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## Palestine, Israel and Trump

By Robert Fantina

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To say that there are many things regarding United States governance that puzzle this writer would be an understatement. The fact that a candidate can be elected president when his main opponent garnered nearly 3 million votes more than he did; when someone with absolutely no experience with the public school system can be nominated as the head of the Department of Education; when it is thought that the best person in the entire country to run the Department of Housing and Urban Development is a retired neurosurgeon, this writer feels his bemusement does not indicate low intelligence. However, while volumes could be written on each of these situations, it is an entirely different one that is taking his attention today.

It has been reported that the U.S. threatened ‘severe steps’ against Palestine, if Palestinian leaders proceed with plans to take Israel to the International Criminal Court (ICC). Now, we need to look at this situation somewhat closely.

Palestine, along with much of the civilized world, believes that Israel has committed, and continues to commit, war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. These include, but are not limited to, the following: bombing of schools, hospitals, mosques, residential neighborhoods, United Nations refugee centers and press offices; the arrest without charge of Palestinian men, women and children; extrajudicial killings of Palestinian men, women and children; the occupation of the West Bank; the blockade of the Gaza Strip. The list goes on.

Israel states that for every crime it is accused of, it does its own internal investigation. In all but a handful of cases, this investigation exonerates Israel, and any Israeli involved. Now, any reasonable person might say that, if the henhouse has been raided, it should be someone other than the fox, who countless witnesses saw plundering the henhouse, that is responsible for investigating. The fox, in all likelihood, will not find himself culpable.

Thus it is with Israel.

The U.S., under several presidents, has fostered the wasteful myth of negotiations between Israel and Palestine. There are, of course, two major problems with this plan. First, Palestine doesn't need to negotiate anything. International law is clear: Palestine's and Israel's borders are those that were established prior to the 1967 war. One may object to the initial partitioning of Palestine in 1948 (this writer certainly does), but respecting international law, one must accept the reality of Israel. However, if Israel isn't going to respect international law in the context of Palestine, why should anyone respect it in the context of Israel?

Secondly, in order for two parties to negotiate, each must have something that the other wants, that can only be obtained by surrendering something it has. Israel takes whatever it wants from Palestine with nearly complete impunity. But regardless of that, negotiations are completely unnecessary (see the first point, above).

And now, dire consequences are predicted for Palestine if it proceeds with action against Israel in the ICC. It is hoped that the weak, spineless Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, recognizes that dire consequences will result if Palestine doesn't proceed.

And now to the crux of the matter that is so puzzling to this writer. If Israel has nothing to hide, why not welcome an investigation into war crimes allegations? Why is the U.S., that wealthy puppet of Israel, so willing to condemn a poverty-stricken, occupied nation in favor of a wealthy one? If Israel adheres to international law, the Geneva Conventions regarding occupation, including care of the occupied people, residency of citizens of the occupier, etc., why not let the ICC show the world how lawful and magnanimous Israel is?

Perhaps looking at a parallel will help explain this writer's dilemma. Imagine, for a moment, that this writer accuses his next door neighbor of land theft; perhaps he is accused of building a new garage on this writer's property. Imagine that this writer says that his neighbor has thrown rocks through his windows, and sprayed sewage on this writer's house, preventing him and his wife from leaving it. Perhaps this writer accuses his neighbor of cutting the water pipes leading to his house, causing him to have to collect rain water in barrels, for drinking and bathing. And perhaps the neighbor stands accused of even destroying the rain barrels.

So, this writer files a suit against his neighbor, demanding that he cease and desist these activities. If the neighbor has done none of these things, he will be exonerated. He can produce a deed, showing that he is the legal owner of the property on which the new garage is built. He will ask this writer to call witnesses who saw him throwing rocks at his windows, or at least to produce the rocks that were allegedly thrown. He will ask a representative of the water company to come out, to show that this writer's water pipes are in fine condition, and have sustained no damage.

What will be the outcome? This writer will look foolish, and his neighbor will be exonerated.

Why, then, does Israel recoil from any independent investigation of its actions in Palestine? And why does the U.S. fear any such investigation?

The U.S. and Israel are two nations that haven't joined the ICC, mainly because they know they and their soldiers have committed war crimes, and they don't wish to be held accountable. When you are the largest and most powerful nation on the planet, you don't need to play by the rules, but you can freely force other nations to follow them. And, if you have a 'special relationship' with another nation, you can cause it to be excused from following the rules as well.

The U.S. Congress in 2015 actually included in foreign aid legislation that any funds to Palestine would be frozen, if any action against Israel was initiated. Enshrining this in national law is most bizarre, but we mustn't forget the power of the Apartheid Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). This most disreputable of lobby groups donates millions of dollars annually to Congress members who dance to its apartheid tune, and when it comes to greed, members of Congress have no peer. The same might be said about their lack of integrity.

One wonders (actually, one doesn't, but let's just continue the discussion for a minute), what the U.S. government wants from Palestine. The U.S. condemns any acts of violence by Palestinians against the 'poor, defenseless' Israelis, who have all the most advanced weaponry that the world has to offer, and now is also condemning diplomatic actions to achieve just goals. International law provides that an occupied people have the right to oppose the occupation by any means possible, but apparently that U.S. just wants Palestinians to give up their entire country, and disappear off the face of the earth.

Well, that's simply not going to happen. Regardless of what the completely ineffective Mr. Abbas decides to do, worldwide resistance to the brutal occupation of Palestine will continue, until Palestine is once again free. It won't happen overnight, but it will happen, despite all the efforts of the U.S. government to thwart it.