

Raising Money for Killers

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Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

Imagine holding a fundraiser for murder, destruction and military occupation.

On December 6, Friends of the Israeli Defense Forces ([FIDF](#)) held their annual gala in Los Angeles. Guests annually include high-ranking Israeli military and government officials. Well-known Americans attend.

The event raises millions of dollars annually for Israeli militarism, belligerence, and cold-blooded murder. It's shocking that anyone would contribute to what they should condemn.

FIDF says the "job" of IDF killers "is to look after Israel. Ours is to look after them."

Doing so is complicity with decades of crimes of war, against humanity, and genocide.

"Marching Onward with the Soldier," says FIDF. It was founded in 1981. It's headquartered in New York. It operates 14 regional US offices. Panama hosts another.

Major General (Res.) [Yitzhak Gershon](#) is national director and CEO. He's "always been proud of being Israel's soldier," he said, "whether (on active duty) or in" America as FIDF national director.

"The bond between the community in America and the soldiers in Israel is extraordinary and powerful. It has changed the lives and created opportunities for thousands of IDF soldiers."

"Together, we continue to carry out the utmost important mission of providing for the soldiers who fight relentlessly to defend the Jewish homeland."

Gershon served 32 years in Israel's army. He remains unaccountable for enormous amounts of blood on his hands. He was involved in two premeditated wars on Lebanon.

He served as IDF West Bank forces head. He was also Israeli Home Front Commander.

He helped murder and injure hundreds of Palestinian men, women, children and infants during five weeks of Operation Defensive Shield slaughter. During the second Intifada, it raged relentlessly from March 29 - May 3, 2002.

Fifty-five children died. IDF soldiers randomly shot civilians trying to buy food and other essentials. Mines were laid in civilian areas. They killed seven children. Four others were injured.

On April 23, Asad Orsan lost both arms and legs. Twelve-year old Saed al-Wahshi suffered

severe burns and shrapnel wounds over his entire body.

Palestinian neighborhoods were bombed and shelled. Homes were bulldozed with residents inside them. They perished beneath the rubble.

Soldiers shot children going to and returning from school. Many schools closed because violence was so intense. Injured Palestinians were prevented from getting healthcare in time. Deaths resulted.

Dozens of children were arrested, detained, beaten, isolated and terrorized. They were denied contact with families and legal help. Thousands of Palestinian men and women were treated the same way.

Three mothers lost newborns. They were forced to give birth at checkpoints. Their babies perished. Many other war crimes were committed. Gershon was actively involved.

[B'Tselem](#) reported what happened, saying:

“The IDF tried to prevent information about Palestinian suffering from reaching the Israeli public and the outside world by barring the media from most of the areas where troops operated.”

“Israeli television, radio, and newspaper reporters talked about exchanges of gunfire and the movement of armored personnel carriers, but did not mention the hardships of the civilian population.”

“It was no accident that civilians, caught in the middle of the fighting around their homes, suffered grave harm. Those who decided to use massive military force inside cities, villages, and refugee camps surely knew what the consequences would be.”

B'Tselem's report presented graphic evidence of horrendous crimes of war and against humanity. They occurred numerous times earlier. They repeated during Israel's 2006 Lebanon war, Cast Lead, Pillar of Cloud, and many other Israeli attacks on civilians.

Gershon and others like him are proud to have served. They have much to answer for. So do FIDF supporters contributing funds to Israel's war machine.

During Pillar of Cloud slaughter and mass destruction, FIDF said the [following](#):

Its members “worked around the clock to ensure the IDF's hardworking soldiers were taken care of.”

“Whether it was by sending packages of snacks and much-needed clothing or by sending a ‘Break from the Battlefield’ package including an LCD TV screen and board games, soldiers were able to uphold hygiene and were kept entertained in their few moments off from the battlefield and during the difficult task of keeping Israel safe under fire.”

It's hard imagining such callous support for premeditated slaughter and mass destruction.

On December 8, 2011, Barbara Streisand performed at FIDF's fundraiser. She shamed herself in the process.

The December 6, 2012 event was billed as "[Making a Difference](#)." Cheryl and Haim Saban served as co-chairs. Haim is an Israeli/American billionaire media mogul. Cheryl helps donate his money to unworthy causes.

Stevie Wonder was scheduled to perform. Plans at times change. He cancelled after agreeing to be part of what he should have condemned straightaway.

His spokesperson said performing would violate his status as a UN "Messenger of Peace." FIDF organizers had no comment. Nor did Wonder's Creative Artists Agency.

He was pressured to pull out. A petition urging he cancel got over 4,000 signatures in short order. It said:

"You were arrested in 1985 protesting South African Apartheid. Now we ask you: please remember that apartheid is apartheid, whether it comes from White Afrikaner settlers of South Africa or from Jewish Israelis in Israel."

"Desmond Tutu has recognized that Israel's Apartheid is worse than South Africa's. Will you stand with us against apartheid and cancel your performance at the IDF fundraiser."

The US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation launched a [separate petition](#). It urged Wonder to "please continue your legacy of speaking out for the oppressed."

"Please be a 'full-time lover' of justice by standing on the right side of history and canceling your performance for the Israeli army."

"Today, the Israeli army is enforcing a system that South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu has deemed even worse than Apartheid in South Africa."

"Fifteen years ago this week, Nelson Mandela said himself: 'we know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians....' "

"Three years ago, you were designated a Messenger of Peace by the UN. November 29th, one week before your scheduled performance, is the United Nations International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People."

"Please be that messenger of peace by refusing to entertain or fundraise for a military that continues to systematically oppress an entire population."

The US Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott (USACBI) called for a social media campaign to pressure Wonder to do the right thing.

In May 1998, he performed at a gala commemorating Israel's 50th anniversary. He sold his soul doing it. Pulling out Thursday at best redeemed him partially.

He has miles to go for full redemption. He's a noted singer/songwriter. He's been performing for four decades. He's world famous.

Millions everywhere know him. He's able to use his persona constructively. It's time to give back for what success gave him.

Doing so is priceless. No amount of money, fame, or awards gotten matches it. Doing the right thing is its own reward.

During South Africa's apartheid years, he turned down a lucrative offer to perform. One of his songs is titled "It's Wrong (Apartheid)." Some of the lyrics say:

"You know apartheid's wrong, wrong

Like slavery was wrong, wrong

Like the holocaust was wrong, wrong

Apartheid is wrong, wrong, wrong."

Desmond Tutu and other noted figures call Israeli apartheid worse than anything South Africa experienced. It's much worse and nearly longer lasting.

Wonder joined the ranks of other celebrities against Israeli occupation and apartheid. They include Dustin Hoffman, Carlos Santana, Elvis Costello, Jon Bon Jovi, Gil-Scott Heron, Annie Lenox, Meg Ryan, Lady Smith Black Mambazo, and Daniel Barenboim.

In May 2011, he breached Israel's Gaza blockade. With him came 36 European musicians. They performed a brief solidarity concert. Barenboim spoke briefly, saying.

"I am an Israeli. I am also a Palestinian." Israel's blockade "is a very, very major mistake." He also called the occupation wrong.

Ahead of Thursday's fundraiser, Palestinian supporters gathered outside the Hyatt Regency Century Plaza venue. Events included a press conference, protests, a mock funeral for Pillar of Cloud victims, and a rally.

Speakers included:

- Los Angeles National Lawyers Guild executive director, Jim Lafferty;
- US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation steering committee member, Shakeel Syed;
- Palestine Children's Relief Fund representative, Huda Bayaa; and
- Israeli General Matti Peled's son, Miko. His book is titled, "The General's Son: Journey of an Israeli in Palestine." Ahead of the event, he said:

"I served in the (Israeli army). My father was a general in the during the 1967 war."

The IDF "today is one of the best armed and best financed terror organizations in the world. (It's) responsible for the death of countless innocent Palestinians."

Global BDS activism and other supportive Palestinian initiatives are vital. They're also effective. Fundraising should support them. Momentum is building.

Palestine one day will be free. Liberating struggles take time. Apartheid South Africa collapsed. So will Israel's repressive occupation. What can't go on forever, won't.

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