

# Elites Will Make Gazans of Us All

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Gaza is a window on our coming dystopia. The growing divide between the world's elite and its miserable masses of humanity is maintained through spiraling violence. Many impoverished regions of the world, which have fallen off the economic cliff, are beginning to resemble Gaza, where 1.6 million Palestinians live in the planet's largest internment camp. These sacrifice zones, filled with seas of pitifully poor people trapped in squalid slums or mud-walled villages, are increasingly hemmed in by electronic fences, monitored by surveillance cameras and drones and surrounded by border guards or military units that shoot to kill. These nightmarish dystopias extend from sub-Saharan Africa to Pakistan to China. They are places where targeted assassinations are carried out, where brutal military assaults are pressed against peoples left defenseless, without an army, navy or air force. All attempts at resistance, however ineffective, are met with the indiscriminate slaughter that characterizes modern industrial warfare.

In the new global landscape, as in Israel's occupied territories and the United States' own imperial projects in Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen and Afghanistan, massacres of thousands of defenseless innocents are labeled wars. Resistance is called a provocation, terrorism or a crime against humanity. The rule of law, as well as respect for the most basic civil liberties and the right of self-determination, is a public relations fiction used to placate the consciences of those who live in the zones of privilege. Prisoners are routinely tortured and "disappeared." The severance of food and medical supplies is an accepted tactic of control. Lies permeate the airwaves. Religious, racial and ethnic groups are demonized. Missiles rain down on concrete hovels, mechanized units fire on unarmed villagers, gunboats pound refugee camps with heavy shells, and the dead, including children, line the corridors of hospitals that lack electricity and medicine.

The impending collapse of the international economy, the assaults on the climate, the resulting droughts, flooding, precipitous decline in crop yields and rising food prices are creating a universe where power is divided between the narrow elites, who hold in their hands sophisticated instruments of death, and the enraged masses. The crises are fostering a class war that will dwarf anything imagined by Karl Marx. They are establishing a world where most will be hungry and live in fear, while a few will gorge themselves on delicacies in protected compounds. And more and more people will have to be sacrificed to keep this imbalance in place.

Because it has the power to do so, Israel—as does the United States—flouts international law to keep a subject population in misery. The continued presence of Israeli occupation forces defies nearly a hundred U.N. Security Council resolutions calling for them to withdraw. The Israeli blockade of Gaza, established in June 2007, is a brutal form of

collective punishment that violates Article 33 of the Fourth 1949 Geneva Convention, which set up rules for the “Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.” The blockade has turned Gaza into a sliver of hell, an Israeli-administered ghetto where thousands have died, including the 1,400 civilians killed in the Israeli incursion of 2008. With 95 percent of factories shut down, Palestinian industry has virtually ceased functioning. The remaining 5 percent operate at 25 to 50 percent capacity. Even the fishing industry is moribund. Israel refuses to let fishermen travel more than three miles from the coastline, and within the fishing zone boats frequently come under Israeli fire. The Israeli border patrols have seized 35 percent of the agricultural land in Gaza for a buffer zone. The collapsing infrastructure and Israeli seizure of aquifers mean that in many refugee camps, such as Khan Yunis, there is no running water. UNRWA (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) estimates that 80 percent of all Gazans now rely on food aid. And the claim of Israeli self-defense belies the fact that it is Israel that maintains an illegal occupation and violates international law by carrying out collective punishment of Palestinians. It is Israel that chose to escalate the violence when during an incursion into Gaza earlier this month its forces fatally shot a 13-year-old boy. As the world breaks down, this becomes the new paradigm—modern warlords awash in terrifying technologies and weapons murdering whole peoples. We do the same in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia.

Market forces and the military mechanisms that protect these forces are the sole ideology that governs industrial states and humans’ relationship to the natural world. It is an ideology that results in millions of dead and millions more displaced from their homes in the developing world. And the awful algebra of this ideology means that these forces will eventually be unleashed on us, too. Those who cannot be of use to market forces are considered expendable. They have no rights and legitimacy. Their existence, whether in Gaza or blighted postindustrial cities such as Camden, N.J., is considered a drain on efficiency and progress. They are viewed as refuse. And as refuse they not only have no voice and no freedom; they can be and are extinguished or imprisoned at will. This is a world where only corporate power and profit are sacred. It is a world of barbarism.

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