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## The Double Standard

### Israel and Palestine

by ROBERT FANTINA

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The fact that there is a double-standard in effect for all aspects of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, favoring, of course, Israel, is no secret. The mainstream United States media, little more than a pawn for the government, ignores the countless, horrific abuses heaped upon the Palestinians on a daily basis by the U.S.'s sacred cow, Israel.

This double-standard has become so pervasive that the routine atrocities, such as the bulldozing of homes and olive groves, the shooting of unarmed farmers of all ages, etc., barely registers on the collective consciousness. 'Ho-hum,' we all seem to say; 'business as usual in the Middle East.'

It is sometimes hard to judge which atrocity Israel commits against the defenseless Palestinians, all with the consent and financial backing of the United States and some of its more compliant puppets, is the most shocking. We will leave that determination to the individual reader, as we look at one more.

This action strikes at the core of what many Palestinians hold sacred. Now it must be remembered that what is sacred to Israel is sacred to the world. Apparently, what is sacred to Muslims is worth no more than a place in a garbage dump.

A recent news article discusses an Israeli group in Jerusalem that is using state-of-the-art technology “to map every tombstone in the ancient cemetery on the Mount of Olives, a sprawling, necropolis of 150,000 graves stretching back three millennia.”

One can readily understand the value of this cemetery, not only from a religious, but also from an archeological standpoint. Its size and age alone give it value. Israel, theoretically, is understandably interested in its preservation. That fact that it is on occupied territory will not be discussed here.

However, Israel isn't so interested in religion or archeology when it comes to the Palestinians. In a double slap in the face, not only to Palestinians, but to the world community it so obviously disdains, Israel has erected a new ‘Museum of Tolerance and Human Dignity.’ Well, one wonders, what could possibly be objectionable about such a museum? This particular museum is constructed on the site of the Mamilla Cemetery, an historic Muslim cemetery. This cemetery was the final resting place of hundreds of prophets and leaders from the early Muslim period, along with thousands of Christians killed during the pre-Islamic era. It is, or was, sacred ground to Muslims and others.

In August of 2010, 300 Muslim gravestones were bulldozed, witnessed by a French reporter. A ‘stop work’ petition was issued to the courts, where it was rejected, allowing the destruction to continue the very same day.

Later, the Jerusalem city council claimed, incredibly, that fake gravestones had been erected in an attempt to prevent Israel from using the land.

What, one wonders, would have been the anguished outcry from the United States and its several puppet nations, if the Palestinians had desecrated a Jewish cemetery? What consequences would they have suffered? One can imagine U.S. Senators and members of the House of Representatives, many of whom rely on the American-Israeli Political Action Committee (AIPAC) to funnel vast sums to their reelection campaigns, justifying the bombing of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, to prevent what they would, somehow, see as a threat to Israeli security. What kind of people, they would ask, hands wringing in despair, would desecrate a cemetery?

Please note that this question went unasked in the hallowed halls of Congress when Israel bulldozed the Mamilla cemetery.

Need anyone ask what makes the difference? If there were a Palestinian-American Political Action Committee, able to purchase members of the U.S. Congress the way the AIPAC does, perhaps the playing field would be different. But no, the Palestinians need to rely on the good will and sense of fair play of the international community, and that, unfortunately, is no match for the almighty dollar.

This writer wonders how many people are even aware of the historic, sacred cemetery destroyed for Israel's ‘Museum of Tolerance and Human Dignity.’ Closely as he follows the news, he somehow missed this particular news item.

Can one even begin to enumerate the injustices, indignities and horrific crimes that the Israelis commit against the Palestinians? Can one begin to put themselves in the place of these victims? Living in a so-called modern, so-called free society, can one imagine fleeing from one's home as bulldozers begin to demolish it? Can one feel at all the horror of having seconds to gather one's children and rush outside to avoid dying in the rubble? After the bulldozers leave, imagine poking around the wreckage, salvaging what can be salvaged, and sometimes continuing to live under parts of the house, since one has nowhere else to go. Lastly, imagine having no recourse to this crime.

President Barack Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and their cohorts continue to say that negotiations are the only avenue to peace in the Middle East. Are they not aware of the harsh, deadly oppression the Palestinians suffer at the hands of the Israelis? Or is it simply that, lacking the financial resources needed to purchase U.S. government officials, the plight of the Palestinians is simply not worth attending to?

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' bold move, requesting membership status at the United Nations Security Council, has ratcheted up the pressure on the international community considerably. The U.S. scrambles to strong-arm a sufficient number of Security Council members to vote down this request, promising an embarrassing, and foreign-policy-disastrous, veto, if it is unsuccessful. But that is not important; such a veto will ensure Israeli lobbying moneys continue to be directed to the coffers which Mr. Obama wants to see filled. Justice, human rights, equality and other such terms, often bandied about by the U.S.'s political players, are not to be considered. They are only to be paraded out during campaign speeches, when there is nothing behind them but the hot air of pompous politicians. And it has been generations since the concept of statesmanship was ever mentioned.

Yet there is a glimmer of hope on this dull and dusty horizon. With the Palestinians wisely choosing to bypass the hapless, insincere and ineffectual U.S. efforts for a settlement, the international community has been forced to take a bit more notice. That it favors an end to the occupation of Palestine is clear from the recent vote to admit Palestine to UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), and the fact that, once the U.S. defeats Palestine's bid for U.N. membership at the Security Council, its acceptance by the General Assembly is assured. The U.S.'s international influence, especially in the Middle East, but throughout the rest of the world as well, will continue to dim, and Israel will become more and more isolated. Perhaps such consequences will force both nations to take a more realistic approach to their roles on the world stage, but one does not hold out much hope of that happening.