

# Israel's Kafkaesque "Matrix of Control"

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Finding an equitable solution to the intractable, festering decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the Gordian Knot that must be cut to achieve peace overall in the Middle East. Today, no solution is in sight nor are any serious efforts planned to find one despite occasional rhetoric to the contrary like what's now being heard from Washington with similar disingenuous echos inside Israel.

Palestinians know otherwise from long experience. They've heard this siren song before. It's the same old tired refrain going nowhere and not intending to. The so-called "road map" goes nowhere, and the "peace process" guarantees only more conflict because Israel wants it that way to justify its harshness and refuses to discuss the most fundamental Palestinian concerns. Unless they're resolved there can never be peace. They include a sovereign integral independent Palestinian state, the Right of Return, status of Jerusalem Palestinians want as their capital, settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) that must be removed, and established borders. They also include ending what Palestinian-American scholar and activist Edward Said once called Israel's agenda of "refined viciousness" against the Palestinian people. Since Hamas' Palestinian Authority (PA) January, 2006 legislative electoral victory, there's been nothing "refined" about it.

As long as these issues and present conditions go unaddressed, this long-running tragedy will go on without end destroying the lives of new generations of young Palestinians who nonetheless continue their valiant struggle for freedom and justice even against overwhelming odds. Today they're greater than ever as the tiny Israeli state with six million Jews (including those in OPT settlements) is a world nuclear power compared to a virtually defenseless Palestinian population of about five million. Included are 1.4 million Arab Israeli citizens. They're denied all rights Israeli Jews get and are subjected to constant abuse and neglect. They're a fifth of the population but are forced to live on 2% of the land plus 1% more for agricultural use. The Jewish population gets nearly all the rest.

Another 3.9 million Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank only get the right to live under the boot of a hostile occupier. They live under "vicious" repression and are denied all rights including the fundamental one to their own home on their own land that may be bulldozed to rubble anytime for any reason because Israel wants the land for Jewish settlements and relentlessly takes it and the lives of many Palestinians as well.

Then there are the refugees. About five million are in the Palestinian diaspora including about 260,000 internally displaced and living inside Israel. Most others live within 100 miles of Israel's borders in neighboring Arab states. Half are in Jordan, 15% in Lebanon, another 15% in Syria while others live throughout the world including in other Arab countries like Egypt and the Gulf states. Many live with a dominant dream so far unfulfilled - the absolute universal "Right of Return" affirmed in UN Resolution 194 passed in December, 1948

resolving that “refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property....made good by the Governments or authorities responsible.”

This “universal right” is also established in Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and under various Geneva Conventions. Israel won’t recognize it and adamantly refuses to include it in negotiations even though the Jewish state doesn’t have a legal leg to stand on. In 1948-49, its leaders ethnically cleansed 800,000 Palestinians slaughtering many in the process. They also destroyed 531 of their villages in their “War of Independence” all Palestinians call the Nakba or catastrophe. Many refugees dream one day of returning to their homes, and all Palestinians want and deserve their own sovereign independent state never losing hope they’ll get it.

Israel exacerbates their plight practicing a rigid policy of police state control while ignoring binding legal provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Its preamble cites the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and UN Charter, that’s also binding international law, stating “civil and political freedom....can only be achieved (if) everyone may enjoy his civil and political rights (and that it is the) obligation of States under the Charter of the United Nations to promote....human rights and freedoms (for everyone).”

Its many Articles also affirm:

- The right of self-determination and freedom to freely determine one’s political status and freely pursue one’s economic, social and cultural development.
- The inherent right to life and freedom from subjection to torture, cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment or punishment and to be free from arbitrary arrest or detention or deprived of liberty.
- The right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose one’s residence.
- The right freely leave any country and not be deprived of the right to return to it.
- The right to freedom from arbitrary or unlawful interference with one’s privacy, family, home or correspondence.
- The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
- The right to have equal access as all others to public services in one’s country.
- The right of all persons to equal protection of the law without discrimination.....and much more.

In the way it treats Palestinians, Israel willfully violates all the above provisions as state policy and has done so for six decades and gotten away with it. People of conscience must condemn this lawlessness and demand Israeli leaders be held accountable for their crimes of war and against humanity so the long-suffering Palestinians one day have the same rights and freedoms as all Israeli Jews. They and all others deserve no less.

**Jeff Halper’s Concept of An Israeli “Matrix of Control”**

Jeff Halper is the Coordinator of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD) based in Jerusalem. He's also a professor of anthropology at Ben Gurion University and has lived in Israel since 1973. ICAHD was originally formed as a non-violent, direct-action group to resist Israeli home demolitions in the OPT. It's activities now include resistance to settlements, land expropriation, fruit and olive tree uprootings and other crop destruction, bypass road construction, policies of "closure" and "separation," denial of civil and human rights, and all other elements of repression of a people under occupation it wants to help end to achieve an equitable and sustainable peace only possible once Palestinians have their own sovereign integral independent state.

Halper established the concept of a repressive "Matrix of Control" to explain how Israeli governments dominate Palestinian life. For these long-suffering people ever to achieve justice and a land of their own, this system chaining them in bondage must end. Here's how it works.

Halper explains it's composed of three layers of control. The first one is "physical control" of key "links and nodes." It's done through illegal OPT settlements on expropriated land, use of military zones, industrial parks, control of aquifers and other natural resources, checkpoints, control of all border crossings, a network of bypass roads for Jews only, national parks for recreation underneath which are former Palestinian villages destroyed and their history erased to make way for them, and the oppressive (World Court ruled) illegal Separation or Apartheid Wall claimed for security but, in fact, another part of a land grab and confinement agenda. It's being built to continue ethnically cleansing Palestinians and keep those remaining virtual prisoners in restricted cantonized OPT areas. They're isolated from and unconnected to others as part of Israel's policy of ghettoization, repression and social control.

Halper's second control layer is bureaucratic and legal encompassing a host of policies constricting Palestinians in a maze of procedures and restrictions. These include harassing zoning and other regulations governing the following:

- Allowable home and village construction.
- Building permit restrictions.
- Home demolitions for violations of code.
- Land expropriation designated for Israeli "public purposes."
- Agricultural restrictions and crop destruction for violations.
- Licensing and inspection of Palestinian businesses.
- Closures anywhere, any time, for any reason.
- Movement and travel restrictions within and outside the country.
- Many other politically motivated harassing rules and regulations designed to make life impossible for people forced to abide by them. These are politically motivated actions confining Palestinians to designated enclaves or cantons. Israel claims they're legal, but, in fact, they're not. They deny fundamental human and civil rights guaranteed under numerous international laws, covenants, and protocols established by Geneva Conventions

and the UN governing a broad definition of rights and freedoms including economic, social, cultural, political and other ones in peace and war.

Israel is a signatory to these laws yet flagrantly violates them. It's also brazenly ignored over five dozen UN Resolutions going back decades condemning or censuring it for its actions against the Palestinians or other Arab people, deploring it for committing them, or demanding, calling on or urging the Jewish state to end them. Israel flaunts the rule of law observing only what comes out of its Knesset. It arrogates to itself the right to act in its own interest, law or no law, and gets away with it because its supportive partner and paymaster in Washington winks and nods approval, funds it lavishly, and supplies it with the most modern weapons of war to use against any adversary. Palestinians, on the other hand, are vulnerable and defenseless. They have only crude weapons, their bodies and redoubtable spirit to use in self-defense.

Halper's third "Matrix" layer uses violence as a means of social and political control. It includes military occupation, mass imprisonment and routine use of torture as documented by Israeli human rights monitoring group B'Tselem saying it's flagrant and widespread and violates the Fourth Geneva Convention, Universal Declaration of Human Rights and 1984 UN Convention Against Torture. It also relies on an elaborate use of collaborators, pressure on families to sell their land, and military and civil authority oppression in the OPT. All this is falsely justified in the name of security just like harsh US laws and their enforcement are here. In fact, they're just police state measures to harass and round up dissenters and control a restive population resisting a hostile government harming its welfare.

Most people in the US know little about what's happening in the OPT because information about it is suppressed in the corporate-controlled media. The Israeli public is better informed but not well enough about the "Matrix." Americans are willing to sacrifice some freedom for security not realizing when they do they lose both. Israelis, on the other hand, want peace and are willing to give up some territory for it. Palestinians, however, are victims and understand the "Matrix" well because they live under its harshness affecting their daily lives. Achieving their dream one day depends not only on gaining their own independent state, but also freeing themselves from "the key nodes of the Matrix" Halper explains do the following:

- Gives Israel full control of all aspects of Palestinian life in the OPT.
- Most often lowers Israel's military profile creating an image of administration and Israel's right to defend itself hiding the ugly reality on the ground of an oppressive occupier.
- Creates a cramped space for a Palestinian cantonized mini-state relieving Israel of an obligation to service it.
- Deflects international opposition beneath the cover of conventional administrative and bureaucratic mechanisms.
- Creates deplorable conditions leading to despair and belief a truly sovereign independent state is unachievable hoping Palestinians will accept the crumbs offered them or give up and leave.

This bureaucratic web of containment disguises a hard line Kafkaesque system of social control and oppressive enforcement harshly treating anyone resisting it. Visible on the

surface under a military head of a “Civil Administration” is a face of “proper administration, upholding the law, and keeping public order and security.” It makes the occupation invisible except for its victims disciplined by its harsh rules. Halper describes the control mechanisms:

- Military assaults against the civilian population and infrastructure (including targeted assassinations and willful collateral killing). It’s now ongoing daily in Gaza and the West Bank and documented by the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, B’Tselem and others on the ground.
- Use of collaborators and undercover “mustarabi” army units, mass arrests, administrative detentions, (kangaroo court) trials and widespread torture of detainees.
- Absence of civil law replaced by military rule supplemented by Civil Administration policies.
- Mass expropriation of Palestinian land mostly in the OPT but also affecting Arab Israeli citizens.
- Construction of over 200 settlements on occupied land for 400,000 Israeli Jews since 1967 in the West Bank including Palestinian East Jerusalem.
- Dividing the OPT into Areas “A,” “B,” “C,” and “D” in the West Bank; “H-1” and “H-2” in Hebron; nature reserves for Jews only; closed military areas; security zones; and “open green spaces” for Jewish-only housing developments in over half of East Jerusalem leaving Palestinians confined to unconnected cantons surrounded by Israeli settlements, restricted roads and checkpoints.
- An interconnected restricted highway and bypass road system linking the settlements and effectively incorporating them into Israel proper like suburbs are to downtown areas of US cities.
- Controlling aquifers and other key natural resources including rainfall Palestinians are forbidden to collect by law even though they have limited access to other water sources.
- Controlling OPT holy places as pretexts to maintain a “security presence” there.
- Maintaining permanent “closure” of the West Bank and Gaza.
- Restricting movement using a discriminatory system of work, internal and external travel permits.
- Schemes to displace those unwanted by exile, deportation and revoking residency rights.
- Home demolitions, land expropriation, denial of basic services and impoverishment.
- “Master plans” to continue settlement expansion and develop of new ones.
- Agricultural restrictions along with hundreds of thousands of olive and fruit trees destroyed since 1967 and other crop land disrupted or expropriated.
- Using various other means of social control and harassment against an unwanted people in a racist Jewish state wanted for Jews only.

All this is a scheme to traumatize, intimidate and break the will of the occupied people hoping they'll give up and leave vacating the land for Jewish development and settlement. It hasn't worked for six decades and never will because too much is at stake, and Palestinians, like Jews, want a land of their own land one day they intend to get. It worked for the Jews and one day will for Palestinians as well. But for decades Israel hasn't stopped trying to prevent it, and there's no sign it intends giving up. It has full support of its policies from the US, the West and most Arab states aligned with the Global North for benefits they receive believing sacrificing Palestinians' interests is a small price to pay.

Halper believes settlements are central to maintaining the "Matrix" because all other development is woven around them including connecting roads, industrial areas, military installations and zones, and the entire security scheme of checkpoints and other mechanisms of control. The only way to end the "Matrix" is to remove all settlements from the OPT, replacing checkpoints and border restrictions with normal transit arrangements just like in any other country or between them. It also means ending military occupation and rule allowing the Palestinians the right to a real integral state they govern freely and not Israeli dictated cantons unconnected to others that are effective open air prisons by any other name the way they're now conceived and laid out.

### **Life on the Ground Today in the OPT**

Palestinians have endured six oppressive decades under Israeli rule, four of them in the OPT since Gaza and the West Bank were occupied after the 1967 war when the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) seized the Territories. Throughout this time, they faced the kinds of repressive harshness explained above including loss of their personal, political and economic freedoms and any chance for justice in a land only affording those rights to Jews.

For the Jewish "chosen people," Israel is a democratic state, but for non-Jews, especially Arab Muslims, it's their worst nightmare. It's a daily struggle to endure and survive in a hostile racist apartheid land wanting to exclude them from society, and all rights in it, and since 1948 has had an agenda of state-sponsored ethnic cleaning amounting to genocide to rid the land of most non-Jews and all Muslims making the state one for Jewish habitation only. This policy is no different than Nazi Germany's Nuremberg Laws governing Jews under that state's Racial Policy asserting Aryan race superiority. In Israel, Jews are the "Master Race" and Arabs are the persecuted "Jews."

That ideology shows in the demonizing characterization and depiction of Arabs by former Israeli prime minister and 1978 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Menechem Begin who once said: "Our (Jewish) race is the 'Master Race.' We are divine gods on this planet. We are as different from the inferior races as they are from insects....other races are beasts and animals, cattle at best. Our destiny is to rule over the inferior races. The masses will lick our feet and serve us as our slaves." Begin also called Palestinians "cockroaches" and "beasts walking on two legs." Ehud Barak referred to them as "crocodiles," and Golda Maier said "There was no such thing as Palestinians, they never existed."

With its leaders voicing these kinds of sentiments, it's no wonder Israel imposes harsh treatment on a people it equates with wild animals and insects it wants to eliminate. It makes life grim to impossible for Palestinians at all times, but it hit a new low after the democratic election of a Hamas government in January, 2006. Relations then deteriorated to a state of belligerency and chaos after the world community for the first time in history placed an occupied people under the siege of economic and political sanctions violating the

Fourth Geneva Convention that obligates the international community to protect an occupied civilian population.

It wasn't to be and got far worse erupting into virtual warfare following Hamas' capture of an IDF soldier last June. Israel responded with overwhelming force in Gaza and the West Bank in an operation planned months earlier to destroy Hamas. It used the June incident as a pretext to launch it to with devastating results still ongoing mostly unreported and below the radar. What is reported in Western media refers to Palestinians and Muslims generally as militants, gunmen, terrorists, Islamic extremists, Islamofascists and more. Israelis, however, are always seen as victims defending themselves, even their pilots in US-supplied F-16s and helicopter gunships firing missiles against defenseless civilians in their crosshairs.

In the past seven months, these kinds of IDF assaults killed or wounded hundreds of Palestinian civilians, including women and children. Many hundreds more were arrested and held without charge in an operation raging daily adding to the intolerable toll already inflicted. The military also destroyed agricultural land; buildings (including government ones); homes and essential infrastructure including electricity and water to refugee camps; bridges; key roads and more. It's been done to make life intolerable for people as well as destroy the Hamas government Israel won't deal with because its leaders refuse to serve as Jewish state enforcers which the corrupted Fatah is always willing to do under its quisling leader, chairman Mahmoud Abbas. It's the reason he's seen publicly with Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert, and he's invited to meet with George Bush in the White House. "Real" democrats never get that "privilege."

Fatah corruption and its betrayal of its people is revealed in a document Palestinian activist, writer and lecturer Ali Abunimah obtained and reported on in his Electronic Intifada web site on January 27. It's an Israeli Ministry of Defense Powerpoint presentation showing more of the dark side of a racist apartheid bureaucracy. The document details some of what was covered above including movement restrictions, ethnic cleansing policies and collaboration with Palestinian traitors selling out their people for benefits Israel affords them.

It outlines Palestinian Fatah chairman Mahmoud Abbas' complicity with the Israeli government as well as an official inside glimpse into Israel's "Matrix of Control" with token easing of it to its collaborators and for PR purposes. Mentioned in it is the following:

- the US supplying Fatah with millions of dollars of weapons and equipment for use to oust the democratically elected Hamas government.
- Israel affording special privileges for "the movement of VIP and senior Palestinians (meaning Abbas and his allies) facilitating (their) movement without security checks."
- Special permits for 505 Palestinian "businessmen" exempting them from pass laws forbidding overnight stays in Israel, fewer security checks and other privileges and benefits.
- Allowing a privileged "42,899" Palestinian laborers to work in Israel and exempting 2000 agricultural ones from pass law requirements.
- Restricting Palestinians with foreign passports called "foreign nationals" (including ones from the US and Europe) to tourist visitations totaling a cumulative 27 months stay. But even this limitation may be hardened with re-entry being denied those leaving the country for any reason.

— Listing categories of “humanitarian” workers including religious ones, lawyers, teachers, and hospital and hotel workers less restricted by the pass laws.

In sum, this official document provides an example of Israeli repressive control that can be altered, hardened or manipulated any time in any way to suit a harsh colonial occupier. While making life intolerable for the vast majority of Palestinians, it affords its collaborators enough privileges and rule exemptions to buy them off so they’ll go along with cracking down on their own people.

Doing it creates the harshness of the occupation that affects the entire OPT, but since last June Gaza got the worst of it. Renowned investigative journalist and documentary filmmaker John Pilger explained what’s happening there is little reported in the West and almost totally ignored in the US corporate media that views the conflict through the prism of Jewish victims responding to Palestinian terrorists that, in fact, turns reality on its head.

On January 22, Pilger wrote an article called “Terror and starvation in Gaza.” In it he referred to a genocide “engulfing the people of Gaza while a silence engulfs its bystanders.” He quotes former Swedish foreign minister Jan Eliasson and former senior UN relief official Jan Egeland who describe a people “living in a cage, cut off by land, sea and air, with no reliable power and little water, and tortured by hunger and disease and incessant attacks by Israeli troops and planes.” He added UK Doctor David Halpin’s comment that the people of Gaza are going through a “medieval siege” with daily killings by artillery, rockets, air strikes and small arms.

Children have been especially affected, and Pilger quotes the results of a “remarkable (and horrifying) survey” told him by psychiatrist Khalid Dahlan. It showed 99.4% of children studied in Gaza suffered trauma because 99.2% of their homes were bombarded, 97.5% were exposed to tear gas, 96.6% witnessed shootings, 95.8% saw funerals resulting from bombardments, and nearly one-fourth saw family members injured or killed.

Pilger also cites the writing of Jewish Israeli Haaretz reporters Gideon Levy and Amira Hass. In November Levy wrote people were beginning to starve to death and that “There are thousands of wounded, disabled and shell-shocked people, unable to receive any treatment” in a cauldron he called “monstrous.” Hass has lived in the West Bank and Gaza. She calls the Strip a prison shaming her people and reminding her of her mother’s travails when taken to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in Nazi Germany in 1944. Pilger describes what’s ongoing in the Territories as “Israeli atrocities” and condemns the US Congress, Western journalists and ordinary bystanders including Jews who know what’s happening but stay silent out of cowardice or complicity with the powerful Zionist Lobby allowing the Israeli government to commit mass murder with impunity.

One example among many almost daily happened last November 8 when the IDF shelled Beit Hanoun in Gaza killing at least 18 civilians and wounding dozens more. It was barely reported in the West and faded quickly from the collective memory. On November 11, ironically the day commemorating the end of “the war to end all wars” - WW I, the US vetoed UN SC/8867 condemning the attack.

The resolution called on Israel “to scrupulously abide by its obligations and responsibilities under the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949.” It also called for an end to violence in the OPT and requested the Secretary-General establish a fact-finding mission to investigate the incident. The US alone



objected with its veto ending any hope for justice for the innocent people killed or hurt. The Western press ignored the vote as it's done dozens of other times when the US alone or with one or two small Pacific island allies (plus Israel) vetoed other resolutions condemning Israel for its abusive, hostile actions or that harmed Israeli interests. The Western press also ignores shocking new data showing an 85% poverty rate in Gaza with that percent of the population forced to get by on less than \$2 a day.

Pilger's account of what goes on in Gaza also is part of daily life in the West Bank, and the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights documents it all in the OPT daily from its vantage point on the ground in the Territories. It makes for gruesome reading this writer covered in detail in a previous article. Overall these are grievous crimes of war and against humanity as are the rigidly enforced restrictions and regulations causing misery and death that are part of Israel's six decades-long planned ethnic cleansing, genocidal assault and daily harassment against virtually defenseless people fighting back to survive with only crude weapons and their bodies and spirit but paying a dreadful price doing it.

Look at some Israeli-imposed travel and routine movement restrictions Palestinians must endure just reported by Amira Hass on January 19 in Haaretz. She listed 16 prohibitions from information her paper got from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Machsom Watch. A few include:

- Palestinians from Gaza are forbidden to stay in the West Bank.
- Palestinians are forbidden to enter East Jerusalem.
- Palestinians are forbidden to enter the Jordan Valley.
- Palestinians are forbidden to enter Nablus in a vehicle.
- Palestinian residents of Jerusalem are forbidden to enter Area A in the West Bank.
- Palestinians are forbidden to use Ben-Gurion Airport for foreign travel.
- Gaza residents aren't allowed to reside in the West Bank.

The other nine prohibitive regulations are just as restrictive and still others apply only periodically imposing even more hardships. If the word "Jews" is substituted for "Palestinians" in them, these rules sound like what Jews endured in Nazi Germany under their racist Nuremberg Laws in the 1930s and 40s.

Amira Hass included more of them documenting 75 manned checkpoints in the West Bank as of January 9, 2007 and about 150 mobile checkpoints as of last fall. In addition, there are 446 obstacles placed between roads and villages including concrete cubes, earth ramparts, 88 iron gates and 74 kilometers of fences along main roads. There are also 83 additional iron gates along the Separation Wall dividing lands from their owners with only 25 of them opening occasionally.

These impediments are part of daily life for Palestinians in the OPT. They're in place to harass and discourage those forced to live under them making life so intolerable people will want to leave for a better life elsewhere and become another country's problem.

They're also part of the long-running conflict planned in stages from when Israel first

became a state. This conflict, in Halper's judgment, is "the single greatest cause of instability, extremism and violence in (the) region (but) is the simplest conflict in the world to resolve." He notes that Palestinian leaders for the past 20 years (including Hamas) and a large majority of Israelis and Palestinians support a Jewish state within pre-1967 war boundaries leaving the other 22% of the West Bank and Gaza for a sovereign integral independent Palestinian state free from Israeli occupation including the oppressive settlements making it impossible.

Another key to conflict resolution is the Right to Return that Israel must acknowledge under international law and abide by like all other civilized countries. Halper notes Palestinian sociologist Khalil Shkaki conducted an extensive survey finding only about 10% of refugees (around 500,000 today), mainly the aged, wish to settle in Israel. That's a number the Jewish state can easily absorb if there's political will to do it, but so far there's none nor any hint of any forthcoming. It's because Israel bases its strategy for regional dominance and acceptance on an agenda of conflict and territorial expansion gotten by iron-fisted militarism supported and funded by the US with the West overall going along. Israel also believes the Palestinians are irrelevant, and it can make separate peace and other arrangements with Arab countries and the Muslim world overall.

Halper thinks otherwise saying the Palestinians have a critical "trump card: They are the gatekeepers to the Middle East" in his judgment. For Muslims, this unresolved conflict defines the so-called "clash of civilizations" along with Israel settling territorial disputes with Syria and Lebanon. For Halper, solving this conflict is key to Israel's ability to normalize relations with its Arab neighbors and other Muslim countries as achieving it can weaken the forces of anti-Israeli fundamentalism and militarism fueling conflict. But as long as Israel remains obstinate continuing to deny Palestinians their right to self-determination and maintains its repressive occupation, no progress to peace is possible, all the disingenuous rhetoric about seeking it notwithstanding.

### **A Look Ahead For Hopeful Change**

Looking ahead, the question then is can this policy of hostility and aggression ever work, or in the end, will it fail. Israel believes it can muddle through as it has for six decades. So far, it succeeded because its Arab neighbors in the past were too weak to contest (and still are) and now prefer allying with the West and tolerating Israel at the expense of aiding the Palestinians. Most of all, Israel has a powerful ally in the US, and each country serves the other's interests. It's also supported by the West that up to now has turned a blind eye on the region's most intractable problem thinking in time it may go away or not matter much if it doesn't.

But that kind of thinking has gotten nowhere since 1948, and that's proof enough it never will. Despite everything Palestinians have endured, Israeli's military might never broke their redoubtable spirit nor likely ever will. That being so, it begs the question why the Jewish state continues a failed policy and is unwilling to try a new approach based on rapprochement. Halper believes that kind of effort can achieve a real and lasting peace, and if it's undertaken can progress quickly toward final resolution acceptable to both sides and benefitting the entire region.

It has to happen sooner or later because eventually the international community won't continue tolerating a policy becoming too costly to back. It may be heading toward it already because of the situation in Iraq, Afghanistan and Lebanon over the summer showing

US and Israeli belligerency failed and it's time for an alternate course. The international community may push a conflict resolution agenda even harder in light of US hawkishness toward Iran threatening an even wider and much more dangerous regional war. Black propaganda to the contrary, it's unrelated to Iran's legal commercial nuclear program. It's all about Washington's nearly three decade resolve for regime change in a country unwilling to surrender its sovereignty and submit to US imperial management rules. Rule number one explains "who's boss" with no toleration of outliers or disobedience.

Palestinians aren't waiting for conflict resolution or for Israel to see the error of its ways and decide to pursue real peace. They intend keeping up the struggle for their rights and freedoms and an end to six decades of colonial abuse and repression. They took their fight to the seventh World Social Forum in Nairobi, Kenya in late January and first one ever held on the African continent. A 30 member delegation attended representing all major Palestinian community and NGO networks operating in the OPT, Israel and Lebanon. It came to issue a political statement to the world and call to action on Palestine for help in their struggle for "freedom, justice and (a) durable peace" and an end to 60 years of repression. It wants to build a "global Campaign for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel until it ends its apartheid-like regime of discrimination, occupation and colonization, and respects the right of return of Palestinian refugees and IDPs (internally displaced persons)."

It advocates "Consumer boycotts of Israeli products; boycott of Israeli academic, athletic and cultural events and institutions complicit in human rights abuses; divestment from Israeli companies, as well as international corporations involved in perpetuating injustice, and pressuring governments to impose sanctions on Israel...."

The delegation stressed "official diplomacy has failed in enforcing scores of UN resolutions and....international law (to end) Israel's occupation, colonization, displacement and dispossession of the Palestinian people." It condemned "US-led Middle East diplomacy, favoring military intervention and unilateralism (and its complicity with Israel) in wars and occupation in Iraq and Lebanon (and) Israel's colonial regime in Palestine (and Washington's active encouragement of) division and civil war in the region (with) the US and the entire Quartet (comprised of the US, UN, European Union and Russia) part of the problem in the region (not the solution)."

The Palestinian delegation called on people of conscience and civil society everywhere to join their struggle denouncing Israel as a pariah state and to work cooperatively for "justice and peace (in) the Middle East (and) reconciliation and coexistence for everyone in the region, based on equality and mutual respect for international law and fundamental human rights." Organized actions like these ended the oppressive South African apartheid regime that once had full support of the US and the West. They can achieve the same result with Israel if enforced long enough with teeth, and they must be. Eventually this will happen in one form or other, and it'll work because repression can never be sustained forever and won't be. The sooner Israel accepts that, the quicker real peace will come to the Middle East, and it can't happen any too soon.

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