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Veterans For Peace works to increase awareness of the costs of war, restrain our government from intervening in the internal affairs of other nations, end the arms race, reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons, seek justice for veterans and victims of war, and abolish war as an instrument of national policy.

We pledge to use democratic and non-violent means to achieve our purpose.

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*"There won't be any
trumpets blowing come
the Judgement Day —
on the bloody morning
after, one tin soldier
rides away..."*

(Potter & Lambert)

Check the Rearview Mirror Before Looking at Gaza

(The ungovernable mess in Israel didn't begin on Oct 7, 2023)

by David Cooley

What can an old white guy with lingering farmboy sensibilities from the Midwest possibly have to say about Israel?

Much has been said and written about the ongoing tragedies in Israel since October 7, 2023, by people with at least some skin in the game. A human catastrophe is obviously what is happening and I could start with that, but jumping into those details without context ultimately leads to misunderstanding. There are numerous sources that can give you a blow-by-blow account of the suffering and heartbreak in Gaza. For this and much more try the two links below from Palestinian author, scientist and founder/director of the Palestine Museum of Natural History Professor Mazin Qumsiyeh, who lives in occupied Palestine: <http://qumsiyeh.org> and <http://palestinature.org>

The current conflict has roots that go back to the creation of the modern State of Israel during 1947–48 and beyond. Not to take you too far into the weeds, because there is much to study about Jewish history, but Israel was first mentioned in about 1590 BCE. Suffice to say the Jewish diaspora had its start around the time of 720 BCE. Since then, Jewish people have been persecuted or accepted, flourished and declined during different historical periods in numerous countries or empires with Christian and/or Muslim traditions.

It was during the 19th century that Zionism as an idea for organized nationalism took hold due to European/Jewish conversations going on between 1870 and 1880 about establishing a political state in the Ottoman-Syria region of Palestine. With the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Britain took control of



Palestine after WWI only to find that Zionist nationalism coupled with Palestinian anger was more than it could handle. So it proposed through the League of Nations, a "limited" home for Jews in Palestine with the signing of the Balfour Declaration in 1917. Before this mandate, Jews made up around six percent of the total population in Palestine.

With the Arab unrest and riots of 1936–1939 over Jewish immigration and Jews agitating toward statehood, Britain considered backtracking on the Balfour proposal in favor of a single state with a Jewish minority. WWII delayed the action and the Holocaust boosted sympathy for a Jewish state. However, the Jewish Resistance Movement in Palestine began attacking Arab and British forces in 1945 which was accompanied by a massive illegal migration of Jews to Palestine. This led Britain to leave it up to the United Nations (UN) to determine the fate of Palestine after Europeans failed to provide a safe environment for Jews.

The State of Israel was proclaimed on May 14, 1948, by David Ben-Gurion, the head of the Jewish Agency, and things got rough quick. The First Arab-Israeli War between 1948 and 1949 resulted in the forced

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expulsion of nearly 750,000 Palestinians in a catastrophic attack that's now referred to as the Nakba. After this ethnic cleansing operation, Israel had taken control of 78% of Palestine's land.

The U.S. being the predominant power emerging from WWII soon saw the importance of having an ally like Israel in the Middle East to control the flow of oil, the Suez Canal and other countries in the region. Their relationship grew so close over the years, that the U.S. government still ignores the Palestinian land and resources Israelis illegally usurp during their military actions. It is worth noting that the U.S. was the first country to acknowledge Israel and planted a big secret military base there long ago.

Since 1948, Israel has been involved in sixteen wars. The Six-Day War in 1967 may be the most important and well-researched due to the ongoing illegal and growing military occupation in the West Bank by Jewish settlers from around the world. Current estimates on the number of settlers vary between 500,000 and 700,000. Indigenous Palestinians remaining on this land continue to be terrorized by settlers throughout occupied Palestine and often live next to prison-like walls that protect Jewish settlements. These Palestinians are still required to go through humiliating checkpoints and forced to drive on segregated roads. According to Adalah, the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, there are at least 65 laws in Israel and the Occupied Territories that discriminate against Palestinian citizens. In 2006, former President Jimmy Carter wrote the book, *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*, claiming Israel is an apartheid state.

And this brings us to Gaza where living conditions are insufferable in this war-torn hellscape. According to the United Nation (UN) over 90% of Gaza's 2.2 million people are now displaced and/or under attack by Israeli security forces who keep saying they're taking precautions not to kill civilians, but the numbers tell a different story. The civilian death toll in Gaza since Oct 7 easily dwarfs all of the numerous other attacks on Gaza by Israelis. In the first 45 days of unrestricted bombing, over 13,300 Palestinians were killed including at least 5600 children and 3500 women. At least 30,000 Palestinians have already been injured and around 6000 Gazans are missing and feared dead or trapped under rubble. At least 1500 of those are children. As of this writing, around 18,000 Palestinians have been killed so far — over two-thirds are women and children.

Much of Gaza's infrastructure has been pulverized including over 300 schools, 26 hospitals, 167 mosques, as well as government buildings, water desalination plants, sewage treatment facilities, etc. Because of U.S. 2,000 pound bombs, roughly half of Gazans are now homeless and highly communicable diseases like cholera are spread-

ing. On November 15 this year, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported 44,900 cases of diarrhea since mid-October 2023 along with skyrocketing spikes in scabies, skin rashes and chicken pox cases in children under five. There have been 54,866 respiratory infections diagnosed so far and starvation and dysentery remain serious concerns.

One might think that numbers like these would have shocked the sensibilities of most everyone by now, but they haven't. The recent Israel-Hamas War on kids, grandparents, sleeping civilians and babies in incubators remains legal grist for squabbling academics while mainstream corporate media and politicians in the occidental world debate about what constitutes ethnic cleansing. At least the Global South seems to understand genocidal operations when they see them, even though much of the West still can't locate the red line on a moral compass.

One also might think that with so much verifiable information about Israelis blocking medical necessities, internet service, clean water, food and fuel, there would be more global leaders stepping up to referee the madness in more humane ways. So far, that hasn't happened. Moreover, what is never reported, is the fact that making Gaza unlivable and forcing Gazans to live elsewhere is part of an Israeli-stated objective of creating a "Greater Israel" — the final chapter of ethnic cleansing.

Currently there is a ceasefire with most Americans resigned to listening to Jewish billionaires and multi-millionaires make threats about cutting college funding while political action groups try to ban organizations in solidarity with Palestinians and limit free speech. What's more, there is always time to interview politicians on the network channels who believe that a controversial chant such as "from the river to the sea" on campus is worse than actually committing genocide in Gaza. In addition, media blacklisting of pro-Palestinian voices along with reports about Hamas criminality based largely on unproven accusations, proves once and for all, that pro-Israel biases are alive and well in mainstream corporate media.

Meanwhile, hundreds of captive Palestinians are held in administrative detention without the right to a trial and hundreds of thousands more find shelter where they can, go hungry, dig graves and pray for an end to the carnage as they flee war zones on motorbikes, in buses or alongside carts pulled by donkeys.

Editor's Note: For links to additional reports on this tragedy and other news not found in mainstream corporate media, please checkout the newsletter article on page 13: WHAT MEDIA? (Alternatives to mainstream corporate media and where to find them).

David Cooley is a local artist, Vietnam Vet and a member of Veterans For Peace.