

Israel's Moral and Political Insanity

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Global Research, January 13, 2009

13 January 2009

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#)

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Apart from the slaughter of 900 Palestinians and the vast destruction from 14 days of aerial bombardment, the Israeli invasion of Gaza has failed to achieve any of its strategic objectives. The Palestinian resistance is still intact, the rocket-fire has continued, and Hamas is stronger than ever. So, what has been gained? Hamas has withstood the ferocious Israeli assault without knuckling under or making any concessions. They've proved that they are the legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people and the standard bearers of the national liberation movement. Their place at the head of the government is now assured thanks to Israel's criminal blunder. In contrast, Mahmoud Abbas and the PA have ended up looking like cowards and quislings kowtowing to Tel Aviv.

For Israel, the military campaign has been a public relations disaster. Photos on the internet of bloodied and dismembered children rushed off to make-shift hospitals or wrapped in their funereal shrouds has generated unprecedented sympathy for the plight of Palestinians. Israel has come across as a bully. The establishment press has also suffered yet another blow to its credibility. This could be a tipping point for the corporate media. Arab news channels have come of age while more and more westerners are turning to independent media for their news.

Presently, Israel is looking for a way to wind down its rampage and withdraw its troops, but Hamas is not making that easy. On Saturday, Hamas chief Khalid Meshaal rejected UN Resolution 1860 which calls for a ceasefire and issued this statement:

"We want the immediate and complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and the lifting of the unjust siege on Gaza that has led to the current situation. Our other request is the opening of all border crossings including the Rafah border crossing. We, with an open mind, will deal with any initiatives and decisions based on these three requests. Therefore, we will not accept any negotiations for a truce in the light of and under the pressure of a military campaign and siege.

"Let the military campaign stop, let the Israelis withdraw, and let the rights of our people be admitted to, let them recognize our rights to live without a siege and closed border crossings, just like other humans, then we are ready to discuss a truce, just like we did before. We will not accept a permanent truce, because it will take the right of resistance from the Palestinian people. The resistance is against occupation and military campaigns and therefore as long as occupation exists, resistance will too... We will also not accept the interference of international forces because international forces will come only to protect Israel's security and any international force imposed will be considered as occupiers.

"We will not accept any talks about strengthening the 'choke hold' on the resistance concerning its weapons. Some are speaking about the tunnels as if Gaza is a super power with advanced weapons, while we are people with very

limited capabilities to defend our territories and ourselves. No body has the right to take our legitimate right for defense and resistance. The US, as if the whole of the Israeli arsenal does not exist, sends hundreds of tons of explosives and artillery shells to Israel.

“Some express fear that after all the sacrifices, the leadership of the resistance may collapse or make a settlement for example. On the contrary, the blood of our women and children and people will increase our cohesion and determination to achieve our aims. It is unjust that after all these massacres to just go and say let's make a truce. On the contrary, the price of this bloodshed is freedom and to decide our own destiny and to end the occupation and siege.” (Meshaal: Resistance is all we have in Gaza, Press TV)”

Meshaal knows that Israel doesn't want to reoccupy Gaza. He also knows that Defence Minister Ehud Barak doesn't want to be bogged down when elections roll around in 4 weeks. Israel was hoping to rout Hamas quickly and install Abbas's PA security guards at the Rafah crossing. But now they've hit a glitch and the battle is starting to look like a quagmire. As long as Hamas stands firm and refuses to cave in, it will be hard for Barak to withdraw.

The Olmert administration seems to have huddled with French President Nicholas Sarkozy and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to work out an exit strategy so Israel could get out of Gaza before the January 20 deadline. That's when Barak Obama is inaugurated as president. Sarkozy and Mubarak have been working the diplomatic channels for support for UN Resolution 1860. The Bush administration rejected the ceasefire twice, to give Israel more time to kill more Palestinians, but eventually relented and allowed the resolution to pass. No one anticipated that Meshaal would throw a spanner in Israel's plans. Now Olmert and Co. will either have to invent a pretext for leaving or declare “victory” and simply pull out. Either way, critics are likely to judge Olmert's decision harshly.

Already, Israel has begun to rattle off excuses so it can save face when it slinks back over the border. Yaakov Katz, military analyst for the Jerusalem Post, said in an interview with al Jazeera that, “Israel made very clear from the beginning of this operation that they may not be able to put an end to the rocket fire. I don't think we can measure the success of the operation from the number of rockets that are fired into Israel.”

This is a lie. In fact, Israeli officials repeatedly said that the mission would continue until the rocket fire was ended. In fact, the stated purpose of the invasion was to stop the rocketfire. Israel is just moving the goalposts once again.

On a similar note, Ehud Olmert said on Sunday that Israel was “approaching the goals it set for itself” in Gaza.” This is another lie. The rocketfire has not stopped and Israel has shown that it is incapable of stopping it. By their own standards, the mission was a failure.

Barak is finding that it's difficult to control events once the war-genie is out of the bottle. What better reminder of America's failed Middle East policy than to have the fighting in Gaza overshadow the festivities in Washington on Jan 20. It might have a positive effect though, by shedding some light on the minuscule difference between Bush and Obama. As stated on ABC News on Sunday:

“Comparing his approach to the Middle East to that of previous administrations, Obama suggested that he will not be making a clean break from the Bush policy. “I think that if you look not just at the Bush administration, but also what happened under the Clinton administration, you are seeing the general outlines of an approach.”...When asked if he would say

the same in Israel today, Obama said, "I think that's a basic principle of any country is that they've got to protect their citizens." (Obama: Gitmo Likely Won't Close in First 100 Days ABC News)

Indeed; Israel must "protect their citizens". Will Obama rubber stamp the brutal siege of the world's most densely populated area, giving a green light to the bombing of ambulances, cultural centers, mosques, apartments, medical clinics and hundreds of civilians? We'll see. Over 1,400 targets have been destroyed in Gaza already; none of them with any military value. There are no military bases in Gaza despite the claims of the New York Times. These were all civilian buildings, which posed no threat to Israeli security. Let Obama state his position when he is sworn in so his supporters know where he stands from Day 1.

A report in the International Herald Tribune says that the people who are most likely to play significant roles on the Middle East in the Obama administration are "Dennis Ross (the veteran Clinton administration Mideast peace envoy who may now extend his brief to Iran); Jim Steinberg (as deputy secretary of state); Dan Kurtzer (the former U.S. ambassador to Israel); Dan Shapiro (a longtime aide to Obama); and Martin Indyk (another former ambassador to Israel who is close to the incoming secretary of state, Hillary Clinton.) (Roger Cohen, International Herald Tribune, "Mideast Dream Team? Not quite")

The only difference between this gaggle of pro-Israel hawks and the Bush clique is that they are more adept at creating the illusion of a "peace process" to conceal the theft of Palestinian land. Other than that, the differences are negligible. These are hardline Zionists whose aims are the same as the Haganah in 1948 whose task it was "to uproot the villagers, expel them and destroy the villages themselves." The basic job description hasn't changed in 60 years.

Israel has been sharply criticized for its disproportionate use of force in Gaza. But there are some Israeli fanatics who believe that Israel should use even greater force—widespread lethal force. The Jerusalem Post reports on that Sephardi chief rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu has written a letter to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert informing him that "all civilians living in Gaza are collectively guilty for Kassam attacks on Sderot. ...Eliyahu ruled that there was absolutely no moral prohibition against the indiscriminate killing of civilians during a potential massive military offensive on Gaza aimed at stopping the rocket launchings."

"No moral prohibition against the indiscriminate killing of civilians"

Isn't this the definition of terrorism?

One Israeli settler leader recently argued during a conversation with a visiting American peace activist that 'if it was right to commit genocide during Biblical time, why can't it be right to commit genocide now. Has God changed his mind,' the settler wondered sarcastically."

Israeli peace activist and author Uri Avnery has an expression for this type of thinking. He calls it "moral insanity", a sociopathic disorder.

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