

Genocide in Gaza

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Global Research, September 16, 2006

palestinechronicle.com 16 September 2006

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

Nothing apart from pressure in the form of sanctions, boycotts and divestment will stop the murdering of innocent civilians in the Gaza Strip.

By A genocide is taking place in Gaza. This morning, 2 September, another three citizens of Gaza were killed and a whole family wounded in Beit Hanoun. This is the morning reaper, before the end of day many more will be massacred. An average of eight Palestinian die daily in the Israeli attacks on the Strip. Most of them are children. Hundreds are maimed, wounded and paralyzed.

The Israeli leadership is at lost of what to do with the Gaza Strip. It has vague ideas about the West Bank. The current government assumes that the West Bank, unlike the Strip, is an open space, at least on its eastern side. Hence if Israel, under the ingathering program of the government, annexes the parts it covets – half of the West Bank – and cleanses it of its native population, the other half would naturally lean towards Jordan, at least for a while and would not concern Israel. This is a fallacy, but nonetheless it won the enthusiastic vote of most of the Jews in the country. Such an arrangement cannot work in the Gaza enclave – Egypt unlike Jordan has succeeded in persuading the Israelis, already in 1948, that the Gaza Strip for them is a liability and will never form part of Egypt. So a million and half Palestinians are stuck inside Israel – although geographically the Strip is located on the margins of the state, psychologically it lies in its midst.

The inhuman living conditions in the most dense area in the world, and one of the poorest human spaces in the northern hemisphere, disables the people who live it to reconcile with the imprisonment Israel had imposed on them ever since 1967. There were relative better periods where movement to the West Bank and into Israel for work was allowed, but these better times are gone. Harsher realities are in place ever since 1987. Some access to the outside world was allowed as long as there were Jewish settlers in the Strip, but once they were removed the Strip was hermetically closed. Ironically, most Israelis, according to recent polls, look at Gaza as an independent Palestinian state that Israel has graciously allowed to emerge. The leadership, and particularly the army, see it as a prison with the most dangerous community of inmates, which has to be eliminated one way or another.

The conventional Israeli policies of ethnic cleansing employed successfully in 1948 against half of Palestine's population, and against hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in the West Bank are not useful here. You can slowly transfer Palestinians out of the West Bank, and particular out of the Greater Jerusalem area, but you cannot do it in the Gaza Strip – once you sealed it as a maximum-security prison camp.

As with the ethnic cleansing operations, the genocidal policy is not formulated in a vacuum.

Ever since 1948, the Israeli army and government needed a pretext to commence such policies. The takeover of Palestine in 1948 produced the inevitable local resistance that in turn allowed the implementation of an ethnic cleansing policy, preplanned already in the 1930s. Twenty years of Israeli occupation of the West Bank produced eventually some sort of Palestinian resistance. This belated anti-occupation struggle unleashed a new cleansing policy that still is implemented today in the West Bank. The Gaza imprisonment in the summer of 2005, which was paraded as an Israeli generous withdrawal, produced the Hamas and Islamic Jihad missile attack and one abduction case. Even before the abduction of Gilad Shalit, the Israeli army bombarded indiscriminately the Strip. Ever since the abduction, the massive killing increased and became systematic. A daily business of slaying Palestinians, mainly children is now reported in the internal pages of the local press, quite often in microscopic fonts.

The chief culprits are the Israeli pilots who have a field day now that one of them is the General Chief of Staff. In the 1982 Lebanon war, the Israeli airforce issued orders to its pilots to abort missions if within 500 square meters of their target they spotted innocent civilians. Not that these orders were kept, but the pretense for internal moral consumption was there. It is called in the Israeli airforce, the "Lebanon Procedure" [Nohal Levanon]. When the pilots asked a year ago if the "Lebanon procedure" is intact for Gaza, the answer was no. The same answer was given to the pilots in the second Lebanon war.

The Lebanon war provided the fog for a while, covering the war crimes in the Gaza Strip. But the policies rage on even after the conclusion of the cease-fire up in the north. It seems that the frustrated and defeated Israeli army is even more determined to enlarge the killing fields in the Gaza Strip. There are no politicians who are able or willing to stop the generals. A daily killing of up to 10 civilians is going to leave a few thousand dead each year. This is of course different from genociding a million people in one campaign – the only inhibition Israel is willing to undertake in the name of the Holocaust memory. But if you double the killing you raise the number to horrific proportions and more importantly you may force a mass eviction in the end of the day outside the Strip – either in the name of human aid, international intervention or the people's own desire to escape the inferno. But if the Palestinian steadfastness is going to be the response, and there is no reason to doubt that this will be the Gazan reaction then the massive killing would continue and increase.

Much depends on the international reaction. When Israel was absolved from any responsibility or accountably for the ethnic cleansing in 1948, it turned this policy into a legitimate tool for its national security agenda. If the present escalation and adaptation of genocidal policies would be tolerated by the world, it would expand and used even more drastically.

Nothing apart from pressure in the form of sanctions, boycotts and divestment will stop the murdering of innocent civilians in the Gaza Strip. There is nothing we here in Israel can do against it. Brave pilots refused to partake in the operations, two journalists – out of 150 – do not cease to write about it, but this is it. In the name of the holocaust memory let us hope the world would not allow the genocide of Gaza to continue.

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