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Terrorism, Palestine, the U.S. and Israel

Is the World Slowly Awakening to the Realities of Israeli Apartheid?

by ROBERT FANTINA

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A jury in Manhattan, New York, has found the Palestinian Authority and other groups guilty in a ‘terrorist’ attack that left some Americans dead. So we have yet another one of the countless examples of the double-standard that exists in U.S. jurisprudence.

In 2003, U.S. citizen Rachel Corrie, 23, was in Palestine, helping the oppressed people there, teaching children and attempting to prevent house demolitions that are illegal under international law, when she was run over by a massive bulldozer operated by an Israeli soldier. The soldier ran over her once, burying her in the dirt, and then backed up, crushing her a second time. She was uncovered, still alive, although just barely, but died shortly thereafter. Her heartbroken and devastated parents contacted their elected officials, requesting a formal inquiry; this was denied. After all, if Israeli soldiers want to bulldoze a U.S. citizen, apparently that is within their rights. Israel held one of its usual inquiries into the situation, but found no reason to bring any charges against anyone.

British Citizen Tom Hurndall was unarmed and wearing a bright orange coat identifying him as International Solidarity Movement activist when an IDF (Israel Defense Force. Read: terrorist) soldier shot him in the head in 2004. Less than a year later, the terrorist, who was not named publically, but referred to only as ‘Sgt. T’, was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to eight

years in prison. While one may wonder why his conviction was only for manslaughter, at least there was an investigation, indictment, trial, conviction and sentence. Obviously, the Israeli lobby is not quite as powerful in Britain as it is in the U.S.

Let us look for a moment at the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) definition of terrorism.

“International terrorism’ means activities with the following three characteristics:

- * Involve violent acts or acts dangerous to human life that violate federal or state law;
- * Appear to be intended (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping; and
- * Occur primarily outside the territorial jurisdiction of the U.S., or transcend national boundaries in terms of the means by which they are accomplished, the persons they appear intended to intimidate or coerce, or the locale in which their perpetrators operate or seek asylum.”

Now, let us look at the U.S. role in the oppression of the Palestinians, in the context of this definition.

The U.S. provides Israel with \$3.8 billion in aid every year, including the most advanced weaponry on the planet. Israel then uses this to bomb the Gaza Strip. Additionally, Israeli terrorists arbitrarily shoot peaceful protestors. These seem to be ‘violent acts’ that are ‘dangerous to human life’. Do they violate federal or state law? Wanton murder of unarmed civilians does, indeed, violate such laws.

With U.S. financing, Israel deprives Palestinians of their ability to go to school or work, through cruel and arbitrary checkpoints. It arrests men, women and children without charge, and holds them for months without granting them access to family or legal representation. It bombs private residences, schools, hospitals, mosques and United Nations refugee centers. All this is certainly intended ‘to intimidate or coerce a civilian population’.

Additionally, with full U.S. support, Israel is now withholding \$100 million dollars per month that it collects in taxes for Palestine, as punishment for Palestine joining the International Criminal Court (ICC), and filing charges against Israel. This money is required by Palestine to pay salaries. Is this not intended ‘to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion’?

Lastly, for this point, the U.S. provided all the funding for Israel's carpet bombing of the Gaza Strip in the summer of 2014, and has done nothing to assist the people suffering there as a result. Over 2,500 Palestinians were killed, including over 500 children, some as young as newborns. Tens of thousands of people remain homeless. Prior to that, hundreds of Palestinians in the West Bank were arrested, many without charge. This certainly falls within the category of attempting ‘to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping’.

All of the unspeakable brutality referenced herein ‘occur(s) primarily outside the territorial jurisdiction of the U.S.’

So while a courtroom in New York decides that the PA is guilty of acts of terrorism, who is looking at the U.S.’s role as international terrorists? The ICC has begun its investigation into possible war crimes committed by Israel which, in the eyes of the U.S. is, like the U.S., above the law. As a result of this investigation, there is a possibility that Israel, at least in the court of international public opinion, will be held accountable for its crimes. Since it, also like the U.S., has refused to join the ICC, two examples of the few rogue nations that haven’t done so, the court cannot issue any consequences to it. But its refusal to participate will of itself be a damning indictment of Israel, and any findings will, of course, be widely distributed. All this will justifiably lead to Israel’s ever growing isolation as a global pariah, a situation even the mighty U.S. can’t resolve.

What does this verdict mean for Palestine? Probably not much. The verdict is meaningless, and the PA has no money to pay the fine anyway. It can’t even pay the salaries of its employees, thanks to Israel illegally withholding hundreds of millions of dollars belonging to Palestine. Internationally, the death of a few Americans is not seen as more tragic or meaningful than the death of thousands of Palestinians, much as the U.S. government might consider it to be so.

Judicial terrorism may have a slightly different definition than ‘terrorism’ as shown above. While not a violent act, and committed within the U.S.’s borders, its purpose is still ‘to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government’. So while not bloody like U.S. bombs, its goal is still the same.

Israel’s relations with much of the world are in disarray; more and more countries are preventing their businesses from trading with Israeli companies located on occupied territory. Universities around the world are voting to divest from Israel-owned companies. Entertainers and academics are refusing to appear in Israel. And even the U.S., the financier and puppet of Israel, has thrown an uncharacteristic hissy fit, not because of Israel’s abominable violation of human rights, but because Israeli Prime Murderer Benjamin Netanyahu accepted an invitation to speak to Congress without the approval and foreknowledge of President Barack Obama. While the reason may be trivial, the fact that the U.S. feels emboldened to criticize Israel, for the second time in less than a year (the first was a tepid criticism of Israel’s bombing of a known United Nations refugee center), does mark a significant change.

Where will it all lead? Eventually, to a free Palestine. This will not happen overnight, but all the signs are there: increasing loss of international patience with the occupation; global recognition of the futility of ‘negotiations’; resolutions throughout much of Europe, calling on governments to recognize Palestine; shock and horror at Israeli atrocities. The people are finally learning the reality of apartheid Israel, and are demanding that their governments respond. Their efforts must continue; too many lives are at stake to allow this to continue.