

Israel-Palestine: The Humanitarian Consequences of an Occupation

By [Michael Welch](#)

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In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

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– Larry Commodore, from this week’s interview. (transcript below)

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The ongoing subjugation of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation continues to take its humanitarian toll.

According to the [most recently published report](#) from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, restrictions on goods entering and leaving the Gaza Strip have contributed to the devastation of Gaza’s economy with the unemployment rate in the second quarter of 2018 standing at an unprecedented and staggering 53.7 per cent. Israeli reprisals against the demonstrators at the border fence with Israel since March 30 have resulted in the deaths of 179 Palestinians and injuries to over 18,000 others.

Gaza’s devastated electricity grid has been cut up to 20 hours a day. Funds for the UN emergency fuel program, mainly intended to power back-up generators has run out as of the end of August, leaving hospitals without the service support, and severely compromising other critical health centres and sanitation facilities.

In the occupied West Bank, Israel is expanding its settlements. In August, an Israeli Defense committee [approved the construction of over 1000 settlement homes](#). According to the Israeli NGO Peace Now, 96 per cent of these settlements approvals “are in isolated settlements that Israel will likely need to evacuate within the framework of a two-state agreement”. In 2017, the Netanyahu government advanced plans to build 6,742 settlement homes compared to 2,629 the previous year. As of the end of August, plans were advanced for the construction of 3,794 more units.[1]

All of this in spite of a near consensus of opinion within the international community, including the United Nations Security Council and the International Criminal Court that the settlement enterprise is illegal. [2]

The Global Research News Hour radio program concentrates its focus this week on Israel's role in exacerbating the ongoing crisis in the occupied territories, and the failure of the international community to hold this Middle East power to account.

Our first guest, Suha Jarrar, elaborates on the crisis in Gaza with a special emphasis on the additional impact of climate change and how Israel's settler colonial project interferes with Palestinians' ability to adapt.

Our next guest, Larry Commodore speaks about his experiences on board the Freedom Flotilla boat Al Awda which was intercepted by Israeli forces in July while attempting to peacefully breach the Gaza blockade to bring aid to the people of Gaza.

Finally, Dmitri Lascaris breaks down Canadian culpability in aiding and abetting Israeli violation of international law.

Suha Jarrar is a Palestinian human rights researcher and advocate, and currently the Environmental and Gender Policy Researcher at [Al-Haq](#) human rights organization in Ramallah, Palestine. Suha obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree in environmental and gender studies from Trent University in Canada, and her Master of Science in Climate Change Science and Policy from the University of Sussex. Suha's M.Sc. research focused on climate change adaptation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Larry Commodore is a long-time indigenous rights activist and former elected chief of the [Soowahlie](#) community of the [Stó:lō Nation](#), near Vancouver.

Dmitri Lascaris is a Canadian lawyer, journalist and activist. In 2012, Dimitri was named by Canadian Lawyer Magazine as one of Canada's 25 most influential lawyers. He is a correspondent and board member of The Real News Network and a board member of Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East.

Transcript – Interview with Larry Commodore, September 13, 2018

Global Research: This past summer, activists from countries around the world, including Canada, took part in the 2018 Freedom Flotilla, a peaceful, non-violent action aimed at breaking Israel's blockade of Gaza and bringing vital supplies to Palestinians on the territory. On July 29th, the Flotilla ship Al Awda was intercepted and boarded by Israeli soldiers. The passengers and crew would report being assaulted, threatened and detained, and their cargo and personal effects stolen. |They would remain in detention for four days.

One of the passengers was Larry Commodore, a long time Indigenous rights activist, and former elected chief of the Soowahlie community of the Stó:lō Nation, near Vancouver. Larry cited the similarities between his experiences as a First Nations man in the Canadian settler-State, and the realities of Palestinians under occupation as a motivation for his involvement in Palestinian solidarity activism. He joined us by phone from the Soowahlie community where he lives, to tell us what he witnessed and experienced during the ordeal.

Larry Commodore: Well again, we were stuck in ... The night before we were actually singing and ...having a good time together, and we knew that they were gonna – they will be coming down on us. We talked a bit about what jail would be like and that and so forth.

When it started coming down the next day, I was, uh, I was by the wheelhouse. I listened to

the radio communication with the Israeli navy. They were calling us that uh, that we were a threat to the Israelis' security and that - they were telling us to turn around. And we told them that we were in international waters, that we had no intention of going to Israelis' waters, and that we had the right to ... seek passage.

We went back and forth for I don't know how long, half an hour or so. At some point the captain of our boat, Herman Reksten, advised that (we should) be prepared for an attack (from the) Israelis. So I went down deck and alerted everybody that - to get ready! The Israelis are coming! Go in the bathroom! Get something to eat! Do whatever you have to do to get ready!

The Israeli commandos boarded quite quickly. I was surprised at that, how quickly they were able to board and start attacking our people at the - that were at the wheelhouse...

GR: Could you talk about their use of force against the crew and the passengers?

LC: Yeah, that's what got me going there, because as I say, I didn't have a good view but I did see some of them knocking our guys onto the deck there - the commandos were - and that got me quite upset then. As I say, I didn't have a good view, but any fear that I had now was washed away by the anger, because I heard yelling and screaming going on. So I was quite angry at what was transpiring. Again, I didn't have a good view of what exactly was going on. And I didn't find out until later on what exactly happened there because some of our folks was tasered, one of our folks had a broken foot there because they started stomping on people's feet, that were around the wheelhouse too. They uh...

And then they got the captain, Herman Reksten, and they started beating up on him. The boat was stopped at that point, and they wanted the captain to start the boat again. But apparently, it's a bit of a process to start the boat, and then you have to go down to the engine room...So they brought him - the captain - down to the engine room and got the engineer - told the engineer to start the boat, and the engineer said no. And so they started beating on the captain again and told the engineer (if he doesn't) start the boat they were going to continue beating the captain. And they even threatened the captain with execution too.

So after that, after the beating of the captain, the engineer started the boat after that.

GR: The ship and its passengers were taken to the Ashdod naval base in Israel after a 6 hour journey. Larry reports that passports, wallets and other personal effects were seized by the soldiers. He said he would not voluntarily leave the Al Awda until those belongings were returned to him.

LC: The last thing I remember...they had me on the deck and they put handcuffs on my hands there...on my back. And then that's all I remember.

I was told by other shipmates that they had dragged me off - they were quite violently they had dragged me off the ship. That I had a gash on my foot there and there was a lot of blood coming out. But they ended up bringing me to the hospital because of the gash on my foot, and I was unconscious when they brought me to the hospital, and uh, I came to because they were stitching up my foot there and it was painful. And I came to, I didn't know where I was, I didn't know how I got there.

I was in a total daze....and then I just went unconscious again, and when I came to, I was in

Givon prison, and it's a bit of a blur there, I don't remember much of the hours at Givon.

GR: While in detention, Larry would discover that his bladder had been injured during the melee leaving him unable to urinate. The discomfort was sufficiently intense that he indicated he was in no condition to take part in a proceeding in front of an immigration judge, nor was he able to travel back to Canada. After two days, officials relented and sent him to a hospital. However, the guard escorting |him seemed insensitive to his plight.

LC: The head guard that they got me to the hospital, he didn't believe that I had a bladder problem at all. So at the hospital, he was forcing me to drink more water. He forced me to drink about eight glasses of water. Then he got me to the bathroom. Told me to urinate....and I couldn't urinate, he was standing right behind me at the time too...Again, I couldn't urinate, and then I told him that...(said) you're playing games with me. And then he got me to drink more water, and I still wasn't able to urinate. So he kind of gave up on that - the guard kind of gave up on that and he got me back into the hospital again. And then after a while the doctor came and realized that there was a problem, and he put a catheter on me and I was able to pass fluid after that.

GR: Mmm...

LC: And uh, I was brought back to the hosp - uh, to prison. I was - leg shackles on. When they were bringing me to the hospital I had leg shackles on, and the guard kept yelling at me: "Walk faster! Walk faster!" even though |I wasn't able to walk very fast. And I was also carrying a urine bag too.

GR: Larry got deported from Israel the day after his hospital visit. He saw doctors in Toronto and was returned to his home on the West Coast of Canada. After three weeks of bed rest he reports an almost complete recovery from his ordeal.

Have you approached the Canadian government? What are they saying about these actions taken by the Israeli forces against you?

LC: Yeah, well, it's uh, I did have a meeting with the Canadian consulate when I was in Israel, and again I was really kind of blurry then too, I still wasn't in very good shape. And uh, I don't think...before I realized that (I had) the bladder issues too, when I seen a consulate.

They wouldn't seem helpful at all. They just seemed that they'd go with the Israeli line that I was being a threat to the Israeli security, and uh, and thenvthey gave me a phone number for them, and uh, because we have access to a phone, didn't do me any good...I wasn't too impressed with them at all.

It seems quite daunting, what the Palestinians are facing, but like Dr. Swee Ang who was with us and who was a long time Palestinian supporter, and who has seen the Sabra-Shatilla massacres - is a witness to the massacres in that community - she said she was inspired by the Palestinians, their resilience, how they were able to continue on in the face of all sorts of murderous oppression.

And that's what inspires me, is the Palestinians themselves, how they are able to continue on...As I say, the reason I was there was to - thought it was my duty to be challenging the oppressor, and I think that should be everybody's duty - every decent person, every person of conscience it should be their duty to stand up to challenge Israel and the way they - their

murderous oppression that really is inflicted ...on the Palestinians in Gaza in particular... We just have to create a better world for everybody.

-end of transcript-

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The [Global Research News Hour](#) airs every Friday at 1pm CT on [CKUW 95.9FM](#) in Winnipeg. The programme is also podcast at [globalresearch.ca](#) . Excerpts of the show have begun airing on [Rabble Radio](#) and appear as podcasts at [rabble.ca](#).

The Global Research News Hour now airs Fridays at 6pm PST, 8pm CST and 9pm EST on Alternative Current Radio ([alternativecurrentradio.com](#))

Community Radio Stations carrying the Global Research News Hour:

CHLY 101.7fm in Nanaimo, B.C - Thursdays at 1pm PT

Boston College Radio [WZBC 90.3FM NEWTONS](#) during the Truth and Justice Radio Programming slot - Sundays at 7am ET.

[Port Perry Radio](#) in Port Perry, Ontario -1 Thursdays at 1pm ET

[Burnaby Radio Station CJSF out of Simon Fraser University](#). 90.1FM to most of Greater Vancouver, from Langley to Point Grey and from the North Shore to the US Border.

It is also available on 93.9 FM cable in the communities of SFU, Burnaby, New Westminister, Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Surrey and Delta, in British Columbia, Canada. - Tune in at its new time - Wednesdays at 4pm PT.

Radio station [CFUV 101.9FM](#) based at the University of Victoria airs the Global Research News Hour every Sunday from 7 to 8am PT.

[CORTES COMMUNITY RADIO CKTZ 89.5](#) out of Manson's Landing, B.C airs the show Tuesday mornings at 10am Pacific time.

[Cowichan Valley Community Radio CICV 98.7 FM](#) serving the [Cowichan Lake](#) area of Vancouver Island, BC airs the program Thursdays at 6am pacific time.

Campus and community radio [CFMH 107.3fm](#) in Saint John, N.B. airs the Global Research News Hour Fridays at 10am.

Caper Radio CJBW 107.3FM in Sydney, [Cape Breton](#), Nova Scotia airs the Global Research News Hour starting Wednesday Morning from 8:00 to 9:00am. Find more details at [www.caperradio.ca](#)

RIOT RADIO, the visual radio station based out of [Durham College](#) in Oshawa, Ontario has begun airing the Global Research News Hour on an occasional basis. Tune in at [dcstudentsinc.ca/services/riot-radio/](#)

Radio Fanshawe: [Fanshawe's 106.9 The X \(CIXX-FM\)](#) out of London, Ontario airs the Global Research News Hour Sundays at 6am with an encore at 4pm.

Los Angeles, California based Thepowerofvoices.com airs the Global Research News Hour every Monday from 6-7pm Pacific time.

Notes:

1. https://twitter.com/peacenowisrael/status/1032307745083535360/photo/1?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1032307745083535360&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.aljazeera.com%2Fnews%2F2018%2F08%2Fisrael-approves-plans-1000-settlement-homes-180822162800080.html
2. <https://imeu.org/article/israel-international-law-settlements>

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