

History: The “Penal Colonies” of Palestine. “The Gaza Strip is the Realization of Israel’s Vision of ‘Separation’” Prof. Tanya Reinhart

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Global Research, June 22, 2024

[Global Research](#) 30 June 2002

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [History](#),
[Military and WMD](#), [Poverty & Social
Inequality](#), [United Nations](#)

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With tremendous foresight of what is happening now, this article by the late Professor Tanya Reinhart was first published by Global Research in 2002 under the title The Penal Colonies.

Our thoughts are with Tanya Reinhart. Her legacy will live.

The Netanyahu government is no longer contemplating “Separation” or “Apartheid”. There is no longer a “Two State Solution”.

The October 7, 2023 Declaration of War against Palestine consists in invading and annexing Gaza and the West Bank, while excluding Palestinians from their homeland. It’s a crime against humanity.

Michel Chossudovsky, Global Research. June 22, 2024

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Israel’s Vision of Separation

The Gaza strip is a perfect realization of the Israeli vision of “separation”. Surrounded with electric fences and army posts, completely sealed off the outside world, Gaza has become a huge prison.

About one third of its land was confiscated for the 7,000 Israeli settlers living there (and their defense array), while over a million Palestinians are crowded in the remaining areas of the prison.

With no work or sources of income, about 80% of its residents depend, for their living, on UNRWA, or contributions from Arab states and charity organizations. Now Israel is considering the imprisonment there of families of suicide bombers from the West Bank (1). As a senior Israeli analyst stated, Gaza can now serve as “the penal colony” of Israel its “devils island, Alcatraz”. (Nahum Barnea, Yediot Aharonot June 21, 2002).



This is the future that Sharon and the Israeli army designate for the West Bank as well. While the external fence is presently being built, Israel's current military operation is set to be the final step in the implementation the IDF plans for reestablishing full military rule (which was abolished in large parts of the West Bank during the Oslo process).

Though Israel describes everything it does as a spontaneous reaction to terror, the plan was fully spelled out in the Israeli media already back in March 2001, soon after Sharon entered office. Alex Fishman, military and strategic analyst of Yediot Aharonot, explained at the time that since Oslo, "the IDF regarded the occupied territories as if they were one territorial cell", and this placed some constraints on the IDF and enabled a certain amount of freedom for the PA and the Palestinian population. The new plan is a return to the concept of the military administration during the preOslo years: the occupied territories will be divided into tens of isolated "territorial cells", each of which will be assigned a special military force, "and the local commander will have freedom to use his discretion" as to when and who to shoot. (Yediot Ahronot weekend supplement, March 9.2001).

Operation Defensive Shield

The first stage of this plan the destruction of the institutions of the Palestinian Authority was completed in the previous 'Operation Defensive Shield' in April of this year [2002]. In practice, from that time on, the towns and villages of the West Bank have been completely sealed. Even exit by foot, which was possible up to that point, became blocked, and movement between the "territorial cells" now requires formal permits from the Israeli military authorities. Soldiers and snipers prevent any "unauthorized" walking to agricultural fields, to places of work and study, or for medical treatment.

However, unlike the pre Oslo period of Israeli military rule, the army makes it clear that there is no intention to construct any civil administration that will take care of the basic daily needs of the two million Palestinians, such as food supplies, health services, garbage and sewage. For these tasks, some form of a Palestinian Authority will be maintained, though in practice it will not be allowed to function.

As a 'military source' told Ha'aretz,

“Internal conclusions of the security echelons, following operation ‘Defensive Shield’, assessed that the functioning of the civil branches of the Palestinian Authority had reached an unprecedented nadir, mainly due to the destruction the IDF operation left behind in Ramallah (including the systematic destruction of computers and databases)... Combined with the severe restrictions on movement, the Palestinian population is becoming, as the military source defined it, ‘poor, dependent, unemployed, rather hungry, and extreme’... The financial reserves of the Palestinian authority are reaching the bottom... In a future not far off, the majority of Palestinians will only be able to maintain a reasonable life through the help of international aid.” (Ha’aretz Hebrew edition, June 23, 2002, Amos Har’el). Thus, the West Bank is being driven to the level of poverty of the Gaza strip.

Nevertheless, at the same time that Israel deprives the Palestinians of their means of income, it also makes a substantial effort to diminish or block international aid, under the pretext that the aid is used to support terrorists or their families. At the outset of its new ‘operation’, Israel “decided to stop the flow of foodaid and medicine from Iran and Iraq to Palestinians in the territories” (Ha’aretz, June 24, 2002, Amos Har’el). Iranian and Iraqi aid is an easy target for Israel, as these countries belong to the “Axis of Evil”. However, Israel started launching a more ambitious campaign: The EU the largest PA donor is under constant pressure from Israel to cut its aid, which is used, inter alia to pay the salaries of teachers and health workers. The tactics are always the same: Israel provides some documents presumably linking the PA to terror. Any aid to the PA is, therefore, aid to terror (2).

UNRWA’s aid is the next target. The U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestinians in the Near East (UNRWA) has become a major source of food for Palestinians in the besieged territories. Its food supplies are now delivered not only to the refugee camps, but also in towns and villages. The amount of food UNRWA supplies has increased fourfold in two years (3). Recently,

“Israel has begun a campaign in the United States and the United Nations to urge a reconsideration of the way the UN Relief and Works Agency, which runs the Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza, operates. Israel charges that UNRWA workers simply ignored the fact that Palestinian organizations were turning the camps into terrorist bases and it is demanding the agency start reporting all military or terrorist actions within the camps to the UN.... Meanwhile, Jewish and proIsraeli lobbyists in the U.S. are waging a parallel campaign ... American Jewish lobbyists are basing their efforts on the fact that the U.S. currently contributes some 30 percent of UNRWA’s \$400 million a year budget, and is therefore in a position to influence the agency: A congressional refusal to approve UNRWA’s funding could seriously disrupt its operations. (Ha’aretz June 29, 2002, Nathan Guttman). The campaign is not yet demanding cutting UNRWA’s aid and presence altogether, but raising the impossible demand that UNRWA should serve as an active force in “the war against terror” (“reporting military or terrorist actions”) is the first step towards such a demand.(4)

Since September 11,[2002] Sharon has been constructing an analogy between the occupied territories and Afghanistan (with the PA as Al Qaeda). He keeps declaring that the solution to Palestinian terror, and the required ‘reforms’, should be along the lines set in Afghanistan. The analogy is frighteningly revealing: As it established the ‘reforms’ in Afghanistan, the US forced starvation upon millions of people. This is how Noam Chomsky described it:

“On Sept. 16, the New York Times reported that ‘Washington has also demanded [from Pakistan] a cutoff of fuel supplies...and the elimination of truck convoys that provide much of the food and other supplies to Afghanistan’s civilian population.’ Astonishingly, that report elicited no detectable reaction in the West, a grim reminder of the nature of the Western civilization that leaders and elite commentators claim to uphold. In the following days, those demands were implemented... ‘The country was on a lifeline,’ one evacuated aid worker reports, ‘and we just cut the line’ (NY times Magazine, September 30). According to the world’s leading newspaper, then, Washington demanded that Pakistan ensures the death of enormous numbers of Afghans, millions of them already on the brink of starvation, by cutting off the limited sustenance that was keeping them alive.” (Interview with Michael Albert, reprinted in Noam Chomsky, 911, Seven Stories, 2002). Arundhati Roy, summarized this at the time: “Witness the infinite justice of the new century. Civilians starving to death while they’re waiting to be killed” (Guardian, Sept. 29).

The new stage of Israel’s ‘separation’ can no longer be compared to the Apartheid of South Africa. As Ronnie Kasrils, South Africa’s Minister of Water Affairs, said in an Interview with Al Ahrum Weekly, “the South African apartheid regime never engaged in the sort of repression Israel is inflicting on the Palestinians” (Issue of March 28 April 3, 2002). We are witnessing the daily invisible killing of the sick and wounded being deprived of medical care, the weak who cannot survive in the new poverty conditions, and those who are bound to reach starvation.

Nevertheless, the public debate in Israel revolves around questions of efficiency: Is it possible to stop terror in such methods. Let us suppose even that it is. Is it allowed? Is this what we (Israelis) want to be?

One people stole the ‘Lamb of its poor neighbor’(5): Gaza and the West Bank are 22% of the land of Israel Palestine, where the Palestinians lived in the past. On this small piece of land, three million people live, with hopes, needs and dreams, just like ours.

Since Oslo, they have been lured with promises that we are about to evacuate the settlements and give them back their land, at the very same time that we have been imprisoning them in Gaza, stealing more of their land in the West Bank, and leaving them no hope whatsoever. The Palestinian people are fighting for their freedom. The crimes of Palestinian terror do not remove our culpability for our own crimes.

Before Oslo, as well, there was a wave of horrible terror attacks. But at that time, after each such attack, the call was heard get out of the territories! Then it was still understood that when you leave people no hope, there is no way to stop the madness of suicide bombing. It is not too late to get out of the territories.

Notes

(1) In its meeting on Friday, June 21, 2002, the Israeli cabinet “decided in principle in favor both of the expulsion of families of suicide strikers from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip... The implementation of this expulsion policy depends upon the outcome of a legal review.” (‘IDF set to expel bombers’ families’ By Aluf Benn, Amos Harel and Gideon Alon, Ha’aretz June 23, 2002).

(2) Here is one example of the pressure on the EU: “The documents seized from PA offices in recent months, some of which were included in the document compiled by minister without portfolio

Dan Naveh following Operation Defensive Shield, were presented last week to the EC delegation in Israel and representatives of the International Monetary Fund at a meeting with IDF intelligence officers. Naveh claims the documents prove European financial aid has been used to finance terrorism and incitement, and has also found its way into the pockets of senior PA officials.

The head of the EC's delegation to Israel, Giancarlo Chevallard, told Ha'aretz that at the meeting, the delegation saw evidence that Arafat is financing terrorism, but added Israel had not provided evidence that European financial aid which is designated to pay the salaries of PA employees is being used to finance terrorist attacks. Another senior delegation official said he was extremely skeptical Israel had evidence to prove European aid is being used by the PA to finance terrorism...

Meanwhile, in the shadow of the Israeli accusations, the European Parliament's budgetary committee last week delayed the transfer of 18.7 million euros in financial aid to the PA until the EC reports how the money is to be distributed..." (Ha'aretz, June 6, 2002, Yair Ettinger) This specific frozen amount was released in the meanwhile, however Israel's pressure continues.

(3) Amos Har'el, 'The IDF neutralizes the Palestinian Authority, and humanitarian organizations try to replace it', Ha'aretz Hebrew edition, June 23, 2002. (Quoted before).

(4). The campaign against UNRWA started earlier: "In letters written to Annan in May, Republican U.S. Senator Arlen Specter and Democratic U.S. Representative Tom Lantos accused the U.N. agency of allowing and promoting terrorist activity in the camps. Specter said UNRWA schools promoted antIsraeli and anti Semitic sentiments and Lantos said the agency allowed terrorists to organize in the camps."(Inter Press Service, June 24, 2002)

(5) Bible, Samuel II, 12:11: "12:1The LORD sent Natan to David. He came to him, and said to him, "There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. 12:2The rich man had very many flocks and herds, 12:3but the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and raised. It grew up together with him, and with his children. It ate of his own food, drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was to him like a daughter. 12:4A traveler came to the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man who had come to him, but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man who had come to him." (<http://ebible.org/bible/hnv/2Sam.htm>)

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