

Real Peace-Making Needed for Gaza

Some Israeli leaders joke about their periodic slaughter of Gazans as “mowing the grass,” a chore that needs regular repeating. Though a ceasefire has stopped the killing for now, real peace-making is needed to stop Israel from bringing out the lawn mower again, says ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

Nick Casey of the *Wall Street Journal*, reporting from Gaza, noted one indication that the latest announced ceasefire in the war there may actually stick: a salvo of outgoing rockets launched shortly before the starting time for the ceasefire.

Belligerents often try to get in a last lick before a ceasefire they expect to take hold, so that evidently was the expectation of Hamas. This brings back memories of being at Tan Son Nhut airbase near the end of the Vietnam War, when the Viet Cong unleashed a rocket barrage on the base 90 minutes before the ceasefire negotiated between Washington and Hanoi was due to begin.

Israel's timing in wrapping up its operation may be part of the natural rhythm of the Israeli lawn mower. Operation Protective Edge has been somewhat larger, but not greatly so, than Israel's last previous big assault on the Gaza Strip, Operation Cast Lead in 2008-2009.

Cast Lead went on for 23 days, about a week less than Protective Edge. The number of Palestinians killed in Protective Edge appears to be just short of 1,900, compared to about 1,400 in Cast Lead, with most of the dead being unarmed civilians in both cases, although with perhaps even a larger proportion of them being so in the latest assault.

The biggest difference between the two episodes has been in Israeli military casualties. In Cast Lead ten Israel soldiers died, four of them from friendly fire. In Protective Edge 64 have died; we do not yet know how many of those were from friendly fire. Israeli civilian deaths in the two conflicts were the same: three in each case.

Although there is a basis for near-term optimism that the suffering that already has occurred will not be compounded by additional bloodshed tomorrow or next week, there are grounds for little but pessimism about anything else that is likely to ensue from this tragedy for the foreseeable future.

One could conceive of possible agreements that would involve some kind of monitoring of access to Gaza (to keep out munitions being acquired by Hamas) in return for allowing at least some legitimate imports. Israel has given Hamas

almost no incentive, however, to change its positions or to take any risks in making any concessions.

It is hard to imagine Hamas agreeing to something that could be called demilitarization when it and the civilian Palestinian population have just sustained a highly destructive month-long assault, there will be no demilitarization involving the Israeli forces that conducted the assault, and those forces already are getting their depleted stocks of munitions replenished with U.S. help.

Moreover, the principal demands that Hamas has been making, to lift the blockade on the Gaza Strip and to release the Palestinians who were incarcerated in mass round-ups in the West Bank last month, would involve Israel living up to commitments it already made in previous agreements and on which it later reneged.

On the Israeli side, we have observed during this war further indications of longer-term trends, toward hard-line militancy, unwavering reliance on force, and hostility toward Palestinian Arabs, that have been in evidence for some time. This has been reflected not only in the strong domestic support the Netanyahu government has had for this war but in dissents, including from those within the ruling right-wing coalition, that argue, with proposals that chill the spine, for even more extreme uses of force.

It would be nice to think, as relief from the pessimism regarding prospects for the months ahead, that the refreshingly and unusually direct criticism by the Obama administration on Sunday of what was then the latest Israeli military attack on civilians had something to do with the ceasefire. It probably did not.

Mark Landler most likely has it right in his front-page article in the *New York Times*, portraying the Netanyahu government as having the political confidence to swat aside such criticism. Unanimous consent resolutions in Congress speak more loudly than Jen Psaki at the State Department.

The tendency to personalize disputes has led to an overemphasis on how much U.S.-Israeli frictions are an Obama-Netanyahu thing, when in fact there are deeper and more fundamental conflicts of interest between the United States and Israel that will continue, especially as long as an Israeli government with anything like the coloration of the current one remains in power, notwithstanding the political reasons in both countries to try to downplay those differences.

The Israeli government can look past 2016, however, and anticipate that the next time they crank up their lawn mower either a Republican or Hillary Clinton will

be in the White House, and they may not have to put up with even the sort of firmer-than-usual criticism they heard this week.

The whole awful cycle of endless lawn mowing can be broken only by addressing the underlying issues of occupation and self-determination. That would mean, among other things, dealing even with the hated Hamas, and as a political player, not just as a firer of rockets. But from the perspective of today, even if things stay quiet in the Gaza Strip, it is hard to see much basis for hope that will happen.

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If a Genocide Falls in the Forest

Chilling words of ethnic hatred and even genocide uttered by prominent Israelis were the political backdrop for Israel's military offensive against Gaza, which killed more than 1,800 people including many children, writes David Swanson.

By David Swanson

There's a wide and mysterious chasm between the stated intentions of the Israeli government as depicted by the U.S. media and what the Israeli government has been doing in Gaza, even as recounted in the U.S. media.

With the morgues full, Gazans are packing freezers with their dead children. Meanwhile, the worst images to be found in Israel depict fear, not death and suffering. Why the contrast?

If the Israeli intent is defensive, why are 97 percent of the deaths Gazan, not Israeli? If the targets are fighters, why are whole families being slaughtered and their houses leveled? Why are schools and hospitals and children playing on the beach targeted? Why target water and electricity if the goal is not to attack an entire population?

The mystery melts away if you look at the stated intentions of the Israeli government as *not* depicted by the U.S. media but readily available in Israeli media and online.

On Aug. 1, Deputy Speaker of Israel's Parliament Moshe Feiglin posted on his

FaceBook page a plan for the complete destruction of the people of Gaza using concentration camps. He had laid out a somewhat similar plan in a July 15th column.

Another member of the Israeli Parliament, Ayelet Shaked, called for genocide in Gaza at the start of the current war, writing: "Behind every terrorist stand dozens of men and women, without whom he could not engage in terrorism. They are all enemy combatants, and their blood shall be on all their heads. Now this also includes the mothers of the martyrs, who send them to hell with flowers and kisses. They should follow their sons, nothing would be more just. They should go, as should the physical homes in which they raised the snakes. Otherwise, more little snakes will be raised there."

Taking a slightly different approach, Middle East scholar Dr. Mordechai Kedar of Bar-Ilan University has been widely quoted in Israeli media saying, "The only thing that can deter [Gazans] is the knowledge that their sister or their mother will be raped."

The *Times of Israel* published a column on Aug. 1, and later unpublished it, with the headline "When Genocide Is Permissible." The answer turned out to be: now.

On Aug. 5, Giora Eiland, former head of Israel's National Security Council, published a column with the headline "In Gaza, There Is No Such Thing as 'Innocent Civilians'." Eiland wrote: "We should have declared war against the state of Gaza (rather than against the Hamas organization). . . . [T]he right thing to do is to shut down the crossings, prevent the entry of any goods, including food, and definitely prevent the supply of gas and electricity."

It's all part of putting Gaza "on a diet," in the grotesque wording of an advisor to a former Israeli Prime Minister.

If it were common among members of the Iranian or Russian government to speak in favor of genocide, you'd better believe the U.S. media would notice. Why does this phenomenon go unremarked in the case of Israel? Noticing it is bound to get you called an anti-Semite, but that's hardly a concern worthy of notice while children are being killed by the hundreds.

Another explanation is U.S. complicity. The weapons Israel is using are given to it, free-of-charge, by the U.S. government, which also leads efforts to provide Israel immunity for its crimes. Check out this revealing map of which nations recognize the nation of Palestine.

A third explanation is that looking too closely at what Israel's doing could lead to someone looking closely at what the U.S. has done and is doing. Roughly 97 percent of the deaths in the 2003-2011 war on Iraq were Iraqi. Things U.S.

soldiers and military leaders said about Iraqis were shameful and genocidal.

War is the biggest U.S. investment, and contemporary war is almost always a one-sided slaughter of civilians. If seeing the horror of it in Israeli actions allows us to begin seeing the same in U.S. actions, an important step will have been taken toward war's elimination.

Yes, how many times can a man turn his head?/Pretending he just doesn't see?/â€œThe answer my friend is blowin' in the wind/â€œThe answer is blowin' in the wind.

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