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Counterpunch

Murdering Babies is "Permissible" When They're Palestinian

By ALISON WEIR

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US media have been widely and repeatedly reporting on the awful March 11 murder of three small Israeli children and their parents. While no one yet knows who committed this act, reports presume that the murderers were Palestinian, and for this reason the incident is receiving major attention. Various heads of state, including President Obama, have condemned it.

If it turns out that the murderer or murderers were Israeli, as some previously presumed “terrorists” have turned out to be, or a foreign worker who had previously threatened the family over unpaid wages, as some reports from the area suggest, it is likely that coverage of the incident will quickly vanish from U.S. headlines.

For now, however, American news reports continue to provide excruciating details about the atrocity. Given the amount of reportage, it is surprising how much significant information is omitted.

For example, none of these reports mention that the location of the murders, Itamar (near Nablus), is an illegal Jewish-only settlement on stolen Palestinian land in the midst of refugees whom Israel pushed off their ancestral land through massacres and ruthless military actions.

Nor do reports mention the frequency with which Israeli settlers beat, occasionally torture, and sometimes murder Palestinians of all ages, burn their crops, and hack down their groves of olive

trees, the livelihood of many Palestinian villagers; hundreds, at least, of these trees, have been destroyed by rampaging Israeli settlers.

Religious extremism

Even lengthy articles on the tragic incident fail to mention the extremely relevant and chillingly ironic fact that Itamar was founded and is largely populated by fanatic Jewish extremists, many of whom believe that the killing of non-Jewish infants is religiously permitted, and sometimes mandated, as discussed in a best-selling book “The King’s Torah,” which was written by authors from the area and endorsed by numerous rabbis and religious schools (but opposed by most Israelis).

In their elaborate descriptions of the murder scene, U.S. articles neglect to mention that the building next door is the house of Chabad Lubavitch emissaries, a Hassidic movement in Orthodox Judaism, and features a photo of the late Lubavitcher Rebbe Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, known for his astoundingly supremacist teachings.

Schneerson is widely revered by such settlers (and his followers in the U.S.); many believed him to have been the messiah. In their book “Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel,” professors Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky quote Schneerson’s teachings about the differences between Jews and non-Jews:

“... we do not have a case of profound change in which a person is merely on a superior level. Rather, we have a case of ‘let us differentiate’ between totally different species. This is what needs to be said about the body: the body of a Jewish person is of a totally different quality from the body of [members] of all nations of the world...A non-Jew’s entire reality is only vanity...The entire creation [of a non-Jew] exists only for the sake of the Jews...”

Which children matter?

Finally, news reports on the abhorrent Itamar murders fail to mention the frequent, tragic, and equally abhorrent killing of massive numbers of Palestinian children by Israelis.

For example, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that the Itamar incident was “the deadliest such attack against Jewish settlers in the area since 2002,” but didn’t bother to report that there have been numerous deadly attacks on Palestinians in the area in the intervening years, that dozens of Palestinian minors have been killed, many more injured and maimed, and even more Palestinian mothers, fathers, and grandparents killed.

This viewpoint is typical of U.S. media. Statistical studies show that primetime network news shows report on Israeli children’s deaths at rates up to 14 times greater than they report on Palestinian children’s deaths; regional newspapers report Israeli deaths at even more disproportionate rates.

Palestinian deaths are therefore often virtually invisible to American news consumers, even though they occurred first and are far greater in number.

In the round of violence that began in fall 2000, over 90 Palestinian children were killed before a single Israeli child; in total, approximately 1,500 Palestinian children have been killed by Israelis, and approximately 130 Israeli children have been killed by Palestinians during this period.

Since American media, in stark contrast to coverage of the Itamar victims, so rarely report on Palestinian victims and their weeping families, or provide details of their grisly deaths, at the end of this article is a partial list of these young, largely disappeared victims.

While this very incomplete list does little to balance the moving, detailed reporting on Israeli children's deaths found in U.S. news media, and completely ignores the even greater number of children grieving for parents killed by Israeli forces, publishing it here at least provides the names of Palestinian victims, a rarity in American media coverage.

A few years ago an Israeli army officer emptied, at close range, the entire magazine of his automatic rifle into a 13-year-old Palestinian girl. Afterward he said he would have done the same even if she had been three years old. Because so many of his underlings reported this particular incident, he was eventually tried in an Israeli military court – but on minor offenses, not murder. He was acquitted of all charges.

It is hard to imagine the feelings of Americans if these were our children and if we were suffering this degree of unbearable loss. The population in the Palestinian Territories is less than 1/90th the population of the U.S.; there is hardly a Palestinian family that has not experienced tragedy.

Because Israel partisans consistently screen out the mass of significant information on this issue, and other editors, perhaps through ignorance, negligence, and/or timidity, go along, Americans receive the kind of highly filtered, lying-through-omission “journalism” that is so effectively creating fear, hatred, and ignorance of Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims – and that perpetuates the uniquely massive flow of American money to Israel, currently over \$8 million per day. Israel, with a population of seven million, is reportedly about to ask for an additional \$20 billion.

Regarding the as-yet unsolved murder of three children in Itamar, President Obama pronounced: “There is no justification and there can be neither excuse nor forgiveness for the murder of children. I expect a similar condemnation, and I demand a similar condemnation, from the Palestinian Authority.”

Perhaps someday President Obama will have the integrity – and the courage – to make the same pronouncement about the murders of Palestinian children, and address it to the Israeli government.