

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://www.commondreams.org/view/2012/11/19-1?print>

Obama Weaves Web of Deceit on Gaza War

by Ira Chernus

11/19/2012

When Barack Obama finally spoke out publicly about the Israeli assault on Gaza, at a press conference, he wove an astonishingly thick web of deception and distortion.

I'm no Obama-basher. But when I see him bashing and trashing the truth so blatantly, I have to speak out. I have to express my pain, because I know that his misleading words will increase the risks to my loved ones and fellow Jews in Israel and the much greater risks to the victims of Israeli aggression in Gaza.

Of course to hear Obama tell it, it's the Israelis who are the victims. "The precipitating event here that's causing the current crisis ... was an ever-escalating number of missiles" fired from Gaza into Israel, he said. "And there's no country on Earth that would tolerate missiles raining down on its citizens from outside its borders."

This is the same old tale Americans have been getting from their presidents, politicians, and press for decades: Those nasty Arabs, attacking Jews out of the blue for no good reason that we can see.

Not a word about Israel's economic blockade, which has inflicted so much misery on the people of Gaza for so many years. Israel has turned Gaza into what Noam Chomsky (who just returned from the Strip) calls "the world's largest open-air prison," where the only relief from suffering comes from materials brought (or smuggled) across the border from Egypt.

From the Israeli side, there is only a systematic plan “to put the Palestinians on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger,” as one cynical Israeli official put it.

And that’s literally what the Israelis have done. Israel controls all the transport bringing food into Gaza, “an average of only 67 trucks -- much less than half of the minimum requirement [for basic nutrition],” according to Jonathan Cook, a journalist based in Israel, who notes that more than 400 trucks a day were coming in before the blockade began. The result is chronic malnutrition. According to Middle East scholar Juan Cole, over half of schoolchildren and two-thirds of infants suffer from anemia.

Medicines and medical equipment are in terribly short supply too. People die for lack of treatment. They are not allowed to make the short trip to Israel, with its high-quality medical facilities. Hospitals cannot be built (or rebuilt, after the massive 2008 Israeli attack on Gaza) because building materials are systematically kept from entering Gaza, too.

So the Palestinian victims of a stream of Israeli air attacks -- targeted assassination efforts that too often strike innocent bystanders -- cannot get the treatment they need either.

In 1967 Israel justified its preemptive attack on Egypt by claiming that Egypt’s blockade of one Israeli port was an act of war. How much more, then, is Israel’s ongoing blockade of the whole Gaza Strip an act of war. If Gazans shoot rockets in return it’s a result, not a cause, of the conflict.

In fact, though, the Hamas government in Gaza has been remarkably restrained in its retaliation over the years. When Obama said “a genuine peace process starts with no more missiles being fired into Israel’s territory” he got it exactly backwards. It was Israel that destroyed the chances for peace once again with its assassination of Ahmed Al-Jabari, the leader of Hamas’ military wing, who had enforced previous cease-fires and was central in negotiations for a new one when he was killed.

Why Israel wants to kill chances for peace is a matter for debate. That Israel kills chances for peace -- by killing Palestinians -- just when it seems that a truce might be at hand, or when Hamas has already been strictly observing a truce, is a matter of historical record, which Obama completely ignored.

Instead, he put all the blame on Palestinians and made it sound beyond question that the Israelis are the victims: “We are fully supportive of Israel’s right to defend itself from missiles. ... We will continue to support Israel’s right to defend itself.

This is the old myth of Israel’s insecurity: poor little Israel, just trying to defend itself against ferocious neighbors who constantly imperil its very existence. The story has been told so often now that most Americans really can’t see the conflict any other way.

Perhaps Obama is equally blind to the true facts and speaks out of naïve ignorance. Or perhaps he knows the truth and is intentionally trying to deceive us. Either way, the result is to perpetuate the suffering -- suffering that he could stop.

It was one final mendacious note when Obama pretended, at his press conference, that he could only sit around and wait to see how things work out: "We are actively working with all the parties in the region. ... We're going to have to see what kind of progress we can make in the next 24, 36, 48 hours."

In fact "it is clear who is boss," as the highly respected Israeli foreign policy analyst Anshel Pfeffer recently wrote. Israelis know perfectly well that if Washington says "no" and really means it, the government in Jerusalem must stop. But "so far," Pfeffer notes, "there is a clear American green light for Israel's operation."

The American public lets their president give Israel that green light because the public swallows the story told by the president and the press.

Obama did say one true thing: If peace can come "without a ramping up of military activity in Gaza, that is preferable, that's not just preferable for the people of Gaza, it's also preferable for Israelis because if Israeli troops are in Gaza they're much more at risk of incurring fatalities or being wounded." Both sides suffer from this Israeli-initiated violence, though the people of Gaza suffer by far the most.

Israel's biggest newspaper reports that peace is possible. Hamas asks only for an end to Israel's illegal blockade and attacks on Gaza. But Israel is demanding that Hamas must promise to prevent all rocket fire from Gaza (even by the groups beyond Hamas' control), while Israel retains the right to continue the economic blockade indefinitely.

That's not change any reasonable person can believe in. Nor is the president's portrayal of the conflict a picture that any reasonable person should believe in.