

Israel's Lie Machine is Working Flat Out

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The core issue in this struggle is the illegality of Israel's brutal occupation. Israel goes to great lengths to avoid and suppress all mention of it and play-acts the pathetic victim, notes Stuart Littlewood.

While the murderous assault on Gaza continues, I notice there's a briefing document on the website of the Israeli Embassy in London which has a lie in every line. The West's mainstream media repeat them, and even the most senior TV and radio interviewers don't bother to challenge them.

The document is a transcript of Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni's statement to the Israeli press dated 27 December 2008 - a day that will live in infamy. It is a perfect example of the falsehoods used to dupe not only us westerners but Israel's own people. The statement shows how the regime's view of itself is constructed on a web of dishonesty and self-delusion.

For example:

- "Israeli citizens have been under the threat of daily attack from Gaza for years."

Palestinians have been under harsh Israeli occupation for 60 years.

- "Only this week hundreds of missiles and mortars shells were fired at Israeli civilian communities."

Only one in 500 Qassam rockets causes a fatality. How many thousands of Israeli bombs, missiles, rockets, grenades and tank-shells have been blasted into the crowded city and towns of the Gaza Strip by Israel's high-tech weaponry?

- "Until now we have shown restraint. But today there is no other option than a military operation."

The only legitimate option for Israel is to end the occupation and withdraw behind its 1967 border, as required under international law and UN resolution. Israel has been killing Palestinians at the rate of 8 to 1 since 2000, and children at the rate of nearly 12 to 1 (B'Tselem figures). This is somebody's idea of restraint?

- "We need to protect our citizens from attack through a military response against the terror infrastructure in Gaza."

Self defence is not a right exclusive to Israel. Palestinians have an equal right to protect their citizens from the terror tactics of Israel.

- "Israel left Gaza in order to create an opportunity for peace."

Israel never left Gaza. It still occupies Gaza's airspace and coastal waters and controls all entrances and exits.

- "In return, the Hamas terror organization took control of Gaza and is using its citizens as cover while it deliberately targets Israeli communities and denies any chance for peace."

Hamas was voted into power as the legitimate government of Palestine. Israel chose not to accept the people's choice, which amounted to a denial of their human rights, and immediately set about obliterating it.

- "We have tried everything to reach calm without using force. We agreed to a truce through Egypt that was violated by Hamas, which continued to target Israel, hold Gilad Shalit and build up its arms."

Try talking. The Israelis' ongoing siege and economic blockade, begun shortly after Hamas was elected early in 2006, was never going to generate calm. And why is Shalit considered more important than the 9,000 Palestinians abducted and held prisoner by Israel? As soon as a Hamas government was formed Israeli troops arrested 8 Hamas ministers and 20 other parliamentarians, making the work of government impossible.

- "Israel continues to act to prevent humanitarian crisis and to minimize harm to Palestinian civilians."

Every agency operating in Gaza has warned of the deepening humanitarian crisis and protested about the starvation and suffering, especially of children many of whom show evidence of stunted growth.

- "The responsibility for harm to civilians lies with Hamas."

Not according to the Fourth Geneva Convention.

- "Hamas is a terrorist organization, supported by Iran, that does not represent the legitimate national interests of the Palestinian people but a radical Islamist agenda that seeks to deny peace for the peoples of this region."

Hamas was the popular choice of Palestinians at the last election. It is entitled under international law to take up arms against an illegal occupier and invader. If it is supported by Iran, so what? Israel receives mega-support from the US. When it comes to terror, it is Israel's conduct which fits the US definition of terrorism so perfectly - see Bush's Executive Order 13224, Section 3 - <http://www.treas.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac/programs/terror/terror.pdf>

- "While confronting Hamas, Israel continues to believe in the two State solution and remains committed to negotiations with the legitimate Palestinian Authority in the context of the peace process, launched at Annapolis."

Israel is busy establishing irreversible facts on the ground that make a viable Palestinian state impossible. As everyone knows, the regime has reneged on the peace process and carries on building illegal settlements and the illegal Wall, and demolishing Palestinian

homes. Months ago Hamas accepted a Palestinian state based on internationally recognized (pre-1967) borders, in accordance with UN resolutions, with full sovereignty and its capital in Jerusalem, but this has been ignored. Hamas also offered a 10-year truce, also ignored. Earlier, Arafat and the PLO recognized the State of Israel in the Oslo agreement but what good did it do? Today's US-backed, Fatah-controlled Palestinian Authority is not representative of the Palestinian people.

- "Israel expects the support and understanding of the international community, as it confronts terror, and advances the interest of all those who wish the forces of peace and co existence to determine the agenda of this region."

Israel, next to the US, is the biggest purveyor of terror in the region and only advances its own interests. It may get the support of Israel lobby stooges in other western governments but is rapidly earning the contempt of everybody else.

From a statement dated 22 December 2008:

- "Hamas, backed by Iran, has regularly stated its desire to see the complete destruction of Israel."

Israel is itself a leading destroyer and currently engaged in trying to wipe out Hamas and the Gazans. Iran's Ahmadinajad quoted the late Ayatollah Khomeini as saying that "this regime occupying Jerusalem must vanish from the page of time" - fair comment considering Jerusalem, with Bethlehem, was designated an 'international city' under the UN Partition Plan. Israeli propaganda twisted the Iranian's words to read "Israel must be wiped off the map". Zionist sources and the manifestos of Israeli political parties have made it clear for a long time that Israel plans to wipe Palestine off the map, and every act and lie is directed towards that end.

- "Our fight is not with the people of Gaza; it is with the extremists of Hamas."

Then why does the Israeli navy harass and fire on peaceable Gazan fishermen who are well within their own territorial waters? Why does Israel prevent Palestinian students from taking up places at foreign universities and block hospital spares, medicines, foodstuffs and foreign medics from entering Gaza? Why has the Israeli navy just rammed a mercy vessel in international waters taking doctors and medicines to Gaza? Latest air-strikes have hit the Islamic University and the ministry of education. These are direct attacks on Gazan civil society and its infrastructure.

- "Hamas started this conflict, and it bears responsibility for any harm to civilians on either side."

The conflict, started by Jewish terrorists, has been going on for 60 years, decades before Hamas came into being.

- "Israel's only responsibility is to protect Israeli citizens."

As the occupying power Israel has a duty to see that the people of the occupied territories come to no harm.

- "Just as Israel seeks to defend its civilian population, Hamas seeks to kill them."

This reads far better the other way round: “Just as Hamas seeks to defend its civilian population, Israel seeks to kill them.”

- “Rocket attacks have continued for years and are now a daily occurrence. How long does the international community expect Israel will wait before defending itself against them?”

The rocket attacks will end when Israel ends the occupation and stops terrorizing its neighbours.

- “In the south of Israel, Israeli citizens live with air raid sirens sounding every day - sometimes every hour. Their situation is intolerable.”

Not half as intolerable as it is for the Gazans, who live in constant fear of air raids and re-invasion and are constantly under surveillance by armed drones which can fire missiles under computer control from an armchair in Israeli headquarters.

- “For years, the international community has turned a blind eye to this onslaught. Only when Israel seeks to stop the rockets do they take notice.”

For years the international community has turned a blind eye to Israel’s violations of international law and human rights, which is why the problem remains unsolved.

- “Hamas is not only the enemy of Israel - it is the enemy of every Palestinian who believes in peace.”

Israelis just can’t come to terms with the Palestinians’ democratic choice and are bent on obliterating it.

- “It is Hamas’ attacks - not Israel’s reactions - that destroy every opportunity we have for peace.”

The world has managed to work out by now that Israel doesn’t want peace until it has stolen all the land and water it needs to expand its racist state into a ‘Greater Israel’. It is well on the way to achieving this and won’t be thwarted.

- “Palestinian militants targeted by Israel are not just the enemies of the Israeli people; they are criminals under international law, and enemies of peace.”

Israel is in no position to preach international law.

- “What is collective punishment? ‘Collective punishment’ is a city - schools, hospitals, homes - civilians being bombarded every single day by rockets and mortars.”

Collective punishment is keeping a whole population bottled up under siege and blocking supplies and exports, smashing their infrastructure, wrecking their economy and starving their children. Trying to equate Sderot with what’s happening in the Gaza Strip is idiotic.

- “Today’s Middle East is divided between extremists and pragmatists. Hamas, backed by Iran, belongs to the extremists, who must be defeated for the sake of the future of the Middle East.... Israel’s primary goal is peace.”

Israel’s primary goal is the expansion of Israel by making the occupation of the West Bank permanent and bringing the Gazans to their knees.

The core issue in this struggle is the illegality of Israel's brutal occupation. Israel goes to great lengths to avoid and suppress all mention of it and play-acts the pathetic victim. As the official statements (above) show, the strategy is to frame and define the situation in Israel's own terms regardless of the truth. It uses advanced propaganda skills, and the elaborate Israel lobby network, to persuade western politicians and media to accept Israel's version of events (and even use Israel's biased language) and not question its motives.

In political PR terms it works wonderfully well. The loony leaders of my own government happily spread the poison and don't seem interested in halting Israeli aggression and the vaporizing, dismembering and crushing of Gaza's population. In human PR terms it is a disaster.

I have been listening to the BBC's senior interviewers these last few days. None has had the gumption to ask Israeli spokesmen the only question that matters - the 'killer' question on which hangs the key to peace: WHEN IS ISRAEL GOING TO END ITS OCCUPATION AND RETURN TO THE PALESTINIANS THEIR LANDS AND FREEDOM?

Stuart Littlewood is author of the book Radio Free Palestine, which tells the plight of the Palestinians under occupation.

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