

## Letter to the Claremont Courier

by Robert E. Smith, Jan. 30

The basic issue is the OCCUPATION of Palestine, going on ever since 1967, that is, for over forty years! The settlers that Israel has illegally put onto Palestinian land, the thousands of Palestinians that they have arrested, the thousands that have been killed (1,300 in just this last month, of whom 420 children and 104 women, plus over 5,000 wounded) the life-giving orchards that they have uprooted, the hundreds of homes that they have demolished, the millions that they have daily subjected to crassly humiliating and harassing treatment, all the while imprisoned behind an horrendous wall-- these are facts to be faced.

But Hamas is terrorist, you say? In 2006 an election was held on the insistence of the United States, and declared open and fair by international observers. Hamas won! The U.S. at the time declared that it wished to spread freedom and democracy in the Middle East. Isn't this a case to be praised? But no, Israel and the U.S. decided to declare Hamas a terrorist organization. In December 2007 the U.S. backed an attempted coup by Fatah, sending in arms. So Hamas moved first and took over power. The details proving this are very clear and very damning. Next Israel and the U.S. tried blockading people there, saying they wanted to teach them to choose Fatah and not Hamas. The blockade prevented sufficient food, fuel, medical supplies and other necessary goods from coming in. Electricity and water treatment plants gave out for lack of fuel. Sewage systems were no longer functional. A high percentage of children became malnourished. People died for lack of proper medical treatment. People were stopped from getting out of Gaza, kept like prisoners. And this went on for 18 months before the current Gaza war. For this, and for a second reason, the people of Gaza lashed out with rockets, just as a man being choked to death will thrash about. And the damage those rockets did is ridiculously small compared to the horrendous rain of fire and steel falling upon the innocent people of Gaza: 13 deaths, of whom 10 soldiers, some killed by their own troops. Compare that to the 1300 above, 100 times as many.

And what is that second reason for rockets? Because peace negotiations have led nowhere, I repeat nowhere, for over 40 years. Abbas has had two years to be the good moderate guy who brings hope to Palestinians, but he has returned empty-handed. Israel is happy to stall and stall and stall, meanwhile sending more and more settlers in the stolen lands of Palestine, and allowing them to treat the inhabitants cruelly and violently. And why do they feel able to carry out these illegal and immoral acts? Because the United States, the world's superpower, backs them up no matter what. We give Israel \$3 billion a year, and those planes, tanks, and rockets (including white phosphorus) recently raining death and destruction on the civilians of Gaza were possible thanks to the U.S. We veto any resolution in the UN attempting to bring about accountability and change. And we turn a blind eye to the war crimes committed against the civilians of Gaza and elsewhere.

Some say that Israel did pull out of Gaza in 2005, and look what happened. Well, do look what happened. Pulling that small group of settlers out was a tactical move—so as to better hold on to the much larger and continually growing settlements on Palestinian land in the West Bank. Some say Hamas should recognize Israel. Has Israel offered to deal with Hamas? Some say arms should not flow into Gaza. Then why should arms be allowed to flow into Israel? Some

say civilians were used as human shields in Gaza. But if you pack 1.5 million people in a strip of land at times 7 miles wide, where do you expect people to go to avoid being hit by 500-pound bombs, tank and artillery shells? They were even prevented from leaving the strip! In just about every case where Israel has said they were attacked from a school, a hospital, a mosque that they bombed, they were forced to back down in the face of contrary proof. But for them, such lies were useful, since no one was paying attention to the next day's report contradicting them.

Many Israelis see the immorality of what's going on quite clearly. Listen to Jeff Halper: "I, an Israeli Jew...can no more passively witness my government's destruction of another people that I can watch the Occupation destroy the moral fabric of my own country. To do so would be to violate my commitment to human rights, the very essence of prophetic Jewish religion, culture and morals, with which Israel is no longer Jewish but an empty, if powerful, Sparta."

Sir Gerald Kaufman was brought up an orthodox Jew, a friend of Golda Meir, and a Zionist, with family in Israel that fought in the wars of 1956, 1967 and 1973. His parents came to England as refugees from Poland during the Nazi oppression. His grandmother had been shot dead in her sickbed by the Nazis. He states: "My grandmother did not die to provide cover for Israel soldiers murdering Palestinian grandmothers in Gaza. The current Israeli Government ruthlessly and cynically exploits the continuing guilt among gentiles over the slaughter of Jews in the holocaust as justification for their murder of Palestinians." When Major Leibovich justified the killing of 800 Palestinians in Gaza as "500 of them were militants", Kaufman said: "I suppose that the Jews fighting for their lives in the Warsaw ghetto could have been dismissed as militants."

There are several good plans for bringing Peace to the Holy Land, but they all contain the primary solution: **STOP THE OCCUPATION!**

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