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Israeli's Adeptness at Genocide Assault on Gaza—Rafah, a Case Study

by NORMAN POLLACK

AUGUST 05, 2014

The Jewish State uses religion as a subterfuge to hide political-military aggrandizement. Nothing quite like this psychotic exhibition of statecraft—and utter desecration of religion per se. To all critics, Israel and its propaganda organs abroad, notably, AIPAC, rush in to charge “self-hating” Jew to silence dissent among Jewish people, while non-Jews are merely and quickly labeled anti-Semites. How long can this racket continue? How long the BLASPHEMING of Judaism, yes, nothing short, because insulting G-d through acts of murder, cruelty, vengeance, and therefore the profanation of a religion devoted to His service and therefore treating what is sacred with contempt? How long ethnic cleansing, population displacement, promiscuous killing of the innocent, hauteur and sangfroid in the act of bombing hospitals, refugee-packed UN schools now shelters to escape the constant bombing and ground-forces’ actions in residential neighborhoods? Not a tear (except of the crocodile variety, rote, sanctimonious in the face of gut-wrenching human suffering), never an admission of wrong-doing, always an insinuation, the slyness of the authoritarian mind, that the other party is culpable.

Let’s define terms: (a) assault, by which I mean a direct attempt to overpower by violence of onslaught—an outrageous violation—to which I am tempted to include, because of Israelis’ observable arrogance, demand for superiority, and, through militarism and military buildup, the urge to domination as national policy and national character trait, an element or overtones of

sadomasochism having perverse sexual content, here, assault as the derivation of pleasure from the infliction of physical or mental pain, in the case of Gaza, physical, as in the widespread destruction and ever-present rubble, and mental, premeditated tactics intended to terrorize the civilian population; and (b) adeptness, by which I mean proficient, specifically, knowledge and experience in an endeavor, proficient implying competence derived from training and practice, to which adeptness adds special aptitude as well as proficiency. It is Israel's special aptitude for the disproportionate application and use of power which makes of Gaza, as though revealing the genius of the Israeli soul, its barrenness, a graveyard and free-fire zone for the murder and mutilation of children.

The facts are undeniable. BBC evening news, August 2, interview of a ten-year old Gaza girl, her house crumbling around her, next door, both grandparents and three uncles killed in the bombing and shelling, her own almost stoical expression, asking over and over, why, why, why? A child's wisdom, directness, elemental, without subterfuge, and on the Israeli side—blankness, as the slaughter goes on. Reports are not fabricated: hospitals grossly overcrowded, limited electricity and water if any, shortages of medicine and food; feelings of absolute insecurity, the constant refrain, "Where can we go, how can we be safe, how escape the bombing?" Children bloodied, on gurneys in hallways, parents moaning, holding a dead child—if one applied a moral calculus, what is worse, the infliction of the death and pain, or insensitivity to the commission of the act, whether done by oneself or by others in one's name? To call itself The Jewish State, Israel legitimates genocide in the name of G-d.

In previous articles I discussed the major atrocities of this recent invasion of Gaza, as have other writers in CounterPunch, and, the pattern established after nearly four weeks of all-out, indiscriminate assault (not really indiscriminate, because this has been premeditated targeting to inflict maximum destruction, demoralization, and suffering), I would turn most recently to PM Netanyahu's intent, carrying the nation with him, of total pulverization and humiliation of the Gazan people. I noted earlier his peculiar fusion of Eichmann and the Marquis de Sade, the impersonalization and bureaucratization of the infliction of pain, almost as though imperative to boosting the collective ego of Israel while enclosing it in walls of deniability. Can this situation last? Yes, as long as the international community remains indifferent to, or craven in the face of, Israel's engagement in genocide, and, for the US, as long as AIPAC can bully the Jewish community, Congress, the media, into, beyond acceptance, approval of Israel's actions, and the closeness of the military and intelligence communities continues with its counterparts there.

For the world and the US, this is more than simple opportunism. Israel's political-historical-ideological function is to serve as the advance agent of global counterrevolution, as witness the way Muslim-Arab nations, faced with their own fears of the specter of democratization, have sided with or remained silent about the Israeli invasion of Gaza. Whether Russia, China, and Brazil, for example, are prepared to go against the ideological tide, and whether the UN can extricate itself from America's inordinate influence, is unclear, especially given Obama's exercise of brinkmanship with respect to Russia and Ukraine (who ever thought we'd see, under the supposed banner of liberalism, the reincarnation of John Foster Dulles, only still more dangerous and unprincipled?), even this weekend, pulling the US out of negotiations for

prevention of nuclear war. The proverbial “all options on the table,” Obama’s mantra, fits well with an exacerbation of tensions by charging, without evidence, Russia’s participation in the downing of MF 19.

Let’s turn, then, to Israel’s role in Gaza these first days in August. That the casualty count has continued to climb, despite the widely recognized atrocities committed in the bombing and shelling of UN schools clearly designated as shelters for refugees forced to flee their homes, at Beit Hanoun and Jabaliya (the coordinates of which were continually transmitted to Israeli forces), and other defenseless civilian sites of extreme vulnerability, together indicating murderous intent and constituting significant war crimes, attests to the unpitying, callous attitude toward wreaking death, through sustained lethal operations, on a PEOPLE—a collective punishment—pronounced by the Israeli leadership and public and executed by the nation’s military. Yet, a bottomless well of deniability, i.e., when the cheering stops. Known facts of slaughter have made no dent in the Israeli conscience. In moral philosophy it may be debatable which is the more egregious: wanton murder, or refusal to acknowledge its commission. Israel, however, has its cake and eats it—first, ignoring the reality of its actions, then erasing them from memory (in the process of finding extenuating circumstances through blaming others).

Begin with this scene of the local conditions facing hospitals in Rafah, described by the New York Times reporters Ben Hubbard and Fares Akram in their article, “Hospitals in Gaza Overwhelmed as Attacks Continue,” (Aug. 3): “It was clear from the bodies laid out in the parking lot of the maternity hospital here that it had assumed new duties: No longer a place that welcomed new life, it was now a makeshift morgue. Other bodies lay in hallways and on the floor of the kitchen at Hilal Emirati Maternity Hospital. In the walk-in cooler, they were stacked three high, waiting for relatives to claim them for burial.” As in Gaza City, hallways and floors of hospitals teemed with wounded, children looking up with beseeching cries, shrapnel in back and neck—it is doubtful the full scope and range of human misery were put on Israeli television, for if permitted to be seen how continue the incessant airstrikes and tank firings unless military and public alike found the resulting punishment irresistible? The reporters continue: “Saturday [Aug. 2] was the second day of heavy bombardment by Israeli forces on this city on Gaza’s border with Egypt after Israel’s announcement that one of its officers had been captured by Palestinian militants here during a clash.”

Even if true, this did not warrant revenge killings of civilians, but by Sunday morning “the Israeli military announced the officer...was now considered to have been killed in battle.” Hadar Goldin was cynically used by the government as the pretext for going on a rampage of killings, with no evidence to support the accusation. He was, the offensive underway, trotted in to justify its ferocity: “Israel’s offensive had emptied neighborhoods, shattered the city’s central hospital and killed more people than its remaining health facilities could keep up with. But for the residents of this dusty city of 150,000 people... the assault had unleashed such a wave of terror and death that Lieutenant Goldin, whose fate was unknown when the assault began on Friday [Aug. 1], was scarcely considered.” Dr. Abdullah Shehadeh, director of Rafah’s largest hospital, Abu Yousef al-Najjar Hospital, stated: “It is just an excuse. There is no reason for them to force the women and children of Gaza to pay the price for something that happened on the battlefield.”

And as elsewhere, there was no let-up in Israeli pressures, as though terrorization and body counts vied in friendly competition for Israel's attention. The reporters write: "After two days of Israeli shelling and airstrikes, central Rafah appeared deserted on Saturday, with shops closed and residents hiding in their homes.... More than 120 Palestinians were killed in Rafah alone on Friday and Saturday—the deadliest two days in the city since the war began 25 days ago. Those deaths, and hundreds of injuries, overwhelmed the city's health care facilities." That Friday afternoon, "Israeli shells hit the central Najjar Hospital," Dr. Shehadeh reporting the evacuation of staff and patients, thus compounding the problems of overcrowding and insufficient facilities already faced.

I hope Israeli self-righteousness and smugness is fully aware of the societal depravity their policies and values, embodied in the destruction to others of bombs, missiles, shells, has caused to fellow human beings—depravity twofold because also the internal corruption, to their religious ethos and founding myths. The whole scene is dispiriting, more, shocking, and yet, a microcosm of what was happening throughout the Strip—in areas fortunate enough even to have medical facilities: "To continue receiving patients, his [Dr. Shehadeh's] staff members moved to the smaller Kuwaiti Specialized Hospital, although it was ill-equipped to handle the large number of people seeking care. Ambulances screamed into the hospital's parking lot, where medics unloaded cases onto stretchers sometimes bearing the blood of previous patients. Since the hospital had only 12 beds, the staff members had lined up gurneys outside to handle the overflow."

What is the point of continuing? Israel, AIPAC, congregants everywhere, the universal voice of DENIAL of what is happening, as though right out of World War 2, only oppressor and oppressed now switching roles, Israel, as I have suggested in previous articles, having introjected the psychological poisons, and some noticeable character traits (e.g., cruelty, impersonally felt and expressed), of those responsible for, and who perpetrated on them, the unspeakable crimes of the Holocaust. And the description continues: "The city's central hospital [Najjar] had also housed its only morgue, so its closure created a new problem as the casualties mounted: where to put the bodies." The reporters go on, "At the Kuwaiti Specialized Hospital, they were put on the floor of the dental ward under a poster promoting dental hygiene. In a back room lay the bodies of Sadiya Abu Taha, 60, and her grandson, Rezaq Abu Taha, 1, who had been killed in an airstrike on their home nearby."

I present these details further, knowing the rawness of the setting, yet necessary to take the measure of Israeli conduct—facts which could be duplicated daily and multiplied over every square mile of Gazan territory, so devastating the onslaught, so flagrant the (war)-criminality. And this at Day 25, people transmogrified into cattle to be prepared for slaughter: "Few people approached the main entrance to the pink-and-white maternity hospital, instead heading around back, where there was a constant flow of bodies. Nearly 60 had been left in the morgue of the central hospital when it closed, so ambulance crews who had managed to reach the site brought back as many bodies as they could carry. Other bodies came from new attacks or were recovered from damaged buildings. New arrivals were laid out in the parking lot or carried down a ramp to the kitchen, featuring a large walk-in cooler. Some were kept on the ground, and those not claimed right away were added to the pile in the cooler."

We are speaking of human beings, something Israelis, by their actions, lifestyle, and rhetoric, were not bound to respect applicable to Palestinians, this among the most sickening aspects of the intervention and treatment of them under the Occupation. In this light, Israel's emphasis on the Hamas rockets and tunnels—the same search for attenuating circumstances—appears wholly unconvincing as license or as explanation for the killing machine in progress, and unconvincing because not showing resistance would be interpreted as exoneration for one, submission for the other. Here Rafah takes its place with Gaza City, Beit Hunoun, and Jabaliya, milestones on the road to decimation and/or flight, bulldozers crushing homes now writ large in the form of modern weaponry and to the same end of destroying a people's will.

More faces, that one may know the lineaments of oppression: “Word had spread that the dead were at the maternity hospital, so people who had lost relatives came to talk to the medics or look in the cooler for their loved ones. One short, sunburned man pointed to the body of a woman wearing pink sweatpants and said she was his sister Souad al-Tarabin. The medics pulled her out, laid her on a table and wrapped her in white cloth and plastic. Some teenagers helped the man carry her body upstairs and lay it in the back of a yellow taxi. A man in the front seat cradled a small bundle containing the remains of the woman's 4-year-old son, Anas. Sitting nearby, Asma Abu Jumain waited for the body of her mother-in-law, who she said “had been killed the day before and was in the morgue at the central hospital when it was evacuated.” Ms. Abu Jumain said, “She was an old woman. She did nothing wrong.” Then we find Mohammed al-Banna who said that “an airstrike the morning before had killed nine of his in-laws, including his wife's father and four of her brothers.” Banna: “The aggression here is creating a new generation of youth who want revenge for all the crimes.” He searched unsuccessfully for his lost relatives: “I'll keep waiting for their bodies to come in so we can take them home and bury them.” He did not know how to break the news of their deaths to his wife, who told him that “she was starting to worry because her father's cellphone had been switched off all day.” To which Banna replied, “I told her maybe he has no electricity and his phone is dead.”

Rafah simultaneously witnessed another attack by Israelis on a UN school, killing 10, wounding 25; on Sunday [Aug. 3], 71 Palestinians deaths were recorded, the total now 1,822, with 9,370 wounded. At the school, 3,000 had sought shelter, and according to witnesses “those killed or hurt were waiting in line for food supplies when a missile hit.” The Times account, Steven Erlanger and Fares Akram's article, “Airstrike Near U.N. School Kills 10, Gaza Officials Say,” (Aug. 3), reveals the same Israeli message as at the earlier Beit Hanoun and Jabaliya school bombings, to wit, “The Israeli Army said that it had targeted with the missile three members of Islamic Jihad on a motorcycle near the school, not the school itself, and was investigating a possible secondary explosion when the motorcycle was hit.” Who us? A UN worker on the scene, Mohammed Muafai, said by telephone that “there were bodies on the ground, including two guards and a sanitation worker. He said seven more people from displaced families also died, including one selling flavored ice.”

Netanyahu, the night before [Aug. 2], announced on Israeli television an ostensible pullback of troops in certain areas; in an understated version of the no-compromise position, he declared, “We promised to return the quiet to Israel's citizens, and we will continue to act until that aim is

achieved. We will take as much time as necessary, and will EXERT AS MUCH FORCE AS NEEDED.” (my caps.) There will be no negotiated settlement. The damage will be done, Israel maintaining its right to flex its muscle power at will, as in the now-current phrase, “cutting the grass,” to signify periodic offensive operations in the Territories to keep Palestinians underfoot and locked into permanent subjugation. Meanwhile, children die, whether by bombs, inadequate nourishment, or loneliness, their parents taken from them in a world that doesn’t care.

My New York Times Comment to Steven Erlanger and Jodi Rudoren’s article, “Gaza Operation to Last as Long as Needed,” (Aug. 2), which began the recent round of reports on Gaza, follows—except that it will no longer be found in the Comments section, having been deleted presumably because a reader found it objectionable (I entered a complaint to the Public Editor):

“[We] will exert as much force as needed.” This, despite leaving Gaza already a wasteland of rubble, having also attacked hospitals, power plants, UN shelter/schools, mosques—scenes reminiscent of World War 2 and possibly worse. Yet world Jewry applauds the war crimes of Israel, unable to see how much Israeli war lust defames, sullies, makes a mockery of Judaism itself, which over the last 150 years has been in the vanguard of human rights.

The real “self-hating” Jew is the Israeli, who blindly and bluntly tears apart the sublime ethics of Jewish philosophy. Israel hides behind Judaism to commit war crimes. It doesn’t get uglier than that. The Gaza invasion is GENOCIDE.