

History of Israeli War Crimes, “The Killing of Children has been Persistent”: “Surgical Strikes” against Palestinian Children in 2008-2009. Felicity Arbuthnot

The “International Community” Also Lies Buried

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It was 15 years ago: Felicity Arbuthnot recalls the massacre of Palestinian children during the December 2008-January 2009 invasion of Gaza.

It did not start in 2023.

The killing of children by Israel has been persistent

Veteran War Correspondent Felicity Arbuthnot in solidarity with the Children of Palestine describes the underlying and evolving criminality as well as the Anglo-American complicity.

“Light the fire so I can see my tears, On the night of the massacre ...” (Samih al-Qasim, b: 1939.)

It was that “pinpoint accuracy”, “surgical strike” stuff again, there were “unavoidable tragic errors”, “mistakes”, “scrupulous efforts made to avoid” etc., blah. And as Britain’s Colonel Richard Kemp declared of the fourteen hundred dead of the Christmas and New year onslaught on Gaza in 2008-2009: “Mistakes are not war crimes.” (i)

Colonel Kemp, with impeccable ties to British Intelligence Services, spoke to the BBC from Jerusalem in similar sanguine vein on 21st November(ii) of the then latest twenty four hour bombardment of the tiny, walled in Gaza Strip, where over half the population are children. But Colonel Kemp has seen a fair amount of carnage in his time, from Belfast to the Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. Seemingly after a while the dead and dismembered are just part of the day job.

The eight day blitz killed one hundred and sixty two Palestinians in what were merciless attacks on families with no where to hide. Nine hundred and ninety nine were injured. Eight hundred and sixty five houses are damaged or destroyed.

Six health centres are damaged, thirty schools, two universities, fifteen NGO offices, twenty seven mosques, fourteen media offices, eleven industrial plants, eighty one commercial stores and a UNRWA food distribution Centre.

In addition seven Ministry offices, fourteen police or security stations, five banks, and two youth clubs. The sports complex where the Palestinians athletes and paralympians trained for the 2012 London Olympics is reduced to rubble, as is the beautiful and most necessary Gaza Interior Ministry.

On Universal Children's Day, 20th November, an air strike destroyed the Oxfam-supported Al Bajan kindergarten school and damaged the Al Housna kindergarten. (iii) Oxfam's Sara Almer commented that more than one hundred and fifty children attended these kindergartens. "The children are safe, but the places where they learned and played are now in ruins." This in an area: "where they already suffer a high level of trauma ..."

The Oxfam project was as a result of the devastation caused by "Operation Cast Lead" between 27th December 2008-17th January 2009, when they also repaired the now re-fractured water and sanitation facilities.

There is a shortage of two hundred and thirty schools in Gaza, the Agency points out - and a ban on importing construction materials, which means the further thirty two damaged, the two universities and all else may well stay that way.

Ironically, on the day of the nurseries' destruction, the UN Secretary General announced, that marking Universal Children's Day, the launch of a major UN initiative: "Education First." The day commemorates the adoption of the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1959 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989. The 1989 Convention entered in to force on September 2nd 1990, under a month after the UN embargo on Iraq, with even baby milk formula importation denied.

"The child ... needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection before as well as after birth" is included in the preamble to a fine document. (iv)

Four year old twins, Suhaib and Muhammed Hijazi will never learn of the "protection" they are entitled to by the United Nations. They were killed when their home was bombed as the dawn of Universal Children's Day approached. Their parents, Fouad and Amna died in hospital.

Saraya, eighteen months, won't grow to read the fine words either, she died of a heart attack, literally frightened to death by the bombardment.

As the lights went off in Gaza's hospitals, and their generator fuel hovered on empty, Gilad Sharon - youngest son of eighty four year old former Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, who has benefited from Israel's fine health services and been on life support systems since 2006 - stated: "We need to flatten entire neighbourhoods in Gaza. Flatten all of Gaza. The Americans didn't stop with Hiroshima - the Japanese weren't surrendering fast enough, so they hit Nagasaki too."

Israel's Interior Minister Eli Yishai stated that the goal of the attacks were to: " ... send Gaza back to the Middle Ages."

Palestine has no army, navy, air force, no heavy weaponry. Israel is an undeclared nuclear power, regarded as having the fourth strongest military on earth.

Gaza was, of course being bombed by American supplied F-16s and a variety of American weaponry. But as Gaza grieved, America had parades across the land, ate turkey, prayed over their festive dinners on Thanksgiving Day, 22nd November.

Reality would have had them burning, city to city, The UN Declaration and Convention on the Rights of the Child, The UN Declaration on Human Rights, The Geneva Convention, The Nuremberg Principles and making a pyre of all the fine, meaningless words which do not end or mask international lawlessness and inhumanity. A bonfire which might light the lie of the whole murderous hypocrisy of self proclaimed “democratic” nation states.

Notes

- i. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Kemp
- ii. http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_9771000/9771507.stm
- iii. <http://www.uruknet.de/?p=m92857&hd=&size=1&l=e>
- iv. <http://un.by/en/hr/doc/child/>

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