

How the Grinch Stole Peace

or

Yes, Gaza Has Suffered Agony – but Muslims Could Have Prevented Most of it

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This is a highly emotional subject. Perhaps the best way for lay readers to comprehend the complexity of the Israel-Gaza conflict is to read *The Lemon Tree*, by Sandy Tolan. This book details not only essential historic facts, beginning primarily with World War II, but alluding to earlier periods, and captures the emotional trauma experienced by both Jews and Arab Muslim Palestinians.

Summary of the Conflict

In its simplest form, the Israel-Gaza-Palestine conflict can be summarized something like this:

Palestinian Arabs' View

- The land west of the Jordan river is our homeland. This land includes Israel.
- We were there first.
- We are descendants of Ishmael, first son of Abraham and forefather of Mohammed.
- Mohammed and the Qur'an teach us that Palestine must be retaken for the Arab Muslims. And that Israel should be destroyed and the Jews exterminated.
- We were wrongfully and forcibly dispossessed of our land by Israeli Jews.
- Israel has violated cease-fire agreements.
- Israel overreacts to minor infractions.
- Israel violates ceasefire agreements and UN directives by taking provocative measures, most notoriously by building settlements in the West Bank.

Israeli Jews' View

- Israel has always been a homeland for the Jewish people.
- We were there first; we are all sons of Abraham.
- We dispute the Ishmael thesis.
- Four thousand years prior to the Balfour Declaration, God gave Israel to the Jews. The 1917 Balfour Declaration and the UN's 1947 Resolution confirm the establishment of Israel.
- The Jewish people have a long history of periodic eviction from Israel, their homeland.
- Palestinian Arabs have violated the agreements.
- The Palestinian Arabs initiate violence.
- Israel's settlements are essentially defensive and compatible with Israel's need to counteract Muslims' objective of destroying Israel and eradicating Jews.

Discussion of this topic, or set of topics, is legion. Where do we go to find reliable facts? How do we separate fact from fiction?

Sources

A word of caution to all readers and writers of non-fiction, especially about Israel and Palestine: beware of reliance upon anti-Israeli, anti-Semitic, anti-Palestinian, or anti-Muslim commentators widely perceived as being biased. Googling “Ezra Levant pro-Israel bias” or “Noam Chomsky anti-Israel bias” will quickly lead you to reports and criticism re such biased individuals. One example among dozens re Ezra Levant:

Many astute observers have pointed out that most of the commentators who write and broadcast for Sun News are Jewish and Christian Zionists. The pro-Israel bias of the media company is beyond the pale. Two prominent mouthpieces on the network are Ezra Levant and Michael Coren, both of whom share the same passion for whitewashing Israel’s crimes and deflecting attention from the power and influence of their fellow Zionist tribalists in Canada.¹

One example among dozens re Noam Chomsky:

Noam Chomsky, long-time Professor of Linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, an idol of leftist academics and journalists everywhere, has created hundreds of anti-Israel books, articles, recorded interviews and lectures — all his own. Chomsky repeats every distortion and libel directed against the Jewish state that has appeared in Arab, Western, and ‘pro-peace’ Israeli publications, to which he adds some conspiracy theories of his own devising.²

A Serious Erroneous Statement by Noam Chomsky

Mr Chomsky is quoted by as having said:

The two major Palestinian groupings, Gaza-based Hamas and the Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority in the West Bank signed a unity agreement. Finally, the unity government accepted the three conditions that Washington and the European Union had long demanded: nonviolence, adherence to past agreements, and the recognition of Israel.³

Would that it were so. But Mr Chomsky misstates the facts. There was insufficient unity in the unity government to make happen the acceptance of the West’s conditions. While Fatah under Mahmoud Abbas seemed to be ready to go along with the foregoing three conditions, Hamas vacillated, dithered, and in particular refused to recognize Israel.⁴

Reuters reported on Hamas’s starkly contrasting perspective on the unity talks presented by a highly influential Hamas strategist who participated in the unity negotiations, Mahmoud Al-Zahar. Mr. Zahar dismissed President Abbas’s pledge that the new unity agreement would recognize Israel and honour previous treaties as being “a hollow gesture.” According to Reuters, he said further

A Palestinian unity deal will not lead Islamist group Hamas to recognize Israel’s right to exist and will not result in any Gaza militants coming under President Mahmoud Abbas’s control.⁵

Further, Hamas government spokesman Taher Nunu forcefully denied a Washington Post report attributing to him a statement that Hamas was prepared to soften its opposition to recognizing the state of Israel. “What I was quoted as telling the American paper is wrong, and I unequivocally deny it,” Nunu said on 27 April 2014. “The issue of Hamas recognizing Israel is a complete non-starter... aimed primarily at weakening the movement’s positions on Israel.”⁶

Further still, contrary to Mr Chomsky’s statement, Hamas never had renounced violence and continues to endorse violence against Jews and Israel. Violence remains its primary tactic to achieve its jihadist goal, *viz* destroying

the state of Israel. Indeed, roughly coincident with the attempted formation of the unity government, the prime minister of the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip, Ismail Haniyeh, praised the fatal shooting by one or more Palestinian militants of an Israeli and the wounding of his wife and son as they drove through the West Bank on the way to a Passover Seder. Haniyeh said the attack “brought back life to the path of resistance” against Israel.⁷

Operation Pillar of Defense; Chomsky Alleges Israeli Violations of the Cease-fire that Followed it

Noam Chomsky blames the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) for violating the cease-fire that followed Operation Pillar of Defense.⁸ This is a contentious issue. A day-by-day summary of events pertaining to the Operation is viewable in the Wikipedia summary of the Operation⁹. Note from the summary that Israel incurred three days of rocket attacks from Gaza before commencing the Operation on 14 November 2012. British Foreign Secretary William Hague told Sky News that a ground offensive would lose Israel much international support, but blamed Hamas for instigating the conflict and urged Hamas to cease firing rockets at Israel.¹⁰

A cease-fire was remarkably quickly agreed to between the warring parties and officially began on 21 November 2012. The Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs said “Israel will uphold the ceasefire but reserves the right to react in self-defense should the terrorist organizations violate it. Israel cannot tolerate rocket attacks on its civilians. No country should be expected to allow its citizens to suffer from terrorism.”¹¹

Both Israel and Hamas argue that the other violated the 2012 cease-fire agreement. Alleged violations resulted in one Israeli and eight Gazan deaths and five Israeli and 66 Gazan injuries. According to the Israeli Security Agency (Shabak) there was a sharp decrease in attacks from Gaza in 2013. There were conflicting reports on rocket attacks and IDF retaliation. Israel halted construction material going to Gaza after having discovered a tunnel leading into Israel,

some 300 m from a kibbutz. The IDF said it was the third tunnel discovered that year and that the previous two were packed with explosives.¹²

According to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there were 85 rocket attacks in the first five months of 2014. Most of the 85 rockets were fired in March, after the IDF killed 3 members of Islamic Jihad. Islamic Jihad allegedly fired the rockets in response to an incursion by Israeli tanks and bulldozers into Gaza. The IDF said they were conducting routine military patrols near the Gaza border when they came under fire, and thus responded with air strikes.¹³

The following was reported in January 2014:¹⁴

The shaky cease-fire between Hamas and Israel has grown increasingly more unstable over the past month, leading to a rise in crossborder shootings, rockets, and mortars from Gaza; as well as Israel Defense Forces (IDF) infiltrations, air strikes, and assassinations in the strip. The Egyptian-brokered cease-fire that ended the weeklong Operation Pillar of Defense in November 2012, the last round of major military confrontation between Israel and Hamas, has been put under severe strain due to a lack of strategic political foundation.

In the year following the cease-fire, the number of rocket and mortar attacks originating from Gaza against Israel dropped to 67 from 641 in the year prior; and there were only nine Palestinians killed in Gaza as a result of Israeli operations between December 2012 and the end of 2013, as opposed to 246 in the first eleven months of 2012 (the majority of whom were killed during Pillar of Defense). Yet, in the past month alone, more than twenty rockets have been launched from Gaza.

Underlying Reasons for Hamas Refusal to Recognize Israel

It has been argued that with regard to Hamas’s refusal to recognize Israel, such refusal is mainly based on the reality that inherent in such recognition would be abandonment of the Palestinian diaspora’s right of return to their

lost homes. But there is a more fundamental reason for Hamas's refusal to recognize Israel, viz Islam's compulsion on Hamas to do so. In this regard it is useful to examine excerpts from the Charter of Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement). The following excerpts¹⁵ from the Charter are exemplary and by no means exhaust those in the Hamas Charter exhorting Muslims to destroy Israel and kill Jews.

Article Three: Structure and Essence: For our struggle

against the Jews is extremely wide-ranging and grave, so much so that it will need all the loyal efforts we can wield, to be followed by further steps and reinforced by successive battalions from the multifarious Arab and Islamic world, until the enemies are defeated and Allah's victory prevails.

Article Six: Peculiarity and Independence: The Islamic Resistance Movement is a distinct Palestinian Movement which owes its loyalty to Allah, derives from Islam its way of life and strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine.

Article Seven: The Universality of Hamas: Hamas is one of the links in the Chain of Jihad in the confrontation with the Zionist invasion. It links up with the setting out of the Martyr Izz a-din al-Qassam and his brothers in the Muslim Brotherhood who fought the Holy War in 1936; it further relates to another link of the Palestinian Jihad and the Jihad and efforts of the Muslim Brothers during the 1948 War, and to the Jihad operations of the Muslim Brothers in 1968 and thereafter. The Hamas has been looking forward to implement Allah's promise whatever time it might take. The prophet, prayer and peace be upon him, said: The time will not come until Muslims will fight the Jews (and kill them); until the Jews hide behind

"There is no solution to the Palestinian problem except by Jihad. The initiatives, proposals and International Conferences are but a waste of time"

– *Hamas Charter*

rocks and trees, which will cry: O Muslim! there is a Jew hiding behind me, come on and kill him!

Article Eleven: The Strategy of Hamas: Palestine is an Islamic Waqf:¹⁶ The Islamic Resistance Movement believes that the land of Palestine has been an Islamic Waqf throughout the generations and until the Day of Resurrection, no one can renounce it or part of it, or abandon it or part of it. No Arab country nor the aggregate of all Arab countries, and no Arab

King or President nor all of them in the aggregate, have that right, nor has that right any organization or the aggregate of all organizations, be they Palestinian or Arab, because Palestine is an Islamic Waqf throughout all generations and to the Day of Resurrection. Who can presume to speak for all Islamic Generations to the Day of Resurrection? This is the status [of the land] in Islamic Shari'a, and it is similar to all lands conquered by Islam by force, and made thereby Waqf lands upon their conquest, for all generations of Muslims until the Day of Resurrection.

Article Thirteen: Peaceful Solutions, Initiatives and International Conferences: [Peace] initiatives, the so-called peaceful solutions, and the international conferences to resolve the Palestinian problem, are all contrary to the beliefs of the Islamic Resistance Movement. For renouncing any part of Palestine means renouncing part of the religion; the nationalism of the Islamic Resistance Movement is part of its faith, the movement educates its members to adhere to its principles and to raise the banner of Allah over their homeland as they fight their Jihad. Those conferences are no more than a means to appoint the nonbelievers as arbitrators in the lands of Islam. Since when did the Unbelievers do justice to the Believers? There is no solution to the Palestinian problem except by Jihad. The initia-

tives, proposals and International Conferences are but a waste of time, an exercise in futility.

Article Fifteen: The Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine is an Individual Obligation: When our enemies usurp some Islamic lands, Jihad becomes a duty binding on all Muslims...We must imprint on the minds of generations of Muslims that the Palestinian problem is a religious one, to be dealt with on this premise. I swear by that who holds in His Hands the Soul of Muhammad! I indeed wish to go to war for the sake of Allah! I will assault and kill, assault and kill, assault and kill! of [the means to] guide the life [of the Muslims], it will wipe out those organizations which are the enemy of humanity and Islam.

Article Twenty-Eight: The Zionist invasion is a mischievous one. It does not hesitate to take any road, or to pursue all despicable and repulsive means to fulfil its desires. It relies to a great extent, for its meddling and spying activities, on the clandestine organizations which it has established, such as the Freemasons, Rotary Clubs, Lions, and other spying associations. All those secret organizations, some which are overt, act for the interests of Zionism and under its directions, strive to demolish societies, to destroy values, to wreck answerableness, to totter virtues and to wipe out Islam. It stands behind the diffusion of drugs and toxics of all kinds in order to facilitate its control and expansion.

Other Issues

For tactical and strategic purposes, Hamas has used civilians as human shields when firing rockets at Israel¹⁷, and has instructed Gazan civilians to ignore Israeli warnings of an imminent attack.¹⁸ It has been argued in defence of Hamas that Gaza is so crowded that it is nearly impossible to perform any military activity without some proximity to civilians.¹⁹ This is the flimsiest excuse imaginable. In the first place, Hamas deserves severe blame for deliberately locating rocket launchers, mortars, etc. in Gaza schools and hospitals. During 50 days of fighting, many observers witnessed rocket

launches from what appeared to be urban areas. One piece of video footage distributed by the AP, for instance, captured a launch in downtown Gaza City that took place in a lot next to a mosque and an office of the Hamas prime minister.²⁰ And then for Hamas to forbid the transfer of occupants to safe areas is obscenely repulsive – but then, it has been a Hamas objective to incur civilian casualties for which it can cast the blame on Israel; the Wall Street Journal account is compelling.²¹

Col. Richard Kemp, a British observer throughout the Gaza battles of 2014, spoke as follows to the UN Human Rights Council:

“...during the 2014 Gaza conflict, Hamas, to its eternal shame, did more to deliberately and systematically inflict death, suffering and destruction on its own civilian population, including its children, than any other terrorist group in history. ...

“Unable to defeat Israel by military means, Hamas sought to cause large numbers of casualties among their own people in order to bring international condemnation against Israel, especially from the United Nations.”²²

To the foregoing, Col. Kemp added his complaint about the anti-Israel bias of the UN Human Rights Council.

The simple point is that if Hamas refrains from firing rockets at Israeli civilian targets, Israel will forthwith cease any armed response. When Hamas misuses military weapons by firing at Israeli civilians or using its own civilians as human shields, it is difficult to fault Israel for attempting to destroy the Hamas weapons. This is not an eye-for-an-eye situation. The Hamas rocket attacks should not be occurring at all. “If Hamas wants Israel to stop attacking, they need to stop lobbing missiles into Israel.”²³ Admittedly it must be recognized that for Hamas, peace is an interlude, not an objective. Its Charter, the precepts of the Qur’an, and the words of Mohammed will inevitably govern its actions. The official view of Hamas is that Jews must be killed and Israel destroyed – see the articles from the Hamas Charter quoted above.

Apologists for Hamas and other Palestinian Muslims point to the 1940s history involving attacks by militant Jews on British military and governmental installations. No Mid-East party and no European colonial party is guiltless in this regard. It is possible to look as far back in history as may be thought fitting to attempt to find some rationale for later behaviour of the parties. History is a guide to understanding what went wrong in the past and what may continue to go wrong, but history is no excuse for wrongful acts committed today. Unfortunately for its adversaries, Muslims insist that the Qur'an and Mohammed's words remain current in perpetuity – the Quran's message is eternal and universal, with text unchanged since the original revelation by God to Mohammed in the 7th century.²⁴

Ultimately, for Palestinian Muslims, the words of the Qur'an and Mohammed must in their view necessarily prevail. And as the Hamas Charter makes clear, those words compel Muslims to exterminate all Jews and to destroy Israel.

But What About the Title of this Article?

A point of primary importance is that neighbouring Islamic nations are heavily responsible for the plight of Gaza and of West Bank Arabs by having refused for almost 70 years to accept as immigrants Muslim Arab refugees from these areas. This refusal has been done deliberately to impose on Palestinian Arabs hardships that will come to the world's attention, and to keep alive the hope, impossible of realization, that those Arabs may someday return to former homes in Israel.²⁵

The following is a summary of the refugee situation by Jerusalem Institute of Justice:

The tragic existence of Palestinian refugees continues to be a major obstacle to regional peace and stability. ...What is undisputed, however, is that the 56 million individuals who have inherited the status of 'refugee' living today throughout the Middle East are, for the most part, condemned to living lives of abject poverty. The policies of the Arab nations discriminate against Palestinian

refugees, unjustly trapping them in an economic and social underclass in which they do not enjoy equal access to civil rights, economic and social privileges.

For over 65 years, the Palestinian community has clung to the idea that they will someday be able to return to their homes (an idea that has often been encouraged by the international community). This proposition, known as the 'right of return,' is not only a legally and politically unprecedented concept, but it is also logistically impossible. Yet, the idea that Palestinian refugees must be repatriated in Israel has become permanent leverage in the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.²⁶

So What Will Ultimately Happen?

Predictions for the next decade or two:

- Demographics will overtake Israel. Given the higher Muslim birth rate, it will become virtually impossible for Israel to be both a democracy and a perpetual homeland for Jews.
- Iran will become a nuclear power. Arab states such as Saudi Arabia will not be left behind, and will join the nuclear club.
- Those Palestinians in the diaspora who remember homes in Israel will have begun to die off, leaving the 'right of return' less of an emotional imperative.
- UN and other international agencies will continue to pressure Israel.
- Hamas weapons will become increasingly sophisticated and effective, putting Israel increasingly at risk of damage and loss of life. The Iron Dome will not be able to stop all the Hamas rockets aimed at protected areas. Because of the Hamas Charter, no useful peace agreement will be signed.

Predictions for the period following:

Who knows? •

Postscript by the author: This article was written in the summer of this year, prior to the inchoate nuclear deal with Iran, prior to the Russian intervention in Syria, prior to the Palestinian campaign of stabbing Jews in the vicinity of the Temple Mount and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Time marches on, not always constructively.

Notes

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3. Gaza: The Fate of the Ceasefire, 9 September, 2014, quoted by Morgan Duchesney, *Humanist Perspectives*, Spring 2015
4. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/25/world/middleeast/israel.html?_r
5. <http://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/224517/un-hamas-fatah-unity-deal-may-be-good-thing>
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6. *Ibid.*
7. <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/hamas-praises-deadly-shooting-israeli-family-article-1.1756678>
8. Endnote 3
9. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_Operation_Pillar_of_Defense (accessed 19 July 2015)
10. *Ibid.*
11. http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Issues/Pages/BTH_Ceasefire_Pillar_of_Defense_21
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12. Endnote 9
13. *Ibid.*
14. <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2014/01/28/why-is-israel-hamas-cease-fire-eroding/gzi6>
15. www.thejerusalemfund.org/www.thejerusalemfund.org/carryover/documents/charter.html
16. A Waqf is a religious endowment from Allah and considered to be the perpetual property of the Muslim umma.
17. <http://www.thetower.org/1067oc-hamas-admits-to-using-civilians-as-human-shields/>
18. E.g. <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/182741#.VavrlPmulB8>, and

<http://www.smh.com.au/world/thousands-of-gaza-civilians-flee-ignoring-hamas-advice-to-stay-20140714-zt6cs.html>

19. E.g. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2753176/Hamas-DID-use-schools-hospitals-Gaza-Strip-human-shields-launch-rocket-attacks-Israel-admits-says-mistake.html>

20. *Ibid.*

21. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/thane-rosenbaum-civilian-casualties-in-gaza-1405970362>

22. See <http://blog.unwatch.org/index.php/2015/06/29/col-kemp-tells-unhrc-its-become-tool-of-hamas-murderous-strategy/#more-6689>. Col. Kemp's entire short report is worth reading. To the foregoing, he adds his complaint about the anti-Israel bias of the UN Human Rights Council.

23. <http://theeconomiccollapseblog.com/archives/hamas-just-attempted-to-create-a-horrific-nuclear-disaster-in-the-heart-of-israel>

24. E.g., <http://www.whyislam.org/submission/the-holy-quran/the-origin-of-the-quran/>

25. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/no-way-home-the-tragedy-of-the-palestinian-diaspora-1806790.html>

26. <http://jij.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/JIJ-Report-Forever-Refugees-2014.pdf>

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