Gaza Strip have been regularly shot at by Israeli troops. And so, even reclaiming this space in Gaza itself is an achievement."

Also driving these young men and boys to heroically face Israel guns is the fact that living conditions are becoming unbearable in Gaza. Israel has laid siege to Gaza since 1991. Nothing can go in or out, not food, water, electricity etc. without Israeli approval, which is slowly squeezing Gaza to death while intermittently invading, inflicting huge casualties and destruction. A U.N. agency says that Gaza could soon become unlivable.

Concerning the targeting of protesters' legs, Kouddous said, "It reminds me of the first intifada. Israelis would break the arms of Palestinians who were throwing stones. Now it's Palestinians walking, and so they are taking out their legs."

He visited earlier a hospital where many of the wounded were being treated. "There was a wailing of pain in the orthopedic wards and young men and boys walking around on crutches, many lying in beds, their legs bandaged up with rods and pins protruding."

While this was going on, 40 miles away in Jerusalem, Israeli's were celebrating the creation of Israel. It should be recalled that it was Britain and the United States that enabled its creation, supported by the other imperialist powers. The U.S. is the head of the pro-Israel coalition today. The objective was to establish a pro-imperialist beachhead in the Arab world. It has been this imperialist support that has maintained Israel since.

So it was fitting that the center of the celebration in Jerusalem was the symbolic opening of the U.S. Embassy (the building is still under construction). The move of the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem was itself a provocation against the Palestinians, who view Jerusalem as their capital. It also made it clear for even the most dimwitted that the "two state solution" is dead. (In actual face it

was stillborn from its inception.)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu was at the Embassy opening, heaping praise on Trump for making the move, and declared that Jerusalem has been “the capital of the Jewish people for millennia, and the capital of our state from its inception.” This comes close to declaring that Israel is the state of all Jews everywhere – something he would like to say, but right now is impolitic to do so.

Among the dignitaries from the White House present were Trump’s senior advisor and son-in-law Jared Kushner and Daughter Ivanka, who in turn heaped praise on Netanyahu. Kushner is supposed to release the White House new plan for “peace” which is reported to reject the right of return for Palestinians and back Jerusalem as Israel’s capital.

Prayers were also said by two extreme rightist U.S. preachers, Robert Jeffress and John Hagee. The latter is a prominent “end of times” Christian, who once said that Hitler was sent by God to drive the Jews to what became Israel. The ideology of both Jeffress and Hagee includes that the Jews had to return to the ancient land of Israel, because they had to be there for Armageddon to occur. But if they don’t convert to Christianity they then will “Burn in Hell!” shouts Jeffress, who is echoed by Hagee.

That anti-Semites can be pro-Israel is nothing new. Both positions are held by many in the Alt-Right in the U.S. and the rightist movements gaining strength in Europe. It is a bit odd that Trump would invite these two to Jerusalem – or is it?

Some of Jeffress’s other statements: “Here is the deep, dark secret of Islam. It is a religion that promotes pedophilia, sex with children.” “Islam is wrong! It is heresy from the pit of hell. Mormonism is wrong. It is a heresy from the pit of Hell. Judaism, you know, can’t be saved.” Catholicism “represents the genius of Satan.”

He has equally nice things to say about Buddhists, Hindus, LGBT people, and so on.

Trump and Netanyahu both blame the Palestinian deaths and wounded on – the Palestinians! And defend the Israeli killings. U.S. U.N. ambassador Nikki Haley repeated this at a meeting of the Security Council.

As Malcolm X said, the oppressors turn the criminals into the victims and the victims into the criminals. Much of the mainstream press in the U.S. follow suit.

An exception was one writer in the New York Times, who said: “The juxtaposition of images of dead and wounded Palestinians and Ivanka Trump smiling in Jerusalem like a Zionist Marie Antoinette tells us a lot about America’s relationship to Israel right now.”

**Barry Sheppard**

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