

THE ANGRY ARAB: How Arabs Watch Israeli Elections

The view is no different from how South African blacks regarded elections of whites in apartheid South Africa, writes As'ad AbuKhalil.

By **As'ad AbuKhalil**

Special to Consortium News



Israeli elections are treated by U.S. media as an American affair. It was only after I came to the U.S. in 1983 that I realized the extent to which the American political establishment invests in Israeli elections. And with every election, the U.S. media and dominant political class pretend that if only this side wins (or that side), peace will be at hand and that a historic compromise would be achieved if only the Palestinians show some pragmatism.

U.S. administrations stay neutral toward Israeli candidates (they love them all equally) although some U.S. presidents favored some over others (Clinton favored the Labor Party and Obama favored anyone other than Benjamin Netanyahu – not that he treated Netanyahu's government with anything but the fawning and generous treatment that Israeli leaders are accustomed to receiving from U.S. presidents).

U.S. media purposefully cover Israeli elections to excess, partly to contribute to the myth that Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East region (Cyprus is possibly the one country which deserves that label). Lebanon has been holding elections long before Israel was (forcibly) created

but its elections are scantily covered by U.S. media.

In excessively covering Israeli elections, U.S. and Western media act out of racist preferences: Israel leaders have been exclusively European immigrants (or descendants of European immigrants) and the denigration and political marginalization of Sephardic Jews don't detract from the image of the "only democracy." That's not to mention the mistreatment of the Arab population, both inside the 1948 boundaries of the occupation state, as well as those who are in West Bank, Gaza or outside Palestine.

Israeli leaders visit Washington more than other Western leaders. The declared affinity and "shared values" myth between the two countries was invented to cover up the historical record of anti-Semitism inside the U.S., and to conceal U.S. complicity in the Western inaction toward the Holocaust.

Arabs' views of the Israeli elections are no different from how South African blacks regarded elections of whites in apartheid South Africa. Israel made sure to establish a state in which votes of non-Jews don't count and can't make a difference. You can't expel 82 percent of the native population of a country, and then call elections democratic in that country (after you rendered the natives into a small – albeit growing – segment of the voting population). The whole idea of declaring Israel as a "Jewish state" is a juridical commitment made by the State of Israel to its Jewish supremacist origin and purpose. It basically promises Jews of Israel that the state (through its military) won't allow the number of non-Jews to ever reach a point in which they can count or make a difference. Yet,

they still call that system a “democracy” in the West.

Treated as a Suspect Community

The Arabs, after being expelled from their homes, and after the land was forcibly stolen from the Palestinians, were treated as a suspect community which was put under direct military rule from 1948 to 1966 (when Israel was already being referred to as “the only democracy in the Middle East.”) Arabs needed permits to travel from one village to another and most had to register with the police station for their daily survival. And not a single Arab poet who rose in the 1950s and 1960s (from Tawfiq Zayyad, Samah Al-Qasim, to Mahmoud Darwish) managed to write Palestinian nationalistic poetry without having to serve time in jail and suffered state harassment for his/her literary production. That Israel is “the only democracy in the Middle East” was – and is – one of the most offensive Western political gimmicks in the eyes of Arabs.

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Some Arabs were drawn early on to communist groupings in the state, because Israeli communists were seen – not always justifiably – as the least racist within a fundamentally racist political spectrum. Some Arabs rose within the Israeli Communist Party but increasingly Arabs realized the fundamental limitations of a state officially founded on an apartheid doctrine. Arab voter turnout was always low, but Arabs managed in the 1970s to produce their own “Arab parties and lists” although divisions and splits marred their political emergence.

The Zionist movement from its inception sought to sow discord and divisions among the Arabs, and recently declassified Israeli documents from the Labor Party archives from the 1960s confirmed those Israeli plans. They not only speak of averting the “formation of an educated class” among the Arabs but also of creating divisions among them: “We should continue to exhaust all the possibilities [inherent in] the policy of communist divisiveness that bore fruit in the past and has succeeded in creating a barrier—even at times artificial—between certain segments of the Arab population.”

Participation as Propaganda

Palestinians in the diaspora and Arabs at large looked with contempt and deep suspicion at Arab participation in Israeli elections and opposed Arab representation in the Knesset. Arab critics rightly pointed out that Arab participation, while failing to achieve any meaningful results for the Arab minority, merely provided an added layer in Israeli political legitimacy and propaganda.

Propaganda booths of the Israeli embassy in the U.S. often feature Arab members of the Knesset without explaining that all of them have been subjected to severe and discriminatory treatment by the state: many are often prevented from speaking, or expelled from the halls of the Knesset, or expelled outright from the Knesset. Furthermore, political participation by Arabs in the Knesset weakens the Arab case against the very legitimacy of the Israeli occupation state.

While residents of the refugee camps never distinguished between Labor or Likud, because the bombs kept falling on

them whether the government belonged to the right, center, or left, PLO leadership often put too much stake in the results of the election.

By the 1970s and 1980s, the leadership of Yasser Arafat failed in mounting a successful armed resistance against Israel (because Arafat had such hopes in the U.S. "peace process," which excluded him from the start) and failed in ending the U.S. boycott of the PLO. In a confirmation of the bankruptcy of the leadership of the PLO, Mahmoud Abbas (who was an advisor to Arafat on Israeli affairs) persuaded Arafat that change would come from Israel provided the Labor Party stayed in power. PLO offices around the world (especially in Paris) used to open champagne bottles when Labor won over Likud. They had no other course of action except to rely on their enemy to deliver liberation for them.

Not much will change in Israel after this election. The racism, aggressiveness and contempt for the native population are beliefs that are shared across the Israeli political spectrum. It is not that there is new racism in Israel: the new racism is the old Labor Party racism but without the camouflage and layers of concealment.

The entire political spectrum of Israel keeps moving further to the right, but occupation and apartheid were planted by the Zionist left in Israel. The notion that Israel is changing (toward racism and exclusiveness) is a myth planted by those who believed all along that there was a "peace camp" in Israel. The political debate between Netanyahu and his opponents shows that both sides competed in demonstrating hostility and aggression toward Arabs. Gen.

[Benny Gantz](#), who ran against Netanyahu this time, bragged about the number of Palestinians he managed to kill in Gaza in 2014, when the overwhelming majority of the casualties were [civilians](#).

Israel will not change on its own, but will be forced to change with a change in the regional balance of forces and the steadfastness of the Palestinian population. More people are disqualified from voting in historic Palestine than those who are enfranchised (largely the Jewish population, including any Jewish person as soon as he or she comes to Israel from anywhere in the world). Palestinians who were born in 1948 Palestine and who left homes and orchards behind were shot at the border if they ever tried to return. The state that killed, displaced, and prevented the return of the natives can't be said to be democratic, even if the majority Jewish population are permitted to select who among them should lead the apartheid state.

As'ad AbuKhalil is a Lebanese-American professor of political science at California State University, Stanislaus. He is the author of the "Historical Dictionary of Lebanon" (1998), "Bin Laden, Islam and America's New War on Terrorism (2002), and "The Battle for Saudi Arabia" (2004). He tweets as [@asadabukhalil](#)

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The 'Progressive Except Palestine' Problem

The Jewish community has a special responsibility to fight Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian lands, says Marjorie Cohn.

By **Marjorie Cohn**

Truthout



As a progressive Jew, I find that many of my family members and friends are still what we call “PEP,” progressive except Palestine. Amid ever-worsening injustices created by the Israeli system of apartheid and Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian lands, it is past time for this to change.

I am hopeful that the **firestorm** sparked by Michelle Alexander's recent *New York Times* **column**, “Time to Break the Silence on Palestine,” will finally generate the heat necessary to force more people and groups on the left to overcome the fundamental hypocrisy of the “progressive except Palestine” approach.

I was deeply inspired by Alexander's column and her decision to speak so honestly about the difficulty of overcoming the fear of backlash over taking a public stand against the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

Striking a comparison between the risk taken by prominent critics of Israel and the risk Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. took by publicly criticizing the Vietnam War, Alexander observes, “Those who speak publicly in support of the liberation of the Palestinian people still risk condemnation and backlash.”

Invoking Dr. King’s exhortation that “a time comes when silence is betrayal,” Alexander reflects on “the excuses and rationalizations that have kept me largely silent on one of the great moral challenges of our time: the crisis in Israel-Palestine.”

Alexander’s words resonated with me, a Jew who uncritically supported Israel for many years until I saw the parallels between U.S. policy in Vietnam and Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian territories. My activism and critical writings have followed a trajectory from Vietnam to South Africa to Israel to Iraq to Afghanistan and other countries where the United States continues its imperial military actions.

Although many of my articles are controversial as they criticize the actions of the U.S. government – under both Democratic and Republican regimes – I get the most pushback from my writings about Israel-Palestine. When I analyze Israel’s illegal occupation and crimes against the Palestinians, I am often called a “self-hating” Jew.

My Own Path

I was born in 1948, the year Israel was created out of whole Palestinian cloth. When tasked with finding a destination for Jews displaced by the Holocaust, the United Nations

chose Palestine. Thus began a brutal and illegal occupation that continues to this day.

In his book, [“Injustice: The Story of the Holy Land Foundation Five,”](#) Israeli-American Miko Peled describes the 1948 “ethnic cleansing campaign that was sweeping through Palestine like wildfire, destroying everything in its path.” Palestinians call it the “Nakba,” Arabic for “catastrophe.”

My family was not religious but we were proud of our Jewish heritage. My father fought the Nazis in World War II and relatives perished in the Holocaust. My paternal grandmother was an activist against the Tsar during the Russian pogroms. On her way to a Siberian prison, she escaped and, at the age of 18, boarded a ship bound for the United States.

We revered Israel as the homeland of the Jews. At the Passover Seder, we would raise our glasses and intone, “Next year in Jerusalem!” At Sunday School, we gathered coins to plant trees in the Holy Land. It wasn’t until I left home that I learned the truth about Israel and became an outspoken critic of its policies.

In 1967, during my freshman year at Stanford, I came to oppose the war in Vietnam and joined The Resistance, a group of draft resisters and their allies. The following year, I signed up for Students for a Democratic Society, where I learned the war was not an isolated event, but rather part of a long history of U.S. imperialism. But I was still unaware that the war Israel launched in 1967 “completed its occupation of Palestine,” in the words of Peled.

The anti-Vietnam War movement at Stanford challenged my long-held assumptions about U.S. foreign policy. My

commitment to ending an unjust war against a people fighting for liberation eventually opened my eyes to the plight of the Palestinian people and Israel's role in repressing them.

After college, I went to law school and became a peoples' lawyer. I joined the National Lawyers Guild, a progressive political-legal organization which I later served as president. The NLG's guiding motto is, "Human rights are more sacred than property interests." In the NLG, I met many people who criticized Israel's illegal policies and U.S. complicity in them.

In 1977, the NLG sent a delegation to Israel and Palestine. The report they issued was the first comprehensive analysis of Israel's practices published by a nongovernmental organization dedicated to the protection of human rights. It documented violations of the 1949 Geneva Conventions by Israel as a belligerent occupant of the West Bank and Gaza.

The allegations in the report disturbed me greatly. They described Israel's mistreatment of the Palestinians, including house demolitions, administrative detention and torture. The report documented beatings, burning with cigarettes, forced standing while naked for long periods exposed to heat or cold, dousing with hot or cold water, cutting the body with razor blades, biting by dogs, sensory deprivation, sodomizing with bottles or sticks, inserting wires into the penis, electric shocks to sensitive parts of the body, and suspension from the floor with hands or feet tied to a pulley device. Reading the case studies made me physically ill.

Apartheid, from South Africa to Palestine

Alexander, author of ["The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration the Age of Colorblindness,"](#) wrote that some of Israel's practices are "reminiscent of apartheid in South Africa and Jim Crow segregation in the United States."

After the Palestinians launched the second intifada, or uprising, NLG members went to the region and published a [report](#) in 2001. It documented a system of apartheid in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, as well as the United States' uncritical support of Israel.

[That report](#) describes illegal settlements and bypass roads, restricted movement of Palestinians, discriminatory land policies, differential treatment of Jews and Palestinian non-Jews, and Israeli policing of Palestinian political expression. It also analyzed indiscriminate and excessive use of lethal force against Palestinians, indiscriminate and excessive use of force against Palestinian property, delay and prevention of medical treatment, and collective punishment against the Palestinians.

South Africa's Archbishop Desmond Tutu, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, pointed to similarities between apartheid in his country and Israel's oppression of the Palestinians. "My voice will always be raised in support of Christian-Jewish ties and against the anti-Semitism that all sensible people fear and detest. But this cannot be an excuse for doing nothing and for standing aside as successive Israeli governments colonize the West Bank and advance racist laws," Tutu wrote in a [Tampa Bay Times article](#). He noted "Israel's theft of Palestinian land," and "Jewish-only colonies built

on Palestinian land in violation of international law.”

Tutu cited a 2010 Human Rights Watch report that “describes the two-tier system of laws, rules, and services that Israel operates for the two populations in areas in the West Bank under its exclusive control, which provide preferential services, development, and benefits for Jewish settlers while imposing harsh conditions on Palestinians.” Tutu wrote, “This, in my book, is apartheid. It is untenable.”

On July 19, 2018, the Israeli Knesset passed a law that illegally enshrines a system of apartheid. The legislation, which has the force of a constitutional amendment, says, “The State of Israel is the national home of the Jewish people, in which it fulfills its natural, cultural, religious and historical right to self-determination.” It continues, “The right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people.” There is no guarantee of self-determination for the 1.8 million Arabs who make up 20 percent of Israel’s population.

Tutu called on “people and organizations of conscience to divest from . . . Caterpillar, Motorola Solutions and Hewlett Packard,” which profit “from the occupation and subjugation of Palestinians.” He was advocating participation in the non-violent Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS), which Alexander also mentions in her column.

When representatives of Palestinian civil society launched BDS in 2005, they called upon “international civil society organizations and people of conscience all over the world to

impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to South Africa in the apartheid era ... [including] embargoes and sanctions against Israel.”

Israel continues to attack Gaza, described as the world’s largest “open air prison” as Israel maintains a tight blockade, restricting all ingress and egress. Headlines in the mainstream media falsely portray an equivalence of firepower between Israelis and Palestinians in Gaza. But Israel’s use of force greatly exceeds that of the Palestinians, and the asymmetric warfare continues to escalate.

In 2014, Israel mounted an offensive called “Operation Protective Edge,” relentlessly bombing Gaza for nearly two months, killing 2,251 Palestinians, the majority of them civilians. The number of Palestinians wounded was 11,231, including 3,540 women and 3,436 children. On the Israeli side, six civilians and 67 soldiers were killed and 1,600 were injured. Tens of thousands of Palestinians lost their homes and the infrastructure was severely damaged. Israel targeted numerous schools, UN-sanctioned places of refuge, hospitals, ambulances and mosques.

As Operation Protective Edge was winding down, the NLG and other legal organizations sent a letter to the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, urging her to investigate war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity in Gaza committed by Israel and aided and abetted by US leaders. The letter was based on an article I wrote documenting those crimes.

Criticizing Israel is Not Anti-Semitic

I have become sharply critical of Israel. An active member of the NLG's Palestine Subcommittee, I write frequent articles and do media commentary about Israel's violations of international law. I am also a member of Jewish Voice for Peace and I work in support of BDS.

Years after I first read the 1977 NLG delegation report, I visited Ellis Island, where my grandparents arrived in the United States. It is now a museum. As I walked the route they traveled, I felt very emotional about what they endured. But my deep feelings about the suffering of my ancestors during the Holocaust are not inconsistent with my criticisms of Israel for subjecting the Palestinians to a different kind of oppression.

As stories continue to emerge about Israel's killing of unarmed protesters at the Gaza border during the Great March of Return, it is increasingly difficult to ignore the facts. Yet even those who see the truth about Israel's oppression of the Palestinians worry about reprisals for speaking out.

Alexander describes the silence of many civil rights activists and groups, "not because they lack concern or sympathy for the Palestinian people, but because they fear loss of funding from foundations, and false charges of anti-Semitism." She mentioned the case of Bahia Amawi, a U.S. citizen of Palestinian descent, who lost her Texas elementary school job last year after refusing to pledge in writing that she would not participate in the BDS movement. On Twitter, journalist Glenn Greenwald pointed out the grave danger anti-BDS laws pose to freedom of speech.

The proliferation of these laws – where US citizens are barred from work or contracts unless they vow not to boycott Israel – is the single greatest free speech threat in the US. You're allowed to boycott other US states, but not this one foreign country! <https://t.co/bLfs0bL99B> pic.twitter.com/gRBfNrut8A

– Glenn Greenwald (@ggreenwald) [December 17, 2018](#)

There is a false equivalency between criticizing Israel and being anti-Semitic. Any criticism of Israeli policy is labeled anti-Semitism, even though many Jews—including members of Jewish Voice for Peace, Jewish Center for Nonviolence and IfNotNow—oppose the occupation.

The BDS movement is not anti-Israeli, as it targets the policies, not the people, of Israel. And actions against Israel's policies, including BDS, do not equate to anti-Semitism. Rafeef Ziadah, a spokesperson for the Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee, [says](#), "As a matter of principle, the BDS movement has consistently and categorically opposed all forms of racism, including anti-semitism and Islamophobia."

Palestinian human rights activist [Omar Barghouti wrote](#) in the *The New York Times* in 2014, "Arguing that boycotting Israel is intrinsically anti-Semitic is not only false, but it also presumes that Israel and 'the Jews' are one and the same. This is as absurd and bigoted as claiming that a boycott of a self-defined Islamic state like Saudi Arabia, say, because of its horrific human rights record, would of necessity be Islamophobic."

Even though many persist in equating condemnation of Israel with anti-Semitism, groups like Jewish Voice for Peace continue to gain traction. Jews are increasingly willing to

examine the facts on the ground in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

And although Congress, dominated by the powerful Israel lobby, continues to give more money to Israel than any other country, two new members of Congress – Representatives Ilhan Omar (D-Minnesota) and Rashida Tlaib (D-Michigan) – support BDS.

Alexander is optimistic: “There seems to be increased understanding that criticism of the policies and practices of the Israeli government is not, in itself, anti-Semitic.”

We in the Jewish community have a special responsibility to fight against the Israeli system of apartheid and its illegal occupation of Palestinian lands. The BDS movement is an effective weapon in this struggle. I urge my fellow Jews to join BDS and oppose Israel’s illegal and inhumane policies in whatever way they can.

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Marjorie Cohn is professor emerita at Thomas Jefferson School of Law, former president of the National Lawyers Guild, deputy secretary general of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers and a member of Jewish Voice for Peace. Her most recent book, “[Drones and Targeted Killing: Legal, Moral, and Geopolitical Issues](#),” contains a chapter analyzing Israel’s targeted killing case.

Former Ambassador Reflects on Current

Events

Former British Ambassador Craig Murray discussed the current situation with Julian Assange, the alleged Russian election hack, Trump's Israel embassy move and more in an interview with Randy Credico and Dennis J Bernstein.

By Randy Credico and Dennis J Bernstein

Craig Murray is an author, broadcaster and human rights activist. He was British Ambassador to Uzbekistan from August 2002 to October 2004 and Rector of the University of Dundee from 2007 to 2010. Murray's books include *Zionism is Bullshit*—censored on Facebook—and *Murder in Samarkand*. He is a self-proclaimed defender and strong supporter of the work of Julian Assange as one of the most significant “Publishers” of our time.

Murray was interviewed by Randy Credico and Dennis J Bernstein on January 25.

Randy Credico: The last time we spoke, Craig, you were involved in a libel suit which I believe had a positive outcome for you. Even as we spoke, you were in route to London to defend yourself from the suit brought against by a gentleman you called a liar, after he publicly called you an anti-Semite because of your criticism of Israel and the ongoing ethnic cleansing there against the Palestinians. I understand that the suit was dropped just as the case was getting underway. But it cost you a pretty penny before it was over.

Craig Murray: Unfortunately, while I didn't lose the case, I still ended up having to pay my lawyers. Libel suits are incredibly expensive in the UK, which is why they are used by corporations and the wealthy to silence ordinary people. My legal bills came to well over \$100,000. Lucky for me, there were over 5,000 individuals who subscribed to our defense fund and that paid the bill for me. But it is frightening because ordinary people are terrified to write anything critical of the wealthy and powerful.

RC: I was there right after your suit ended. I was covering Stefania Maurizi's suit in the high court to get email transmissions from the Crown Prosecution Service to both Sweden and the US concerning Julian Assange. She made a great case but in the end they sided with the prosecution. Is the system totally rigged there, or is it libelous to say that?

CM: It is fair to say that the establishment stick together. In fact, I believe that the government and the judiciary are closer here than they are in the United States to some extent. There is quite a closed circle of the ruling class. They attend all the same schools and they are closely linked in various

ways. So once you take on the establishment, you are taking on the entire establishment.

RC: So they are protecting the US government but they are protecting themselves as well. The UK was involved in a lot of the things that Assange exposed—the war logs and some of the cables. Is the motivation to keep him quiet so that the exposures don't continue?

CM: Yes, and the corporate press is part of the same nexus and control the public's access to judicial proceedings. Wikileaks very much threatens this control of government information. Wikileak's motto is "we open governments" and that is very true.

Dennis Bernstein: I'd like to talk a little more about Julian Assange's situation. We know that the powers that be try to undermine the spirit as best they can. To date they have been unable to stop Julian from continuing this work for the people. We know he is facing health problems now. How do you assess his condition and what could happen at this point?

CM: I last met Julian in the embassy a little over two weeks ago. I am not a medical person but medical professionals now say he is in serious condition, both medical and psychological, from the effects of his confinement. He has a single room which is about twelve square feet and a smaller room where people from Wikileaks sometimes work with him. The entire Ecuadorian embassy in London is just an apartment.

Julian gets no daylight at all. He doesn't like to go near the windows because of the threats which have been made against him. He gets no outside exercise, which even the worse prison offenders are allowed for a short period every day to get some fresh air and stretch their legs. This kind of confining existence is a real health danger. In addition, there is the indeterminate nature of the whole thing, which is bound to have a severe psychological effect, not having any idea when he is going to be let out.

But having said all that, I have not seen any diminution in his intellectual abilities. In fact, he seems to be even more honed in on the issues of the day. He is extremely well informed on political and social developments and an extremely shrewd analyst. I don't want people to worry about him in that way. But he looks pale and he is obviously not in a healthy state. The dangers of decline are definitely there.

DB: The current Ecuadorian government, which would really like to earn some good favor in the United States, could become a very dangerous entity to Julian Assange.

CM: In general, Ecuador has been fantastic in what they have done for him.

Ecuador is a small country and like most countries in Latin America is vulnerable to pressure from the United States. The political situation there has changed and the left is not in the position it was five or six years ago.

There is a heavy CIA presence there, both overt and covert. So I don't criticize the Ecuadorian government, they're in a very difficult position.

DB: Facebook has not taken kindly to your recent critique of Zionism. What did they say?

CM: An editor has very kindly taken on the task of collecting earlier articles of mine into a book. They include a speech I gave after one of the big Israeli attacks in Gaza. I actually gave the speech in front of a crowd of 350,000 people in Hyde Park. That's when I first used the phrase "Zionism is bullshit," which became the title of the book.

Facebook took down ads for the book, claiming that they objected to the profanity, which is kind of funny because it is a word that appears quite often on Facebook. Later they claimed that the book was banned because the title denigrated a religion. Of course, Zionism is not a religion but a political movement. Many religious Jews do not support Zionism. If I don't agree with a political position I should be able to say so as plainly as I wish.

DB: The current US administration plans to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Would that be in keeping with Zionist policy?

CM: Look, my own ancestors were primarily Celtic and we know that 3,000 years ago the Celtic people resided in places like present-day Switzerland. Just because 3,000 years ago some people believed that God gave Jerusalem specifically to the Jewish people, that doesn't mean that you ignore the next 3,000 years and the place should become the capital of Israel based on biblical references. The idea that the rights of the Palestinian people can be ignored because of religious text written down thousands of years ago is absolutely ludicrous.

The Palestinians have had a dreadful time over the last ten years. Not only have they periodically suffered completely disproportionate military attacks but they continue to suffer the appropriation of their land and the destruction of their buildings and farms, with more and more Israeli settlements being built on Palestinian land, to the extent that a two-state solution is no longer viable because so much of what would be the Palestinian state is now Israeli settlements, containing hundreds of thousands of people.

To declare Jerusalem the capital of the Israeli state is going to be a major

handicap to any future peace settlement. It is something that the entire international community has resisted doing. It really does set back progress on the Israel/Palestine issue, doing nothing for the cause of peace or for Israeli security. This is being done to gain domestic political advantage in the United States with the Christian Evangelical lobby.

RC: Julian Assange has now been granted citizenship as well as diplomatic status by the Ecuadorian government. But the British government refuses to recognize this diplomatic status.

CM: Now it gets a little technical. Under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, if you appoint an ambassador, that ambassador has to be approved in advance by the host country. If you appoint a diplomat to the embassy below the level of ambassador, you don't have to seek agreement in advance. All you have to do is notify. And Ecuador notified the British government of its decision to grant Assange diplomatic status.

Again, the Vienna Convention is absolutely clear that from the moment of notification that person enjoys diplomatic immunity. The host state doesn't have to accept the person, they can declare him or her persona non grata and the person then has to leave the country within a reasonable period of time. But they have diplomatic immunity from the moment of notification until they leave.

The whole point of diplomatic immunity is to prevent foreign states from effectively kidnapping your diplomats in order to extort from them your country's secrets. So the British government should have to allow Assange to leave the country and he should have immunity while he leaves, but they have stated that they would arrest him if he leaves the embassy.

The remedy would be for Ecuador to take the United Kingdom to the International Court of Justice to oblige the UK to follow international law in this regard.

Whether Ecuador is prepared to do that, I don't know. It would require significant legal resources and time and cost a certain amount of diplomatic capital.

Another option would be, were he to be arrested, his lawyers could take his case to the courts in the UK. But we have spoken already of the close ties between the British courts and the government and whether he could succeed is an open question. The fear is that immediately an extradition request would come in from the United States.

DB: The fact is, Julian Assange is a political prisoner who has made an extraordinary practice of monitoring centers of power. They are going to do whatever they can to bring him down. The only real way to save Assange is for

the people to be made aware and for them to rise up and prevent the UK government from doing this because this person has performed a great public service on many fronts in many countries.

CM: You are absolutely right. He is being persecuted by governments because of the tremendous journalism he has published. It is ironic that at the moment Hollywood is bringing out a film called *The Post* about the Pentagon Papers and that is being celebrated at the same time that the entire establishment is out to get Julian Assange for publishing in exactly the way The Washington Post did.

Of course, The Washington Post has now given up on that and we no longer have a liberal media. The New York Times and The Washington Post are leading the calls for attacks on whistleblowers. Julian Assange exemplifies the only remaining form of free media outlet.

DB: You write in your recent piece "The Russians are Coming, the Russians are Coming", "The complete and unmitigated irrationality of the current epidemic of Russia-phobia does nothing to reduce its incredible virulence as it continues to infect the entire political and media class." That would include The Washington Post, wouldn't it?

CM: In fact, the articles that The Washington Post has been spewing out for a year now on Russiagate and the alleged collusion between WikiLeaks and Russia have been quite remarkable to behold. They appear to have given up any journalistic standards in terms of truthful reporting, in terms of allowing people a chance to reply to their allegations, and in terms of doing any real investigation of the facts. The New York Times is probably just as bad on this story. They have both been astonishing in their inaccuracy.

It is difficult to explain what is happening. The political and intelligence communities have seen WikiLeaks as an enemy ever since the Chelsea Manning revelations. And then the political establishment was very alarmed by the challenges to Hillary Clinton, the first of which was the challenge posed by Bernie Sanders. Then WikiLeaks got a hold of emails from the DNC and Podesta which indicated that the entire playing field was being quite deliberately tilted against Sanders to make sure that he didn't win. This, of course, added to Clinton's unpopularity. All through the campaign opinion polls showed that Clinton was the only person who could possibly lose to Donald Trump. But the establishment made sure that she got the nomination. Already during the campaign she and her people identified Russia as the scapegoat.

So we have had the coming together of these factors: the hatred of WikiLeaks by the intelligence community, the military's need for Russia as an enemy to justify the billions and billions in military spending, and the need of the so-

called liberal left for a scapegoat for Hillary's defeat. So you have this kind of perfect storm that has led people to concoct this imaginary scenario where Russia installed the president of the United States in collusion with Julian Assange.

DB: So again, was this a hack or a leak?

CM: It was definitely not a hack, not by Russia or anybody else. It was a leak of information legally downloaded from their servers. I know this because I am quite closely associated with WikiLeaks. But WikiLeaks never reveal their sources because they are totally focused on source protection.

RC: Is there an economic motivation here? Is there a Russiagate industry that has developed?

CM: We shouldn't underestimate the NSA and their fantastic capabilities. People from inside the agency, such as William Binney and Edward Snowden, all say that if it were a hack the NSA would have the technical ability to trace that data as it passed through the Internet. They would be able to tell you the exact second the hack occurred and where it went. There is no such data, because it wasn't a hack.

People tend to rationalize doing what makes their employers happy or what they consider to be to their advantage in terms of their career. That is a kind of economic motive, but I think it is largely subconscious. People do what they do to get ahead.

Of course, people at the top have a very definite economic motive. They are trying to maintain corporate control and the control of the political class through a process described by Noam Chomsky [and the late Edward Herman] as "manufacturing consent." But I believe the foot soldiers subconsciously fall in with what they are supposed to do in order to keep their jobs.

RC: You just wrote a piece on Margaret Thatcher and her support for Apartheid in South Africa.

CM: It is interesting how the media airbrush history. One of the things which has been airbrushed out of Margaret Thatcher's history is that she was a strong supporter of the Apartheid system. I have no doubt about this whatsoever because my first job as a foreign officer was at the South Africa desk as a political officer.

The entire two years I was there, we were trying to bring her to understand that Apartheid was evil and had to end. But this went against her strong personal instincts, which were to support Whites-only rule. She successfully opposed any

sanctions against Apartheid South Africa. She refused to allow any of her government officials to talk to the ANC or to anybody representing Black people in South Africa.

I have been explaining this to people for many years but people have tended to doubt me because I was going against the accepted narrative. I was very gratified last week that Sir Patrick Wright, the head of the foreign service at that time, published his diaries from that time, where he makes absolutely plain that Thatcher supported Apartheid and that he considered her a racist. I am happy indeed that the truth is starting to get out there.

But the other point is that there are many people in senior positions in the conservative party now—including our minister of defense who just resigned—who at the time were also strong supporters of Apartheid.

DB: Meanwhile, as we all know, Apartheid is alive and well in Israel/Palestine. Let us pray that the kind of forces that rose up to end Apartheid in South Africa will also bring pressure to end the situation in Palestine.

Dennis J. Bernstein is a host of “Flashpoints” on the Pacifica radio network and the author of Special Ed: Voices from a Hidden Classroom. You can access the audio archives at www.flashpoints.net.

Reverberations from Trump’s Jerusalem Move

One ironic benefit from Donald Trump’s presidency is that the world is showing more independence against U.S. edicts, such as the recent rebuff of Trump’s decision to move the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, as Dennis J Bernstein reports.

By Dennis J Bernstein

The U.N. General Assembly’s rebuff of overt threats of economic retaliation from President Trump – in the overwhelming repudiation of his decision to move the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem – marked a rare show of independence from Washington. Despite President Trump’s threats, the vote against the U.S. position was 128 to 9, with 35 abstentions.

I spoke about the significance of the vote with Professor Francis Boyle, a scholar and long-time pro-Palestinian activist, who has been deeply engaged in the Mideast peace process and various negotiations over the last 30 years. Boyle is a professor of international law at the University of Illinois' College of Law. He served as a legal advisor to the Palestinian Liberation Organization.

Dennis Bernstein: Before we jump into this, I would like people to know a little bit more about your background, because you're the perfect person to hit this subject at this time. Just say a little bit more about your work with the Palestinians.

Francis Boyle: Right. Well, starting in 1987, at [the Palestinians] request, I made a speech at the United Nations on the 20th anniversary of the Six-Day War. And, in this speech, I outlined to them an agenda for establishing their statehood, including, at some point, invoking the Uniting for Peace Resolution.

So, they liked what I had to say and asked me to write it up in a memo, which I did. You can read it in my book "Palestine, Palestinians and International Law." And they then carried out my recommendation in their Declaration of Independence of 15 November, 1988. And I was their legal advisor on all of that. My memorandum became their position paper. And I've worked with them since then.

Today, the State of Palestine is recognized du jour by 136 states, the last time I looked. And it also has U.N. observer state status now at the United Nations along the lines that Switzerland had before it became a full-fledged U.N. member state.

[...] And certainly the Palestinians have publicly stated that they can, at some point in the future, invoke the Uniting for Peace Resolution to obtain their admission to the United Nations as a full-fledged U.N. member state. They said that's next on the agenda. I guess we have to see what happens here. I really can't say, but they said they're renewing that struggle in January [2018], after the dust settles here.

DB: Okay, now let's talk about the significance of the vote today [Dec. 21], which has a lot to do with Jerusalem. And, talk about it, if you will, in the context of the Uniting for Peace procedure because this gives it more power or more of a focus.

FB: Well, that is correct. When Uniting for Peace started out, back during the days of the Korean War, the Soviet Union proceeded to exercise a veto. And the United States under Secretary of State Dean Acheson – back in those days we controlled the General Assembly – put forward the Uniting for Peace Resolution in the General Assembly to circumvent the Soviet veto. And then [the US] used it

to impose fairly terrible economic sanctions against North Korea that continue until today.

And, over the years, the Uniting for Peace procedure was approved by the International Court of Justice in the [Unclear 05:48] advisory opinion in 1962. And I did, I was the one who informed the Palestinians about the Uniting for Peace procedure and that we need to go forward and use it. And they have used it.

And [the vote on Dec. 21] was yet another example. The mainstream news media is dismissing this as nothing more than symbolic. You know, Dennis, if it were nothing more than symbolic then why did Nikki Haley get up there and threaten to break the legs of everyone in the world, if they voted for it, and likewise, Trump make his thuggish threat, as well, at his last cabinet meetings? So it's far more than symbolic.

Under Uniting for Peace the General Assembly cannot require states to do anything. But they can certainly authorize them. And what happens here with this resolution under Uniting for Peace is that it really solidified the international consensus on Jerusalem. As you note, we discussed this before, when Trump announced his new policy, and invited other states to follow moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem and recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, which it definitely is not, whether west Jerusalem or east Jerusalem.

And, this vote today really solidifies that international consensus. So that is a positive thing, but, obviously it's going to have to be followed up by more steps by the Palestinians. Again, my advice is the next stage here is to use United for Peace to have Palestine admitted to the U.N. itself. But, that's under consideration. We'll have to see what they do.

DB: And what, exactly, did that resolution say? It was reinforcing earlier Security Council resolutions. What exactly are we talking about here?

FB: Well, the way the United States government set it up under Secretary of State Dean Acheson, was that in the event there is a matter affecting international peace and security, and at least one of the permanent members at the Security Council exercises a veto power over a resolution on that matter, when the resolution is introduced in the Security Council, the matter is then turned over to the United Nations General Assembly for action, for the General Assembly to decide what to do about it, in accordance with a two-thirds vote. So, the United States government originally introduced this. We conceived it and we applied it, regretfully, to North Korea.

And those economic sanctions are still strangling North Korea today, as we talk.

And Trump is trying to escalate them. But in any event, sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. I think it's only history, sort of cosmic blowback here, that a generation later the Palestinians and most of the rest of the world are using Uniting for Peace against the United States. This is our baby, as it were, and they are sticking it back to us.

DB: Alright, now let's just talk a little bit about Jerusalem and what's at stake here. Last we spoke, one of the things you said, and it's very concerning and absolutely true, is that you were now fearing the deaths again of more Palestinians in this fight for liberation.

FB: And, it's true, Dennis, [...] in fairness, that Jews might die too.

DB: Yes. And things have been happening, clearly Palestinians have been dying. There have been attacks in the Gaza Strip. There have been some incidents from Palestinians coming at Jews, that's a fact as well. But, always, it's the Palestinians that lead the dying. And what I want you to talk about here is, because people still do not get it: What is at stake in Jerusalem here? What exactly is this about? And why will this be the line of resistance?

FB: Because, as you know, Jerusalem is the headquarters for the three great monotheistic faiths: Islam, Judaism, Christianity. And, especially, for the Muslims the Haram al-Sharif, the Noble Sanctuary, it's the plateau over there. And that plateau is considered to be sacred. They have on there the Al-Aqsa Mosque, where Muslims used to direct their prayers before Mecca Medina. There is the Dome of the Rock where it is said Mohammed ascended into Heaven. And then you have the El Burka, which is the sort of "stand on the side" where Mohammed is said to have tied up his horse, when he miraculously flew from Arabia to Jerusalem, to make his ascent into Heaven.

So, on the Jewish side, you have the Wailing Wall. And, despite when everything is said, this is still Palestinian. It is protected under the Geneva Conventions, and also there's a 1953 convention to which Israel is a party, protecting cultural religious sites in times of war. Although, I believe, that could easily be negotiated by simply setting up an easement so that Jews could go worship at the Wailing Wall. I don't think Palestinians have any great desire to stop that, one way or the other. And then Christianity, of course, you have all the holy sites there, the Nativity, the Church of the Nativity, the Holy Sepulchre, etc.

So, it's really the flashpoint for these three religions. Although, again, I did devise a proposal for the Palestinians that was approved by the PLO, on sharing Jerusalem as a capital between both Israel and Palestine, the two states. That would have to be subject to approval by the Security Council because Jerusalem

still has a separate status under international laws of *corpus separatum*. But that would probably be approved.

And you can read that proposal that did have the approval of the PLO in my book "Palestine, Palestinians and International Law" along with the original memorandum I did for them going back to 1987. And then the Chair of the Palestinian delegation to the Middle East peace negotiations, my client and friend, the late, great Dr. Haidar Abdel-Shafi, instructed me to draw up the counter offer to Israel's Oslo Bantustan [the Oslo Accords of 1993], which I did do. And that is published in there with Dr. Abdel-Shafi's permission.

It was clear at the beginning that Oslo was pretty much a Bantustan, and so I advised all the Palestinians to that effect. And Abdel-Shafi then instructed me to come up with their counter offer which I did do. But that position did not prevail. Dr. Abdel-Shafi and I fought against Oslo to the bitter end. Then we lost, so there you go.

DB: Now, staying with Jerusalem, I think the statement made by Trump, even though it's obviously a continuum of U.S. policy – Obama's ambassador [Dan Shapiro] was no better, if not worse—but what's going on on the ground in Jerusalem in the context of this statement, in other words, the continuing expansion of house demolitions, the attempt to put security devices, and set up a place to block Muslims from going to pray before making them go through a metal detector..that was going on in the recent past. The heat on this situation in Jerusalem has been high before this announcement. So, this is just sort of pushing it right at the edge, isn't it?

FB: Right. Dennis, it's really emboldening Netanyahu and his religious fanatics over there, who, by the way were complicit in the assassination of Prime Minister [Yitzhak] Rabin. Who was first and, so far, the only Prime Minister they've had over there who was interested in negotiating peace with the Palestinians and Syria, which is why they murdered him.

So, yeah, this simply emboldens these people. And the real flashpoint is... Netanyahu permitting these fanatical, racist settlers to go onto Haram Al-Sharif [Temple Mount] itself, and storm Al-Aqsa Mosque. And, that is happening repeatedly. And it's extremely dangerous and highly provocative. Because, at the end of the day, these people want to destroy Al-Aqsa and build their so-called third temple. And it would be a total catastrophe if this happens, because you'd have 1.5 billion Muslims in the world rising up in unison over this.

But that's the real danger right now, I think, is the emboldenment of Netanyahu and these fanatical religious extremists, settlers that now believe they have a blank check to do whatever they want to do. And especially in Jerusalem and

particularly the Haram Al-Sharif and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, yeah.

DB: And, I guess it should be of concern that Jared Kushner has a foundation that funds the building of settlements in the West Bank. I would think that that would be of concern to anybody thinking about any kind of negotiation, whatsoever. Not to mention the fact that Netanyahu would stay with the family at the Kushner house when he was in the U.S.

FB: Well, that's correct. Kushner is aiding and abetting, by means of his foundation, he is aiding and abetting more crimes under the Hague Regulations of 1907, to which the United States government is a party, a violation of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, the four Geneva Conventions to which the United States is a party. And crimes against humanity as defined by the statute of the International Criminal Court. And the prosecutor, the International Criminal Court, is currently investigating war crimes, and crimes against humanity because of these settlements.

So, it's impossible to think that a guy like Kushner could possibly serve as some type of mediator here, and it does look now, the Palestinians have decided to turn to Russia and China, and the United Nations to serve as mediators. Although I have to point out, Dennis, that I was involved as legal advisor to the Palestinian delegation to the Middle East Peace Negotiations right from the very beginning there in Washington, D.C. in the fall of 1991, convened by President Bush, Sr., and the United States government has never served as an honest broker. They've always supported the Israeli position.

And, indeed, I think as I mentioned it before, Bush, Sr. put three American Jews in charge of the process, [Dennis] Ross, [Aaron David] Miller and [Daniel] Kurtzer. And they basically functioned as Israel's lawyer. And, I believe, two of them were, still are, orthodox. I don't think Ross is. And here we are, all these years later, now 2017 – that was 1991 – and nothing has changed because Trump has put Kushner, [David] Friedman and [Jason] Greenblatt as the so-called negotiators.

And here all three of them are orthodox. So, this situation is completely preposterous. How do you expect any negotiations to go on here – reasonable, fair negotiations? It's not going to happen.

DB: And, I guess, that takes us back to Nikki Haley's threatening statements today sounding like a bit of a mafioso captain warning any nation that would vote – I guess they didn't have much of an impact on the vote – but clearly it's got to be frightening if you're a little nation that lives or dies based on U.S. aid and they're saying you vote for this resolution in support of the Palestinians then we're going to kill you. This is also not a good sign.

FB: Right, well without the Haley/Trump threats, I suspect the Palestinians would have also picked up the 35 abstentions, and maybe the no-shows. It appears several states just didn't show up, because of these threats. So, basically it probably would have been – what, there's 193 U.N. member states – so it probably would have been 185 to 9. But under United for Peace all they needed was two-thirds of those voting and abstentions didn't count. So, there you are.

They have the votes, and indeed, they do have the votes to be admitted as a full-fledged U.N. member state based on this vote here. And the Trump/Haley threats, it does appear to me, they've got the votes to get admitted to the U.N., hopefully starting in January [2018]. There's been a statement made that they will be submitting another resolution on their admission to the Security Council sometime in January. And, assuming the U.S. vetoes it, which it probably will under Trump, they can again invoke Uniting for Peace, and put it before the General Assembly.

Because, at the end of the day, in accordance with the terms of the United Nations charter, the Security Council only makes a recommendation on admission, not any decision. There's a big difference between recommendations and decisions. And, also, under the terms of the United Nations charter, at the end of the day, it is the General Assembly that admits a member state, not the Security Council.

I had advised the Palestinians years ago, they can do this, that they did try in 2012. And, at that point they decided just to go for observer state status. They're going one step at a time, and we'll have to see what their next step is.

I also noticed that, although I don't have a list, but [Palestinian] President Abbas just exceeded to about 22 different treaties. I still haven't gotten the names of those treaties. But that also goes back to our previous conversation on Jerusalem here on a legal intifada.

They will use their memberships in all these international organizations to further solidify and promote their statehood. And, the bottom line is, I think that's positive, one, because even [Noam] Chomsky has pointed out, if the Palestinians keep going this way, at the end of the day you'll have two states over there.

Otherwise, I'm afraid we're just going to have total chaos, and the Palestinians will be getting nothing more than a collection of little Bantustans. You remember, back in the days, Dennis, when we used to fight apartheid in South Africa. We had Transkei, Ciskei, and Bophuthatswana that weren't even connected with each other. They were little bitty plots of land. And that's pretty much what Israel has in mind here.

DB: And it is important to note those who fought that war against apartheid in South Africa are among the strongest supporters of the Palestinians. And they now say, and I pushed them on this, because I want to know if we're talking hyperbole here, and they now say that the Palestinian situation is way worse, particularly in Gaza. Way worse than they ever had it in terms of the Bantustans that you were just referring to.

FB: That's correct. And indeed, my friend, Professor John Dugard, who had been Special Rapporteur on Palestine is from South Africa. And he was one of a handful of white, international law professors over there with the courage, integrity and principles to oppose apartheid in South Africa, at risk to his life. And Dugard has said the same thing. If you want to look at... do a google on his name DUGARD.

And Dugard has said, and as you point out, other ANC leaders have said, that what the Palestinians are up against is far worse than what we were up against in the struggle against apartheid. You were involved, I was involved, many of us fought apartheid in South Africa. And we're fighting apartheid over there [Palestine] today as well. The legal principles are pretty much the same.

DB: The legal principles are the same, but the uh... sort of the history and the details, or the situation, are quite a bit different. Israel and its lobby controls U.S. policy so they're... all those anti-apartheiders have been fairly silent, wouldn't you say?

FB: Well, we have the BDS campaign...

DB: Well, yes... no, no, this is the silver lining but I mean all those politicians, and all those civil rights activists, and all those folks... and you know I can go down the list, do not see... if you even bring that up, either the subject disappears or you're considered an idiot, or a conspiracy theorist, over the top, whatever. When you make that parallel structure. I haven't heard it on NPR, have you?

FB: You mean National Propaganda Radio, Dennis? But, look, I set up the Israeli divestment/disinvestment campaign, in November of 2000, because of my involvement in the divestment/disinvestment campaign here against apartheid South Africa, that was called for by a black lawyer who was ahead of me at Harvard Law School, Randal Robinson.

And looking into the situation, I concluded that the legal principles are the same. And, when I did this, I remember the president of Harvard, Larry Summers, condemned me, because I was involved in the Harvard divestment/disinvestment campaign, and accused me of being anti-semitic.

And WBUR, which is the NPR affiliate out there in Boston asked me to debate Summers and I said I would. And Summers did not have the courage, integrity or principles to debate me. As you know, eventually Harvard fired him because he publicly stated women are dumber than men when it comes to math and science. So, fine.

So I debated Alan Dershowitz on this, as far back as 2002. And, we had a debate and I won that debate. I clobbered Dershowitz. And in 2005 then-Palestinian civil society leaders contacted me and said "We really want to set up a BDS campaign, modeled on what the world did against apartheid South Africa. Boycott, divestment and sanctions, would you go in with us?" I said, "Sure." So, I sort of surrendered the initiative to them.

But we've made an enormous amount of progress in these years. And, yes, the forces against us are substantial, and I guess more substantial than in apartheid South Africa.

Although thereto, as you note, the United States government fully supported apartheid South Africa, except during President Jimmy Carter. But all the rest of them supported it, up through and including Reagan, and the collapse of apartheid. So, when I set this thing up in 2000 I knew the forces against us would be formidable.

But the only progressive ... change we've ever seen in this country, Dennis, in my lifetime, going back to the struggle for civil rights for black people, which I also supported, has come from the people, and grassroots movement. It has never come from Washington, D.C. And it certainly hasn't come from the judiciary. It hasn't come from Congress. It hasn't come from the executive branch.

So, I think we've done a pretty good job in the BDS campaign, not just in this country, but worldwide. And it's going to take more time. Israel is fighting it tooth and nail, as you know. They even set up a separate ministry over there, to counteract BDS. [Sheldon] Adelson is putting millions of dollars into the campaign.

But I think everyone who looks at it realizes they are losing, because we have truth and justice on our side. So we're just going to have to keep plucking away, Dennis. People want to have peace with justice there for both Palestinians and Jews. It can be done. But we have a lot more work to do.

DB: Beautiful. Alright, well, Professor Boyle, as always we appreciate the good information, and the discussion about an issue that is really at the core, whether there's going to be peace in this world.

FB: I do want to make one more point here which I think is very important. Back

in 1991, I was advising both the Palestinian delegation and the Syrian delegation. And the Jordanians were prepared for peace but they couldn't go first. And at that time Lebanon was occupied by Syria, so they basically did whatever the Syrians told them. So I was advising, at the same time, the two key actors here.

And I can assure you that if Israel had wanted peace back in 1991, with the Palestinians and with the Syrians, we could have had it. Because I knew the Palestinian bottom line, and I knew the Syrian bottom line, and I was drafting their documents. And, regretfully, they started under [former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak] Shamir, whose strategy was stall and delay. Then came Rabin, and he negotiated a comprehensive peace plan, agreement with Syria, full peace for full withdrawal. And he also did the Oslo Accord with the Palestinians. And then he was murdered.

DB: He was murdered by settlers. Let's remind people. He was murdered by crazy....

FB: Extremist settlers. And Netanyahu came to power and there's been no peace, peace process to speak of, since then. Now that's 1995. And here we are today. But I can say, based on my inside personal knowledge that peace was at hand, back at that point, at this early point. And, regretfully, we're pretty far from it today.

Dennis J Bernstein is a host of "Flashpoints" on the Pacifica radio network and the author of Special Ed: Voices from a Hidden Classroom. You can access the audio archives at www.flashpoints.net.

The Path Ahead for Palestine

Israel under Prime Minister Netanyahu is showing no inclination to resolve the long-festering conflict with the Palestinians who remain harshly repressed in an apartheid-like system as Jewish expansion continues into Palestinian lands, a crisis that PLO leader Mustafa Barghouti describes to Dennis J Bernstein.

By Dennis J Bernstein

The ongoing occupation and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their homeland by Israel continues unabated. Israeli forces continue to demolish Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem, while they step up the pace of illegal settlement building on the West Bank.

In Gaza, the situation is beyond bleak. It is a major feat even to get fresh water. Thousands of children have been sickened because of this, and are suffering major health defects and learning disabilities as a result. Meanwhile, they are traumatized on a daily basis by the continuing military assaults and constant drone presence on the strip.

Mustafa Barghouti is a physician, activist, politician and General Secretary of the Palestine National Initiative. He's been a member of the Palestine Legislative Council and is a member of the Palestine Liberation Organization, PLO Central Council. He was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 2012.

Dr. Barghouti spoke last week with Flashpoints host Dennis J Bernstein about the future for peace in Palestine and independence for the Palestinian people. Bernstein reached the Palestinian leader at the United Nations.

DB: Welcome Dr. Barghouti. What brings you to the UN?

MB: We had a conference at the UN of 151 parties from all over the world, within the framework of the so-called socialist international. It was a very important platform to present the Palestinian issue. We reached the best resolution ever issued by all these parties supporting the right of the Palestinian people to end the occupation, to have freedom and justice. It calls for the right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes, and to support the immediate end of occupation and all illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, as well as the release of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel, especially the young people, children and the Palestinian elected members of Parliament who are held in Israeli jails.

It was a very good conference inside the United Nations. I hope these resolutions will help advance the Palestinian cause and explain to the world that we are struggling not only for the freedom of the Palestinian people, but also to liberate the Israeli public itself from its own Israeli government which is consolidating a system of occupation, oppression and segregation in the form of an apartheid much worse than what was in South Africa.

DB: In September 2014, following Israel's brutal 51-day massive assault and slaughter [on Gaza], you said, "This inhumanity can't continue. There is only one way out – to establish a boycott, divestment sanctions (BDS) against Israel in order to dismantle the occupation and this apartheid." Do you still agree that is the only real future for Palestine, and how do you see it unfold?

MB: Palestine agreed to the two-state solution and the PLO recognized Israel while Israel still does not recognize the Palestinian state. Many Palestinians thought that by accepting the two-state solution, which is really unfair, but is

a painful compromise that Palestinians can accept, they thought this would end the occupation and that Israel would finally let Palestinians to be free and dignified. Unfortunately it turned out that after 22 years of useless negotiations, these negotiations became a cover for Israeli illegal expansion of settlements and the negotiations became a cover for the destruction of the very last opportunity for two-state solution and peace.

After 22 years, Palestine discovered that the so-called peace process has itself become a substitute for peace. That's why we first need to change the balance of power before we speak about negotiations. The last atrocity in Gaza was the attack of 51 days that took the lives of 2,270 Palestinians, who were 85 percent civilians, including 580 children. This was one last episode of a series of episodes of massacres that have been waged against the Palestinian people.

When we speak about the balance of power, it cannot only happen with the resistance on the ground, which is a non-violent resistance – it requires an international factor. That is what happened in South Africa. Without the boycott, divestment, sanctions against the system of segregation and apartheid, the South African injustice would not have ended. That's what we are saying today.

BDS is one international instrument to make the Israelis understand that their government is dragging them into a terrible situation. BDS is not against the Israeli people as people, or against Jewish people at all. Many Jewish people are supporting this, including many famous people such as Daniel Barenboim, famous musician, or the great historian, Ilan Pappé, and other very well know Israelis. BDS is not against the Israeli people, but against the Israeli government policy.

As we tell Israeli soldiers when they try to arrest us during non-violent actions, we are not struggling only for the Palestinian people but also to liberate the Israeli people themselves from the system of apartheid. Israelis will not be free from fear and the terrible system of apartheid, until the Palestinians are free from occupation. This is the message. It is very peaceful message, about a very non-violent form of struggle, but also about the determination of the Palestinian people to be free and dignified.

I hope that many Jewish people in the United States will understand that the Israeli government policy is destroying not only the future of the people in the region, but it is also harming the image of Jewish and Israeli people everywhere. It's time for people to understand that Palestinians deserve freedom and justice like everybody else. It's time for people to understand that Palestinians need to be free and will be free. Nothing will break us after 67 years of dispossession and displacement, 48 years of occupation – the longest in

modern history – and now a system of apartheid and segregation.

All of that will not break our will because we are determined to be free like African-Americans are determined to get their rights in the U.S., the people of Algeria struggled for their freedom, and the American people struggled for their independence. It's the same. People aspire to freedom and nothing can stop that.

DB: We often hear the Israelis say they are looking for peace, but they don't have a partner. What's your response to that?

MB: I think that is incorrect because they have had partners from the Palestinian side and they had the chance to conclude peace with the Camp David meeting, but instead of accepting Palestinians' right to have a state, they proposed that Palestine would remain under Israeli slavery.

DB: What do you mean by Israeli slavery? That's not hyperbole, is it?

MB: I mean that for 48 years, the Israeli government has been exploiting the Palestinians in several respects; by taking away our land, confiscating more than 90 percent of our water then selling us the water back at twice what the Israelis pay, and a system of segregation where many major roads inside the Palestinian territory are exclusively for the use of Israelis. If a Palestinian is caught driving or walking on them he could be sentenced to six months in jail.

People like me, born in Jerusalem, are prevented from reaching Jerusalem, although I worked there for 15 years as a medical doctor. Yet the Israeli army doesn't want me to be in Jerusalem. People in Gaza cannot reach out to their relatives in the West Bank and vice versa. Our movement and lives are restricted by Israeli military orders and a legal system created to establish apartheid.

Apartheid means two systems of rules for two people living in the same area. That's exactly what we have today. Many people in the U.S. abhor using the word apartheid, but it means segregation, injustice and discrimination. That's exactly what we have. We don't have the right to be free, to move freely from one part of the country to another, the right to determine our future without Israeli control.

When I spoke of the system of oppression imposed on us, I meant a situation where the Israeli government is practicing racism. When you listen to Israeli officials, they frequently say very serious racist remarks, depriving and denying Palestinians the same rights that are supposed to be allowed to everybody. We are talking about inequality. That is the reality on the ground.

DB: What are your hopes and the hopes of a free Palestine in the face of this extraordinary violent war in Syria, which is again making refugees of thousands of Palestinians who were living in Syria. How do you see this terrible and bloody war playing into the future of your people?

MB: What's happening around us is very sad and horrible. We feel very sorrowful about what is happening to the Syrian people, as well as the people of Iraq and Yemen today. These explosions are the result of lack of democracy and opportunity for people, especially young people. These are the core causes of the terrible violence we see, including the terrible forms of terrorism committed by the so-called ISIS, ISIL, etc. All of these are horrible things.

We, the people who have suffered so long, understand the suffering of others more than anybody else. But this suffering of the people in Syria, and the violence that is practiced there, as well as in other places, present no justification for Israel to practice violence against the Palestinian people, as some Israeli government people would think or try to claim. Because thousands of people are killed in Syria, that does not justify killing thousands of people in Gaza.

We want the situation to improve in all these countries. We want the people in these countries to be able to practice democracy and have their rights. But at the same time we also want our rights as Palestinians to be free from occupation and oppression and free from any form of discrimination – through the longest occupation in modern history.

The problem with two-state solution is that while negotiations keep failing, Israel claims there are no partners on the Palestinian state. The truth is that there are partners all the time. The problem is that Israel does not want a partner, but wants an operator, a leader who would sacrifice and give up the rights of his own people and cooperate with Israel to give up those rights. This is the kind of leader Israel wants to see, and they keep failing because there is no Palestinian leader who respects himself who will sell out his country and his people to the occupiers. That's why Israel keeps claiming there are no Palestinian partners.

DB: Here is the big question about two-state solution. Many, many in the movement for a free Palestine, feel those days are long gone. The Israeli expanding ethnic cleansing, if you will, stealing Palestinian land. They have taken so much land, the Palestinians have lost so much, that it isn't even comprehensible to think about a two-state solution. I try to imagine what the map would look like, for a free Palestine with contiguous borders, airports. ... Do you have a map in your mind?

MB: If there was a will on the side of the international community, especially the United States, being the greatest supporter of Israel, if there was a will for a real two-state solution, they could easily force Israel to stop the occupation and they could easily force Israel to remove the settlements from the occupied territories, in which case there would be a chance for a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, including East Jerusalem, according to the 1967 borders. There would be a corridor linking the West Bank to Gaza.

But none of that is happening, because the United States government, and many other governments, are either afraid or do not want to pressure Israel. ... Because of that, we see the evaporation, disappearance, withering of the possibility of two-state solution. That's what some Israeli leaders also say. Israel must confront three choices: either they accept to take out the settlements, remove their army from the West Bank and Gaza and allow the Palestinians to have a Palestinian state on 1967 borders, or they must sustain the existing situation, but the existing situation is not sustainable because it's a system of segregation, apartheid, and occupation.

This is not sustainable because no people in the world can accept being slaves of occupation forever. Then, the only possible third solution if Israel strikes completely the possibility of two-state solution, is the one-state solution with equal rights. I would prefer to have one-state solution immediately, where Israelis and Palestinians have equal rights and equal duties.

We can live together. We lived together with the Jewish people before Israel was established. Palestine was not a place where Jewish people were persecuted or discriminated against. On the contrary, as was the case in most European countries. I understand the suffering of the Jewish people. I understand how they went through the Holocaust, which was the most horrible thing, and the suffering in the pogroms in Russia, and the suffering during the Inquisition time.

But one thing that many Israelis forget is that all of these atrocities had nothing to do with Palestinians. Palestinians were never part of any oppression of any Jewish population. That suffering of the Jewish population doesn't justify in any way Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people. Because of that suffering, I think the Israelis should be more sensitive about injustice and oppression of another people than anybody else.

Unfortunately, that is not the case in Israel today. That's why you see many Jewish people in the U.S. and in many other countries, joining and supporting the Palestinian struggle in solidarity with Palestinians because they care about the moral values.

That's why I say that if Israel prevents the two-state option – and it would be Israel's responsibility – there would be no other alternative than one-state solution with equal rights and equal duties. Such a state would not be a Jewish state. It would be a mixed state. That's what people need to understand. If the two-state solution vanishes, the Israeli government is responsible.

DB: Isn't it just as unrealistic to expect a two-state solution in Israel as it was to expect a two-state solution at a certain point in South Africa?

MB: Exactly. A friend of mine was a Jewish white minister in the first South African government that brought down the apartheid system. I told him that I thought the situation for the Palestinians was similar to the apartheid in South Africa. He stopped me and said what you have in Palestine is much worse than the apartheid system we had in South Africa. In South Africa people were not forced out of their country and did not suffer from this horrible system of oppression that Israel delivers.

In South Africa, the only solution was one-state with democratic rights for everybody. And this would not have happened if it weren't for the BDS, which eventually made the South African apartheid system understand that they would lose everything unless they stopped the system of apartheid. I believe there is a lot of similarity between our situation and South Africa's situation, and that's why I hope that some of the strategies that were used then can also work for Palestine today.

Dennis J. Bernstein is a host of "Flashpoints" on the Pacifica radio network and the author of *Special Ed: Voices from a Hidden Classroom*. You can access the audio archives at www.flashpoints.net.

When Occupation Becomes Apartheid

Backers of right-wing Israeli policies bristle when the South African term "apartheid" is applied to the Jewish state's isolation and persecution of Palestinians. But the near half century of West Bank occupation leaves little doubt the description fits, says Gil Maguire, whose father famously airlifted Jews into Israel.

By Gil Maguire

Israel's military occupation and control of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza has gone on almost half a century, since it conquered those territories during the 1967 Six Day War. While many fear Israel will become an apartheid

state unless it relinquishes all or most of these occupied territories, the evidence is overwhelming that Israel created an apartheid system and became an apartheid state at the end of the 1967 war, 48 years ago.

Under international law and Section III of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, a conquering army becomes an occupying power once military operations have ceased. The occupying power has the duty to restore public order and safety and protect the local civilian population.

Under Article 49, it cannot seize or annex any part of the territory occupied or forcibly deport civilians, nor can it permanently transfer its own citizens into the occupied territory. It must also relinquish control of the occupied territory and return it to civilian authority and control as soon as reasonably possible once order is restored.

The U.S. conducted one the most difficult military occupations in history at the end of World War II after it (and its allies) had defeated the combined Axis Powers of Germany, Italy and Japan. Despite the bitterness of the conflict, the U.S. restored public order and safety and took less than eight years to rebuild the infrastructure and civilian democratic institutions of all three countries and return each to sovereign democratic rule.

The U.S. didn't seize or annex the sovereign territory of these three countries, it didn't deport civilians, nor did it transfer portions of its own civilian population into the three countries it occupied. The U.S. post-World War II occupations are models of how military occupations should be conducted, and today, Germany, Italy and Japan, all former bitter enemies of the U.S., are healthy, prosperous democracies, and strong allies.

Unlawful Deportations and Annexations

By sharp contrast, Israel's military occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza has defied international law almost from the beginning. Some 300,000 Palestinians fled or were forced to leave their homes during and after the 1967 fighting and then were deported from the territories occupied by Israel, as were another 130,000 from the captured Golan Heights.

Israel also prevented Palestinian refugees from lawfully returning to their homes and lands by denying them entry at the borders and by using force against those who surreptitiously attempted to return. It destroyed dozens of Arab towns and villages to prevent their Arab inhabitants from returning.

It also seized and annexed Palestinian lands including East Jerusalem and about 27 square miles of West Bank land which became Greater Jerusalem the so-called eternal capital of Israel. Later it annexed the Golan Heights. Both annexations

have been declared illegal under international law.

In his meticulously researched study of the two years following the 1967 Six Day War, *The Bride and the Dowry: Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinians in the Aftermath of the June 1967 War* (2012, Yale University Press), author Avi Raz details how Israel successfully forced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to leave the West Bank and then conducted “a diplomacy of prevarication” aimed at deceiving the U.S. and its allies into believing it was willing to allow the refugees to return, and would give back the territories it had captured during the war.

Raz also shows how Israel was approached by both the Jordanian government and by Palestinian leaders who were eager, after the debacle of the 1967 Six Day War, to negotiate a settlement with the Israelis. Israel used its excruciatingly-protracted talks with both sides to convince the UN and the U.S. that it was interested in and working toward a negotiated settlement while instead it was doing everything possible to delay and avoid any commitment to one.

This diplomatic strategy was aptly described by Israel’s foreign minister, Abba Eban, as *tahksisanut* or deviousness. Raz concludes Israel was never willing to trade captured land for peace and used a “foreign policy of deception” to hide that fact from its allies, mainly the U.S. which Israel feared would force it to return the captured lands and refuse to sell it the sophisticated aircraft and weaponry it craved.

Raz argues that Israel’s entire approach to settlement negotiations from 1967, through the Oslo Accord of 1993, to the present day followed Eban’s strategy of diplomatic *tahksisanut*. The goal has always been to delay and avoid an agreement until the number of illegal settlements and settlers in the occupied territories created facts on the ground that would make the permanency of Greater Israel a *fait accompli*.

The collapse and failure of Secretary of State John Kerry’s 2013-14 peace talks reflects the continuing success of *tahksisanut*, of Israeli duplicity.

The Illegal Settlements

Raz quotes Levi Eshkol, Israeli prime minister from 1963 until his death in 1969, as saying Israel “wanted the dowry” (the land of the occupied territories) “but not the bride” (the Palestinians living on that land). To solve that dilemma, plans were made and implemented almost immediately after the war to keep the occupied territories as an integral part of Greater Israel or *Eretz Yisrael*, and build all-Jewish settlements in the occupied areas to create facts on the ground that would make the establishment of a separate Palestinian state

difficult if not impossible.

In September 1967, a secret legal memo commissioned by Israel's prime minister made it clear that transferring Israeli Jewish citizens onto settlements in the occupied territories would be a direct violation of international law, specifically the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Despite this warning, Israel began the process of transferring Jewish civilians into settlements, establishing 12 in 1967, followed by ever-increasing numbers in the next five decades. Today, 48 years later, over 10 percent of Israel's Jewish population, well over 600,000 Israeli Jews, live in hundreds of settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, making the creation of a contiguous Palestinian state virtually impossible, as was the plan from the very beginning.

U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk, in a March 1968 memo to the U.S. Embassy in Israel, told the U.S. ambassador to warn the Israeli government that the transfer of its civilians into the occupied territories violated Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. He instructed the ambassador to tell the Israeli government, in the strongest possible terms, the U.S. opposition to any Israeli settlements in the occupied territories.

Rusk also said that building Jewish settlements created the impression that Israel had no intention of reaching a settlement and withdrawing from the occupied territories. Half a century later, Rusk's memo has proved prophetic.

The evidence is clear that Israel knew its obligations as an occupying power under the Fourth Geneva Convention but decided to ignore them. Its illegal actions of forcing civilians out of the occupied territories, refusing to allow them to return, annexing portions of occupied lands for itself, and transferring its own civilians into the occupied lands, all while keeping the Palestinians under strict military rule, demonstrate an intent to keep the occupied territories for itself. Its negotiation strategy of *tahksisanut* is further evidence of that intention.

If Israel had no intention of withdrawing from the occupied territories, and deliberately violated most if not all of the legal precepts regarding military occupation, its behavior was and remains illegal under international law and constitutes grave violations of the laws of war, or war crimes.

Even President Obama's White House seems to have finally acknowledged this hard fact. On March 23, at the J Street annual conference, White House Chief of Staff, Denis McDonough said:

"Israel cannot maintain military control of another people indefinitely"; "An

occupation that has lasted for almost 50 years must end, and the Palestinian people must have the right to live in and govern themselves in their own sovereign state"; "Palestinian children deserve the same right to be free in their own land as Israeli children in their land,"

The Law and Practice of Apartheid

Can Israel's 48-year illegal military occupation be described as apartheid? The term was originally used to describe a system of racial segregation in South Africa. Today, the crime of apartheid, according to the UN Apartheid Convention, applies to acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial, ethnic or religious group over another by acts of systematic oppression.

Examples include: denying the one group the right to life and liberty and subjecting members of that group to arbitrary arrest and expropriation of property; depriving the group of the right to leave and return to their country, or of freedom of movement and residence; the creation of separate areas for the members of different racial groups; the prohibition of mixed marriages, etc.

Each of these examples applies to Israel's treatment of Palestinians in the occupied territories, and, to a lesser extent, to the 20 percent of Israeli citizens who are non-Jews. Some 50 laws in Israel discriminate against non-Jewish Israeli citizens, forcing them to live in impoverished Arab communities surrounded by prosperous all-Jewish communities which receive the vast majority of public resources. Moreover, Israel's Arab population lived under strict martial law the first 18 years of Israel's existence, until 1966, even though Israeli Arabs became nominal citizens of Israel in 1952.

Today, there remain about 274,000 Israeli Arab citizens who are internally displaced refugees of the 1948 war who fled or were forced to leave their homes and villages and were not allowed to return to reclaim their homes, land and property after the end of the war *even though they are lawful residents and citizens of Israel*.

In the occupied West Bank, conditions are far worse. Palestinians are forced to live in enclaves (the so-called Area A) surrounded by Israeli military zones (Area B). Area C, about 61 percent of the West Bank, contains over 300,000 Jewish settlers living in all-Jewish settlements under complete Israeli control. This area completely surrounds Areas A and B.

Palestinians are forced to live in dozens of separate enclaves, their movement heavily restricted. Arbitrary arrest and detention of adults and even young children is commonplace, due process a distant dream.

Palestinian land in the West Bank and East Jerusalem is confiscated and used to build all-Jewish Israeli settlements protected by Israeli Army units and connected by access roads that are restricted to use by Jews only. Israeli Jews living in the occupied territories have full civil rights including the right to vote while their Palestinian Arab neighbors live under Israeli military law, have no civil rights, and cannot vote in Israel's national elections. All of these discriminatory restrictions on the Palestinian Arab population certainly seem to meet the definition of apartheid.

Stephen Robert, a Jewish-American investment banker and long-time Israel supporter, as well as a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and a former chancellor of Brown University, described the situation in the occupied territories as apartheid after fact-finding visits to the West Bank and East Jerusalem in 2011. In a long and detailed article entitled "[Apartheid on Steroids](#)", he concluded:

"How can Jews, who have been persecuted for centuries, tolerate this inhumanity? Where is their moral compass? How can this situation be acceptable to Judaism's spiritual and political leaders? I don't have that answer; except to say that Israel's biggest enemy has become itself."

That was four years ago. David Shulman, an Israeli Jew and distinguished professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem described similar conditions in his March 21 [post-Israeli election recap](#), article:

"Israel has, in effect, knowingly moved further toward a *full-fledged apartheid system*. Those who don't like the word can suggest another one for *what I see each week in the territories and more and more inside the Green Line*." [Emphasis added].

Shulman sees apartheid in the occupied territories and more and more evidence of it even within Israel itself. Israeli journalist and author, Amira Hess, [sees much the same](#):

"When you look at the geography of Palestinians in Israel, it's the same geography, they are encircled in enclaves. They are deprived of their land. Most of their land has been taken by Jews to settle, even though they are Israeli citizens. They are all packed and cramped in houses without spaces to breathe, without agricultural lands. The political geography of the Israeli state is very similar on both sides of the Green Line."

Apartheid Comparisons

The treatment of Palestinian Arabs by Israeli Jews is also [strikingly similar](#) to

the treatment of non-whites by South Africa's all-white regime under apartheid. Moreover, all the conditions for apartheid, the deportations, the annexations, the creation of Jewish settlements, the isolation of Palestinians under military law, were put in place by the Israeli government in 1967.

Since both the intent and the fact of apartheid were in place in 1967, and since conditions have only gotten worse, it's become impossible to call Israel's near half century military occupation of the Palestinian people on Palestinian lands in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza anything but apartheid.

The only remaining question is why we as Americans continue to support a country whose oppression of its Arab population is so contrary to our own national values, a country who openly practices apartheid. Israel's conduct toward the Palestinian people makes a mockery of its claim to be "the only democracy in the Middle East," as does its claim that Israel and the U.S. share common values.

It's high time that we, as Americans, face up to the fact that supporting Israel is supporting apartheid, and that our military, economic and diplomatic support of that country has fostered and abetted nearly half a century of continuing oppression of 4.5 million Palestinians.

It's also high time we put a stop to it by telling our representatives in Congress that while we as Americans support the state of Israel, we will no longer provide military, economic and diplomatic support for Israeli apartheid.

Gil Maguire is a retired civil rights attorney and a writer of both non-fiction and fiction. His interest in the Israel-Palestine issue came from his father's involvement flying Jewish refugees from around the world to the new state of Israel in 1948-49. David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister called his father "the Irish Moses" because of his exploits, hence the name of Maguire's blog site – www.irishmoses.com. [This story previously appeared at Mondoweiss.]

How Mandela and S. Africa Were Freed

From the Archive: One of the great battles of Danny Schechter's life was the fight to end apartheid in South Africa, but he never soft-pedaled the challenges the country continued to face nor did he accept the revisionist history minimizing the role of millions in that global campaign for justice, as he wrote last year.

By Danny Schechter (Originally published on April 28, 2014)

This is probably the worst time to write and release a book about one's involvement in a struggle to free South Africa. It's a bad time because even as South Africa celebrates its twentieth anniversary as a democracy, there has rarely been more rancor and anger in a land we all wanted to see as a Rainbow nation, a model for the world because of how it achieved a relatively peaceful transition from white rule and promoted racial reconciliation.

My new book, *When South Africa Called, We Answered: How Solidarity Helped Topple Apartheid* about the global solidarity movement has been published by a Canadian website and online publication run by Tony Sutton, a former editor of Johannesburg's classic Drum Magazine, often spoken of as the Life Magazine for the black communities during the glory days of resistance.

As I hunt for an American and South Africa publisher, this 300-pager is available in the PDF format as an e-book and can be downloaded for free at <http://coldtype.net>. I wrote it and released it quickly, after a serious health scare because I wanted to be sure that the history of the projects I have been associated with over the decades, from the all-star album "Sun City" by 58 Artists United Against Apartheid, the TV series "South Africa Now," and my work with Nelson Mandela whose story I tell in the book, *Madiba A to Z: The Many Faces of Nelson Mandela* (Madibabook.com)

As I was writing about Mandela heroic life, I thought there might be value in writing my own story, too, by compiling the many essays I wrote alongside the media work I have done about South Africa for decades as a form of solidarity. And I know, as is all too often the case with a lot of my work, the timing may be very problematic if not totally off.

The global anti-apartheid movement is long gone, and now, so is Madiba, the leader who largely inspired it. With all the memorializing, many confess to be "Mandela-ed out." His life has been feted in print, and on the big screen, most recently by the epic movie, "Mandela: Long Walk To Freedom."

The press has mostly moved on. In South Africa, the news media is now more focused on the drama of the trial of Oscar Pistorius, South Africa's high-profile disabled runner accused of intentionally shooting his girlfriend in a tragic and bloody late-night confrontation.

Britain's The Financial Times, reflecting the interest and interests of its readers, did send their editor, Lionel Barber, on a 12-day safari to Southern Africa to key in on today's challenges.

He notes that "twenty years after the end of apartheid [sic, it's been 24 years] South Africa and its neighboring states, Namibia and Angola, face a second

great struggle for progress, prosperity and a better future for all.”

Barber spent a day on the campaign trail with President Jacob Zuma, observing, “he can jive like a man half his age to the old liberation favorite, *Umshini Wami*,” (“Bring me my Machine Gun.”) FT doesn’t mention that this is an oft-repeated recycled act for JZ, as he’s known, because he beat that song to death in his first campaign five years ago.

In the end, Barber is upbeat about South Africa’s economy, perhaps because it is still dominated by a multinational privately controlled Mineral Energy Complex, many based in London. “If you believe in Africa,” he writes. “You have to be positive about South Africa.” This is hardly the message of Zuma’s many detractors.

Soon, as the South African election in early May comes into focus, the rest of the world media will descend and give local events their attention for a day or two. They love conflict and this story is perfect, complete with bitter charges of corruption, defections by long-time supporters of Mandela’s party, the ANC, and frustration in every community as the economy seems unable to eradicate poverty and distribute wealth fairly.

The FT hints at this downside, but features the positive hopes of investors and financiers. The truth is that 20 years after the country’s first multiracial election in which the ANC promised “A Better Life For All,” many there are living worse lives with poverty today as deep as it was then.

It’s not all the fault of South Africans, but reflects a globalized world economy that benefits the 1 percent, far more than the 99 percent, especially in traditionally poor and colonized countries.

At the same time, activists in West have also moved on or moved off this political stage as economic failures erupt in Europe and America, and as young people are stuck in student-debt bubbles, with social for global economic justice movements losing visibility.

Global problems today may be even more serious, with inequality and climate change topping the list, but the sense of widespread moral outrage that fired the anti-apartheid movement seems on the decline.

At Mandela’s funeral, that international movement in a way, a successor to a similar crusade against slavery a century and a half earlier was barely referenced.

The focus was on the utterings of heads of state with a great-men-make-history subtext on display.

Even the ANC as a people's movement was pushed aside by all the government dictated protocol and media led deification of Mandela by politicians. Only the aging "Arch," Desmond Tutu criticized the organizers for not inviting leading whites and activists from abroad.

Even as the event celebrated the history of South Africa's greatest son and his "long walk to freedom," it also rewrote history, leaving out the mass global force responsible for generating pressure for sanctions and demands for Mandela and Co.'s freedom.

Perhaps that's why I felt compelled to write this book, to add my small voice and the memory of worthy, if relatively, notwell-remembered contributions to this important history. As been said many times: the past is never past.

South Africans also need to be reminded of the debt they owe to a world that responded to their call for support and stood with them in the dark years. In an interdependent world, that movement played a crucial role. When South African politiciansride the "gravy train," they are betraying their friends abroad.

Unfortunately, the media that lionizes change-makers from above and ignores movements from below will always downplay that lesson, lest they encourage similar struggles on today's global issues.

As a friend once told me when I went to South Africa at age 25 to enlist in that then against-all-odds freedom struggle, "it's not the ship that makes the waves, but the motion on the ocean."

News Dissector Danny Schechter is a New York based blogger, (NewsDissector.net), editor of Mediachannel.org, author of 16 books, and director of more than 30 documentaries, including six with and about Nelson Mandela. Comments to dissector@mediachannel.org.

Why Israel Is Bad for the Jews

Among the harm that hardline Israeli policies have inflicted on Judaism is the erosion of the traditional Jewish tolerance toward dissent, now virtually forbidden if it involves criticizing Israel, as Danny Schechter learned when he asserted that "Israel is bad for the Jews."

By Danny Schechter

I would have become a rich man in "The Fiddler on The Roof" sense if each of the

insults, putdowns and venomous asides about my recent article, "Israel Is Bad For The Jews," had a monetary value.

For so many years, we used to joke, "Five Jews, Ten Opinions," as a comment about the perennial, ongoing and never-ending arguments and debates that made our culture so rich with its many religious tendencies: Reform, Conservative and Orthodox, and their many spinoffs competing over the best way to serve God.

Politically, we had more organizations and positions than any one Jew has fingers, as conservatives battled liberals; Zionists quarreled with anti-Zionists; and the many factions of the Left and the Right battled each other.

This rich diversity of perspective is what spawned so many passionate writers and engaged intellectuals to pick over the carcass of our history and its many interpretations of what Judaism is and what are the right values and beliefs to guide us.

Even in our Passover Seders, in the modern form and ancient traditions, we sang of our differences, with subtlety and irony. There were always moral choices. Never one answer! "*Dayenu*" anyone?

Isn't it sad today when Jewish critics write about Israel, the content of their concerns are dismissed, *a priori*, and answered by an endless spew of personal attacks on their character. When it comes to this issue, only one correct party line, pro-Netanyahu position masquerading as support for a country which is always facing threats, especially when funds are to be raised.

If you think the Stalinists kowtowed to a party line, check out the Zionists. Many Labor Zionist groups used to have disputes with each other, while the settler movement had its own differences and fanatics. Now, there is no tolerance for anyone who disagrees with you. There is little difference between some of the religious autocrats in Israel and the mullahs in Iran. Tehran has its Supreme Ruler and Israel has its "Security Cabinet." Who cares about democracy in the Knesset?

Only one line is allowed or else. Figure out why 100 members of the 100-member U.S. Senate groveled before embracing Israel in the same resolution and you will understand the way this game is played. Dissent, however mild or reasonable, is not permitted. It's always their way or the highway! We are supposed to hail AIPAC the way the Romans hailed Caesar.

Disagree and quickly life-long Semites become anti-Semites, and people who love justice are blasted as haters, guilty for even invoking the names of people of deep knowledge like that son of a Rabbi, Noam Chomsky, a moral conscience and national treasure, now in his 80's. Chomsky, *oy vey*, has heard it all from all

sides, but keeps going! May we all sing, "bidi-bidi-bum?"

As a graduate of a Jewish school, albeit not a religious one, who took pride in my culture and identity, I am a pronounced a "Jew hater," an anti-Semite, and, to boot, an ignoramus, even an enemy! Oh, yes, as one respondent told me, I am as bad as "HAMMAS" (misspelled!)

My article appeared on several sites including The JewishReporter.com. I was told that many of the site's supporters demanded I be silenced, and my article be taken down, I guess as heresy. (It's too bad the "Scarlet Letter" is not in vogue anymore even if Jews know all too well the way how our ancestors were forced to wear stars of David and later concentration camp numbers. It didn't matter what you thought, it was who you were,)

Dr. Avi Perry, a technologist who appears on PalTalk, shot off a "Dear Danny" letter to me to share his wounded feelings: "I have known you as a far-leftist who bashes Israel at every opportunity, but your recent article, titled: 'Israel Gives Jews A Bad Name' exposed your own ingrained Jew-hating tendencies. Your article and your assertions are wreacked with the same blind spots that every antisemite and every Jew-hater embraces inside their souls.

"Calling Israel an apartheid state is an insult to the word apartheid. Did South Africa afford voting rights to its black residents? Did the true apartheid regime have a black resident on their Supreme Court? Did they have blacks (who preached white genocide) as members of Parliament? Did white folks in apartheid South Africa work for black supervisors? Did black doctors work in white hospitals, treating white folks as well? There are hundreds more examples of how prejudiced you are. You clearly don't know what you are talking about.

"You quote Noam Chomsky, the most supreme Jew-hater in history. (I had noted that he said Israel was not like South Africa, but worse!) You provide proof for Meir Lansky's crimes from a movie, a fiction-based novel" Etc. Etc.

Oops, and now, the closer: "And finally, there is plenty more I could say to you and to those who share your antisemitic views. But it will take a whole book, and I'm not in the mood to write one at this moment."

Never mind that I have written books, articles and produced a TV series about South Africa. And, never mind, that on this past Saturday 100,000 South Africans marched in solidarity with the Palestinians of Gaza. You would think their memory of Apartheid qualified them to make that parallel. But never mind

My friend, the distinguished African journalist and editor Marie-Roger Biloa, wrote to me from Paris when I told her about the nasty response, "that is usual, stupefying that so many Jews, among the best and the brightest, just do not

understand and accept that people protest in the streets against Israel's policy. I just listened to a German Jewish writer lashing out at 'antisemitism disguised as anti-zionism.'"

No doubt, the vehemence of my critic's views and his immediate labeling of me as anti-Semitic or worse, speaks to how cantankerous the discourse on this subject has become. It is now *verboden* to challenge the consensus of the Israel firsters who speak not just in sanctimonious defense of a state dominated by a malicious far right-wing government, but make it appear they are speaking for all Jews everywhere. All that takes to achieve is a couple of hundred million dollars for PR and media spin.

Sadly, this tendency has become true of a onetime hero of mine, Elie Wiesel, with whom I produced a TV pilot for public television. (I didn't have the heart to tell him that the station, WNET in New York, rejected the series because they thought his accent would limit its appeal. Too Jewish? That smelled like anti-Semitism to me at the time.)

Wiesel, whose books turned him into the moral Ambassador for World Jewry because of his reputation as a powerful speaker and Holocaust survivor, now is Israel's No. 1 defender without ever really disclosing how right-wing his politics have become.

According to the Electronic Intifada, "Wiesel has been a chair of the advisory board of Elad, a group of fanatical religious Israeli settlers actively involved in ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from the eastern sector of occupied Jerusalem." Now Wiesel is leading a campaign to further demonize Palestinians

Press Release: "Rabbi Shmuley Boteach has released a stirring advertising campaign that is accusing Hamas of child sacrifice. Along with Nobel Peace Laureate, Elie Wiesel, the ads will run in leading American publications including: The Washington Post, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Chicago Tribune, The Los Angeles Times, The Miami Herald, as well as an extensive social media campaign."

This World Founder Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, stated, "Our purpose is to bring one of the greatest moral voices of our time and one of the most respected human beings alive, who bore witness to the atrocities of genocide and the Holocaust, to respond to the ugly and fraudulent criticisms of Israel and call for an end to the genocidal aspirations of Hamas."

These ads have triggered a press controversy with the usually conservative Murdoch-owned title, The Times, refusing to run it while the usually progressive Guardian carried it in England. Palestinians called it an incitement to genocide

and questioned its accuracy.

The Israeli writer, Gilad Alzmon, blasts Wiesel, a personality who until now is usually revered as a human rights hero. "The ad's headline reads: 'Jews rejected child sacrifice 3,500 years ago. Now it's Hamas' turn.' Wiesel's statement is a blatant lie and the London Times knew it.

"Jews have never stopped sacrificing their children. The Hannibal Protocol is an IDF directive that orders soldiers to take 'necessary measures' to prevent their comrades from being captured by enemy forces. 'Necessary measures' include risking the life of the Israeli soldier and anyone who happens to be in his vicinity. Similarly, the Kastner Affair shows that at the peak of the Shoah, Ben Gurion and the Zionist establishment were willing to sacrifice many Jewish lives on the altar of the Zionist goal."

Over 100 Jewish survivors and descendants of Jewish survivors of the Nazi genocide have signed on to a letter condemning the invasion of Gaza and "speak out against the abuse of their histories to promote the dehumanization of Palestinians advanced by Elie Wiesel among others."

They write, "we are disgusted and outraged by Elie Wiesel's abuse of our history in these pages to promote blatant falsehoods used to justify the unjustifiable: Israel's wholesale effort to destroy Gaza and the murder of nearly 2,000 Palestinians, including many hundreds of children. Nothing can justify bombing UN shelters, homes, hospitals and universities. Nothing can justify depriving people of electricity and water.

"We call for the full economic, cultural and academic boycott of Israel. 'Never again' must mean NEVER AGAIN FOR ANYONE!"

Another Israeli, Miko Peled, is speaking out too. He was born in Jerusalem. His grandfather, Avraham Katsnelson, signed Israel's Declaration of Independence. His father, Mattityahu Peled, fought in the 1948 war, and was a general in the war of 1967.

Sadly, Peled's 13-year-old niece Smadar was killed in a suicide attack in Jerusalem. At her funeral, according to an article summarizing Peled's book, *The General's Son*, Ehud Barak, who had just been elected to lead the opposition, explained that "in order to win votes he must disguise his real intentions as a 'peacemaker.'"

In reply, Peled said, "Why not tell the truth. ... That this and similar tragedies are taking place because we are occupying another nation and that in order to save lives the right thing to do is to end the occupation and negotiate a just peace with our Palestinian partners?"

Peled is among many Israelis who challenge Israeli militarism. But it is the Palestinians who are forced to live with it, with many not making it.

Read this story and weep: “When Ahmed Owedat returned to his home 18 days after Israeli soldiers took it over in the middle of the night, he was greeted with an overpowering stench. He picked through the wreckage of his possessions thrown from upstairs windows to find that the departing troops had left a number of messages. One came from piles of faeces on his tiled floors and in wastepaper baskets, and a plastic bottle filled with urine.

“If that was not clear enough, the words ‘Fuck Hamas’ had been carved into a concrete wall in the staircase. ‘Burn Gaza down’ and ‘Good Arab = dead Arab’ were engraved on a coffee table. The star of David was drawn in blue in a bedroom.”

Why is Israel bad for the Jews? Reflect on that smell as if it were in your home. I reported on a very similar situation involving the IDF’s trashing of a community Media Center in Ramallah years ago. That is the smell and face of hate, and more than a big oy vey.

News Dissector/filmmaker Danny Schechter blogs at [Mediachannel.org](http://mediachannel.org) and edits [Mediachannel.org](http://mediachannel.org). Comments to dissector@mediachannel.org.

The Brutal Failure of Zionism

Israel’s renewed slaughter of Palestinians in Gaza after failed peace talks and ethnic slayings by both sides is further proof that the Zionist experiment has failed and that the only reasonable way forward is to recognize the equal rights of all people living in the region, writes John V. Whitbeck.

By John V. Whitbeck

Now that the American-monopolized “peace process” has expired and violence and hate are exploding again across Israel and Palestine Western nations should seize the initiative, join forces and try to do something useful for Israelis, Palestinians and peace.

If Western nations still believe that a decent “two-state solution” is conceivable, several useful initiatives are immediately available. They could support and reinforce the current two-state legality by joining the 134 states which have already extended diplomatic recognition to the State of Palestine. They could also require Israelis seeking visas to visit their countries to

produce documentary evidence that they don't reside in occupied Palestine.

Most constructively, Western nations could impose economic sanctions on Israel and intensify them until Israel complies with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions and ends the 47-year-long occupation.

If Western nations are unwilling to take such initiatives or if they have concluded, not unreasonably, that a decent "two-state solution" is no longer conceivable and that the only issue now is whether the current one-state reality will continue to be an apartheid reality or can be transformed into a democratic one, they should reflect upon their own histories and responsibilities in order to identify the most useful way forward.

The harsh reality is that Zionism is, and has always been, an anti-Semite's dream come true, offering the hope that Jews in one's own country can be induced to leave and move elsewhere.

The British politician Arthur J. Balfour, who gave his name to the fateful 1917 declaration endorsing "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people," was an earnest supporter of the 1905 Alien Act, which was specifically designed to stem the inflow into Britain of Jews fleeing from persecution in czarist Russia.

Subsequently, in the aftermath of the Holocaust, which was a wholly European abomination, European governments as well as those of the United States, Canada and Australia shamefully brushed aside Arab pleas to treat the resettlement of displaced Jews as a duty and obligation for the whole world.

Western nations refused to relax their immigration restrictions, thereby forcing most of the Jewish refugees to seek to build new lives in Palestine, even though many would have preferred to settle elsewhere.

That approach could be still be reversed now. Western nations, which are no longer anti-Semitic, could and should be opening their doors wide to any and all Israeli Jews who might be tempted to build a new and better life for themselves and their children, with less injustice and less insecurity, by returning to their countries of origin or emigrating to other countries of their choice. They could be offered immediate residency rights, generous resettlement assistance and a fast track to citizenship (if they do not already have it).

Such a policy would be far better than continuing to provide unquestioning support for an ethno-religious-supremacist, settler-colonial experiment in Israel/Palestine that violates principles of justice, human decency and international law.

Offering genuine "Laws of Return" for the descendants of Jews who survived the Holocaust would be profoundly philo-Semitic, pro-Jewish and, yes, anti-Zionist. Such a policy would reflect a moral, ethical and self-interested recognition that political Zionism, like certain other prominent Twentieth Century "isms" which once captured the imaginations of millions, was a tragically bad idea not simply for those innocents caught and trampled in its path but also for those who embraced it.

Even if sustainable with Western support, Zionism does not deserve to be sustained. It has already caused and, if perpetuated, will continue to cause profound problems for the West and its relations with the rest of the world.

Western nations like to call for "confidence-building measures" from Israelis, Palestinians and other Arabs without offering any themselves. A multinational initiative to atone for the West's past sins against Jews by welcoming Israeli Jews to resettle in Western nations would constitute a hugely constructive confidence-building measure which should, logically, be opposed only by people who are either anti-Semites or Zionists or both.

In the land which, until 1948, was called Palestine, democracy and equal rights in a unitary state should offer more realistic hope for peace with some measure of justice than continued recycling of a partition-based "peace process," which is widely recognized to have been a cynical exercise in killing time and which, even if "successful," would simply legitimize, reward and perpetuate ethnic cleansing, racism and apartheid scarcely a recipe for lasting peace, let alone for any measure of justice.

For those who would prefer not to live in a unitary state with democracy and equal rights for all, there would be the freedom of choice and attractive options for resettlement elsewhere.

Old assumptions, including the irreversible "success" of the Zionist experiment, should now be questioned. Even once heretical ideas, including the peaceful rollback of the Zionist experiment at least in its current, aggressively exclusivist, "nation-state of the Jewish people" form and its replacement by democracy through voluntary personal choice rather than through violence, should now be considered.

If Western politicians cared more about the welfare and happiness of individual Jewish human beings than they do about the money from a few wealthy and powerful Zionists who have the ability to inflict political pain (and who mostly live far from the violence and turmoil of the Middle East), then democracy, equal rights and freedom of choice all principles to which Western nations profess devotion might actually come to the "Holy Land."

John V. Whitbeck is an international lawyer who has advised the Palestinian negotiating team in negotiations with Israel.

Pope Francis Prays at Two Israeli Walls

Pope Francis tried to bring a moral perspective to Israel's subjugation of the Palestinians, including scenes of him praying at a separation wall in Palestine as well as at the famous West Wall in Jerusalem, as ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar notes.

By Paul R. Pillar

The trip by Pope Francis to the Holy Land, billed in advance as solely religious, made some eye-catching intrusions into the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Comments minimizing the significance of this aspect of the trip were quick to follow.

Palestinian figure Hanan Ashrawi seemed to go out of her way to pooh-pooh the coming prayer meeting at the Vatican in which Israeli President Shimon Peres and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas will join Francis; Ashrawi accused the pope, probably inaccurately, of not realizing that Peres in his mostly ceremonial position wields little power.

Skepticism about how much any leader of the Roman Catholic Church can accomplish follows in the tradition of Stalin questioning how many divisions the pope has. The pope still doesn't have any divisions, and neither does Peres and of course neither does Abbas.

Francis's foray into Israeli-Palestinian matters nonetheless was encouraging, for several reasons. One is that for a credible and prominent world figure to do this reduces the chance that the Israeli government can, as Jacob Heilbrunn puts it, "derogate the Palestinian issue to the back burner of international relations."

The United States will not be venturing very far into this issue anytime soon, after Secretary of State John Kerry's admirably energetic but ultimately futile efforts on the subject. More fundamentally, the United States still wears the self-imposed political shackles that prevent it from functioning effectively on this issue as anything other than Israel's lawyer.

The U.S. role still will be critical if the Palestinian issue is ever to be resolved, but perhaps it will take more initiative by someone outside the United

States to counteract the power and damaging effect of the shackles.

Another reason is that Francis has demonstrated a flair, and certainly has done so on this trip, for focusing attention sharply on an issue while still performing the balancing acts required of any statesman. The most potent image by far from the visit was the Pope's stop at a section of the Israeli-constructed separation wall, with Francis bringing his head to the wall and praying.

Here was the counterpart, in wall-for-a-wall balance, to the more familiar image of the distinguished visitor at Jerusalem's Western Wall. One wall is an ancient artifact that is one of the leading symbols of Israel's claim to all of Jerusalem; the other is an ugly modern contrivance that not only symbolizes Israel's unilateral slicing up of the West Bank but has practical consequences, negative and severe, on the Arab population that lives there.

A couple of millennia from now, who will be praying at the latter wall, and in remembrance of what? Whether it was Francis himself or someone else in his entourage who thought up this photo op, it was brilliant.

That the Pope is a man of religion may constitute another advantage, in trying to make religion less of a source of division related to this conflict than it is now. Israel's clinging to land rather than peace has several motives, including economic ones, but a religiously based notion of divine right to the land is important for a major part of the current government's right-wing constituency.

Perhaps the most prominent leader of Christianity, another of the great monotheistic religions that arose in the Middle East and for which, like Judaism, the Holy Land is the number one place of importance to the faithful, is especially well equipped to teach that no one religious claim can be the basis for determining the outcome of a dispute between two people over the same land. He is probably even better equipped to do that than someone of the Islamic faith, for whom the Noble Sanctuary of Jerusalem also is important but is more of a number three behind Mecca and Medina.

The most important reason, however, to be encouraged by Francis's involvement stems from his larger set of priorities, and assiduously cultivated image, as the pope of the poor. Championing the cause of the downtrodden is clearly where Francis intends to make his mark.

As such, his involvement in Israeli-Palestinian matters implicitly, even without the pontiff explicitly articulating this point, helps to frame the issue correctly as what it has been for a long time: a highly asymmetrical encounter

in which security and power and control are almost all on one side, and the downtrodden are on the other side.

This is not some kind of fair fight in which each side has significant material assets to bring to bear. The Israelis, as the occupiers, can end the occupation whenever they want. The Palestinians, as the occupied, have almost nothing going for them other than sympathy for the downtrodden and appeals to a sense of justice, which is why the Israeli government frantically resists any move that might give the Palestinians a wider forum for such appeals.

Along with the great asymmetry of security and military power and control there is a comparable asymmetry of wealth and well-being. The system, constructed and controlled by Israel, that determines how the occupied territories operate functions to the economic advantage of Israelis and to the marked economic disadvantage of Palestinian Arabs. This involves matters ranging from water resources to transportation arteries and the separation wall, which divides many Palestinians from their livelihoods and is just one of countless impediments to Palestinian business erected by the occupation authorities.

There also are numerous less visible impediments, involving permit denials, restrictions on trade, and financial controls. Most recently Israel is using its control over currency to undermine Palestinian banking, with, as is the case with any banking system, negative ripple effects on other commerce that depends on the banks.

It should be no surprise that in the face of all these impediments the economic gulf between Israel and the Palestinians under occupation is huge and has been getting larger. GDP per capita in Israel is nearly 20 times that of the West Bank. It is 40 times that of the Gaza Strip, where a suffocating blockade and periodic military assault have made the squalor even worse.

For the pope of the poor, the plight of the Palestinians is a natural fit for his larger mission. Perhaps Francis can get enough people in the world thinking about this issue correctly, not in terms of diplomatic dances about who is recognizing whom but instead as the plight of an oppressed and downtrodden population, that even discourse in the United States, political shackles and all, would be affected.

If so, the effect would be congruent with the other, more hard-nosed, reasons the United States should not allow this conflict to be consigned to the back burner.

Paul R. Pillar, in his 28 years at the Central Intelligence Agency, rose to be one of the agency's top analysts. He is now a visiting professor at Georgetown

University for security studies. (This article first appeared as a blog post at The National Interest's Web site. Reprinted with author's permission.)
