

Carnage in Gaza

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The author teaches at the University of Tel Aviv, in which city she spoke at a protest rally to mark the first anniversary of the Israeli Defence Force's assault on Gaza, named Operation Cast Lead, that began on 27 December 2008. More than 1,400 Palestinians were killed during the 22 days of assault by land, air and sea. She is also a founder of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine, which met for its opening session in Barcelona in March 2010 (see report below).

We mark the first anniversary of the carnage in Gaza, and protest at the comfortable complacency which inhabitants of this city and this country exhibit before the slow annihilation that goes on and on in Gaza and throughout Palestine.

Had Israeli pre-school children been asked 'what did you learn at school this year, dear little boy of mine?', there are all kinds of answers that we might have received. An enlightened and critical child might have answered: I learned that the sun is still shining, and the almond tree is blooming, and the butcher butchers, and there is nobody to judge him.¹

And the child who is less used to theorizing might rejoice and say: I learned how to cheat Americans, deceive Palestinians, kill Arabs, expel families from their homes, and to curse whoever tells me that I am a nasty brat when I have been a nasty brat. And I learned that the Jewish People lives, and that Gilad Shalit [held captive by Hamas] also lives. Still.²

And the new immigrant boy, who longs terribly to integrate and belong, might say: I learned whom to hate, I learned who needs to be killed and who should be spat upon, and I am ever ready for the task, whenever you call upon me.

The Religious-Zionist child, who attends the fenced and well-guarded kindergarten in the settlement, might say: I learned to be a good Zionist, to love the Land, to die and kill for its sake, to expel from it the invaders, to kill their children, to destroy their homes, and never to forget that in each and every generation the persecutors arise to annihilate us, and that all gentiles are the

same, and that they are all anti-semites who must be annihilated. And the most important is that the sun is still shining, and the almond tree is still blooming, and soon we will go planting all over the mountains of Samaria and Judea, and guard well the saplings against the herd of sheep which invaded our country in the two thousand years that we have not been here to guard it.

In the past year our children have learned that to kill a non-Jew, of whatever age, is a great commandment. This they learned not only from the rabbis, but also from the soldiers who ceaselessly boast of what they have done. This was expressed well by Damian Kirilik, when the police arrested him and charged him with murdering the entire Oshrenko family.³ Quite coolly, he asked the police investigators: ‘why are you making such a fuss over the killing of children?’ Damian Kirilik is a new immigrant who does not understand the nuances and sophistry of the rabbis’ command to kill gentile children. But this assassin from the outside quickly got the general idea – he had arrived at a place where the murder of children is taken very lightly.

Our children have learned this year that all the disgusting qualities which anti-semites attribute to Jews are actually manifested among our leaders: deceit and deception, greed, and the murder of children. While accused of trading in transplanted organs, the unperturbed Government of Israel is engaged in trading in whole humans – for the time being. It can be conjectured that, for years to come, when many cars would bear the bumper sticker ‘Gil’ad – born to be free’⁴, the captains of the pirate ship known as Israel will continue their scheming and haggle over how many kilograms of Jewish flesh, which is probably shrinking, could be traded for how much Palestinian flesh, which is also not all that it used to be, as we learned from the news item about theft of skin and corneas at the Abu Kabir Forensic Center.⁵ And they will continue to kill in Gil’ad’s name, and starve and suffocate in Gil’ad’s name, to annihilate the Palestinian people slowly but surely and, on the way, encourage the flourishing of the Palestinian bad ‘weeds’⁶ that always legitimize the ongoing killing.

As in every rotten and corrupt society, the word ‘values’ recurs again and again in every speech of every politician, especially the wanted ones. The values of Zionism and the values of Judaism and the values of the Israeli Defence Force. The values of Zionism we have seen this year in their full glory at the expulsion of families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah. The values of Democracy and the Rule of Law are expressed in Palestinians, who are suspected of a violent act, being extra-judicially assassinated in their homes, in front of their children, while Jewish

terrorists enjoy to the full the amenities of the judicial system.

That is what our children learn in the Jewish democratic state. Therefore, one can wonder at the supposed shock expressed in the face of violence in schools and nightclubs, in streets and on the roads. After all, this violence is nothing but practising the values of the Israeli Defence Force, a course of basic training towards the activities and operations waiting for these youths on their horizon. This is these youths' way of showing that they have learned something from their parents and elder brothers, from their teachers and guides. The only problem which apparently disturbs the educational and law enforcement authorities is that there are no Palestinians in the Jewish schools and the Jewish night clubs and the Jewish streets. For lack of them, the young Jews direct their violence at each other – and that should not happen, a Jew should not harm another Jew. Violence should be disciplined and regulated, guided by blind obedience to the racial laws, directed only and solely at those who are not Jewish.

And we who demonstrate every week, every month, at every carnage, at every anniversary of a carnage – what is our power? Nothing. Bereavement and failure is our lot in this country. Recently, we all stood at the gates of Gaza, disciplined and obedient to the conditions of the police permit, happy to see each other and find out that we are still alive, and chanted slogans loudly at an audience of robot-like police and soldiers, totally incapable of comprehending what we had to say. But we did not pull down the wall. We did not succeed in saving even one child from the plague of meningitis which has infested Gaza for several months already.

What shall we do with our impotence and failure? What is left to be done about an educational system which demands of its graduates a total identification with Jewish guerrilla fighters who were, before 1948, executed by the British on charges of terrorism – and at the very same time a total identification with their executioners? To identify with the victims of Auschwitz, and at the same to behave with cruel indifference to the suffering of anyone who is not a member of our race? What can peace seekers do in a country which is run by the army, whose schools are infested with war criminals coming to instil their teachings, where pupils are obliged to experience a week in the pre-military Gadna (Youth Squads) and listen to heroic tales told by the criminals of the Gaza carnage, on whom all possible psychological and social and educational means are applied to make them part of the killing machine?

These are our sons and daughters – and we have no access to the system which guides their lives. Where is there space left for us to instil in them

one or two of our own values? What values of beauty and goodness can we squeeze into such a sophisticated apparatus of brainwashing and reality distortion?

It seems that the only value which we still have the power and means to instil is the value of refusal – to learn to say ‘no’. To teach our children who have not been poisoned yet to resist the brainwashing, to reject the viruses with which their brains are being injected. It is hard, a sisyphian task, but it is the only way to reassert our humanity. To say no to evil, no to deceit and deception, no to trade in human beings, no to the racism which is spreading over here like wildfire, a racism which does not stop at the Kalandia Checkpoint nor at the Erez Checkpoint, but spreads like cancer to the shameful immigrant absorption centres, to the schools which proclaim integration and practise segregation, to all cultures and all beliefs in this country. If we don’t learn to refuse and reject evil, to refuse the evil laws and regulations, we will find ourselves refusing and rejecting ourselves, our inmost truth. We must refuse to feel ourselves an extinct minority, refuse the fear and apprehension – and the alienation – which are imposed on us, refuse to be accomplices. Only refusal can save us from surrender, from bankruptcy, from despair. We stand here today as an alien and alienated minority, hated and persecuted. But together with our peace-seeking friends beyond the Wall, beyond the barbed wires, we might become a majority. Only the refusal to surrender to walls and checkpoints can open the gates of our ghetto so that we could pull down the walls of their ghetto. To see at last that there is an outside world, that there are regions which the Jewish National Fund has not destroyed. That there is a culture and there are people whom it is worth living to meet, to know and make friends with, to learn from them about this place where we live as resident aliens, and remember that this place can be a place of surpassing beauty.⁷

Translated by Adam Keller

Notes compiled by the translator

References

- 1 A reference to Bialik’s famous poem on the 1903 Kishinev Pogrom.
- 2 ‘Am Yisrael Hai’ (‘the Jewish People lives’) – a traditional saying, often invoked in a nationalist context.
- 3 <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1256799068438&pagename=JPArticle%2FShowFull>
- 4 The slogan ‘Ron Arad – born to be free’ refers to captured Israeli pilot Ron Arad,

- for whose release the government in the 1990s refused to release Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners, and who is widely considered to be irretrievably lost.
- 5 See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/dec/21/israeli-pathologists-harvested-organs>
- 6 Settler leaders dissociate themselves from extreme acts of violence against Palestinians, defining the perpetrators as ‘the weeds in our garden’.
- 7 The Hebrew term used, ‘Yefe Nof’, is taken from the poem of longing for Jerusalem written by the Medieval Spanish Jewish poet Yehuda HaLevi: ‘O Abode of Surpassing Beauty/Joy of the Entire Earth ...’



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