

Talk given at Raleigh (NC) Protest by Rania Masri on Saturday July 19, 2014

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You have all heard the story of the boys playing soccer on the beach - the Bakr cousins, Mohammed, 11, Ahed, 11, Zakaria, 10, and Ismail, 9. They were targeted by the Israeli military - targeted. One Israeli missile. The boys ran. Second Israeli missile. Four boys killed.

You have heard this story - because this crime occurred in front of international journalists. This crime got the international coverage.

Other crimes committed against Palestinians have not gotten the coverage.

- \* Yesterday was a bloody Friday in Gaza. 61 Palestinians were killed.
- \* In the morning, 5-month-old baby Faris Juma al-Mahmoum was killed and his mother and 18 others were injured by “[heavy and indiscriminate](#)” Israeli shelling in the border area east of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip.
- \* Salmiya Ghiyad, aged 70, and 22-year-old Amr al-Mahmoum [were also killed](#) in the indiscriminate shelling of the area.
- \* Imad and Qassim Alwan, both children, were killed as a result of artillery shelling in eastern Gaza City
- \* Rizk Ahmad al-Hayk, aged 2, was killed in air strikes in Shawwa Square in Gaza City, while Sarah Muhammad Bustan, 13, was killed in the al-Tuffah neighborhood in Gaza City,
- \* In the afternoon, 3 siblings were killed. Their names: Ahmad Ismail Abu Musallam, aged 14, Walaa Ismail Abu Musallam, aged 13, and Muhammad Ismail Abu Musallam, aged 15. They were feeding pigeons on the roof.
- \* In the evening, 8 members of the Abu Jrad family, including 4 children, were killed when a missile struck their home in Beit Hanoun. Their names: Haniyah Abd al-Rahman Abu Jrad, Samih Naim Abu Jrad, Ahlam Musa Abu Jrad, and Musa Abd al-Rahman Abu Jrad, - a 6 month-old.

And that was just one day.

In that same day, Israeli terrorist forces continued their “relentless shelling” of the Al-Wafa Hospital. Hospital.

And the massive destruction continues: 1,780 housing units have been destroyed or severely damaged in Israeli bombing, [according to](#) OCHA. Stop and think about it. 1780 homes. Destroyed. A majority-refugee population forced out of their homes — again.

And still we are told that Israel needs to defend itself.

Those who claim outrage over Mohammad Abu Khdeir's murder — a 16 year-old, kidnapped and burned to death, need to be outraged over the air strikes killing hundreds and injuring thousands in Gaza. They are both crimes. Committed by the same population. Supported and

funded by the same government. Doctors without Borders has said that their job is like “patching up torture victims in an open-air prison.”

To understand the horrors imposed on Palestinians, we need to understand the siege. Earlier today, the Ministry of Health in Gaza wrote: “160 medicines/disposables are at zero stock in Gaza hospitals now, including some very basic and vital needs such as IV fluids!”

Even before this latest onslaught, UNRWA stated that 800,000 Palestinians are in need of food aid.

Now, UNICEF states that one million Palestinians are without a water supply.

This siege on Gaza is a genocide, just like the sanctions on Iraq were a genocide

Let us remember: The 1948 Genocide Convention clearly states that one instance of genocide is “the deliberate infliction of conditions of life calculated to bring about the physical destruction of a people in whole or in part.” The decline and disablement of Gaza’s economy and society have been deliberate, the result of state policy — consciously planned, implemented and enforced.

The siege has been imposed on Gaza since 2005, intensified in 2006. Why?

- \* To create a maximum-security prison camp. concentration camp.
- \* To kill Palestinians daily — a few at a time — rather than commit large-scale ethnic cleansing. Incremental genocide preferable.
- \* To corral the Palestinians — 80% of them refugees — into an open-air prison.
- \* Why? Because Palestinians are a ‘demographic threat.’ 80% of the Palestinians in Gaza are refugees. Refugees. A demographic threat. Think about that. The racism inherent in such a statement.

And still the media - the US government - and others blame the victims for their own killing. Still they all speak of Israel’s right to defend itself.

The Israeli military crimes against Gaza are not new. Israel ferociously attacked Gaza in three horrific assaults: 2006, 2009 and 2012 and now again in 2014. An 8-yr in Gaza has experienced 4 wars!

And still the media speaks of Israel’s right to defend themselves. What about Palestinians? Are we only allowed to die, and to die quietly?

We are told that Israel has the right to defend itself, Israel has the right to live without fear

Palestinians — the killed — are responsible for their own killing - according to the US media and the US government. If Obama is so concerned about civilians — why not build an Iron Dome over Gaza? Rather the US Senate approved giving Israel \$621 mil, on top of 3 bil it receives/yr in order to bomb more hospitals & kids playing on roofs & beaches.

What about Palestinians? Don’t Palestinians have the right to defend themselves? Don’t Palestinians have the right to live without fear? To live with dignity? To live with freedom and human rights?

YES.

An occupied population has the right to defend itself.

UN general assembly, Nov 29, 1974: 3. "Reaffirms the legitimacy of the peoples' struggle for liberation from colonial and foreign domination and alien subjugation by all available means, including armed struggle."

I need to repeat this. Palestinians have been dehumanized so long by the press and the government, so they find it easy to blame the victim for his own death. Palestinians have the right to defend themselves. There is no parity, no equivalence between the occupier and the occupied.

Does Israel have the right to claim self-defense? No. An occupier - Israel - does not have the right to self defense. As Noura Erakat explains, "A state cannot simultaneously exercise control over territory it occupies and militarily attack that territory on the claim that it is "foreign" and poses an exogenous national security threat. In doing precisely that, Israel is asserting rights that may be consistent with colonial domination but simply do not exist under international law." (<http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/8799/no-israel-does-not-have-the-right-to-self-defense->)

I need to repeat this: The Palestinians have the right to defend themselves. Palestinians have the right to resist. Israel does not have the legal right to claim "self-defense" over occupied lands.

As Seamus Milne writes in The Guardian recently: "The Palestinians of Gaza are an occupied people, like those in the West Bank, who have the right to resist, by force if they choose But Israel does not have a right of self-defence over territories it illegally occupies – it has an obligation to withdraw. That occupation, underpinned by the US and its allies, is now entering its 48th year. Most of the 1.8 million Palestinians enduring continuous bombardment in Gaza are themselves refugees or their descendants, who were driven out or fled from cities such as Jaffa 66 years ago when Israel was established."

Israel claims that it is responding to Hamas rockets. First, that is not true. Second, we need to recognize: the occupation is the Provocation. The Siege is the Provocation. The Denial of Human Rights is the Provocation.

As Osama Mohammad wrote, "**It is not the war on Gaza that is intolerable: Gaza confirms the intolerability of the present condition of the world**" (@OsamaSh87) It is an ugly world... Yes. An ugly world in which the victim is the culprit, and the perpetrators are rewarded and supported. It is also a world — where hope lives and resists.

We need to remember three things.

- Support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions. Organize locally and nationally. Pay attention to the stores that sell Israeli products — including Whole Foods, Trader Joe, and Harris Teeter. Organize.
- Hold Israel accountable. Support Palestinian struggle for equity, freedom. End the occupation. Support the right of return. End apartheid.
- And all the while remember. While we may feel broken, broken by the constant mourning over our dead — our killed children, women, and men — when we may feel overwhelmed by

despair, we do not have the privilege to despair. We do not have the privilege to despair, to be pessimistic. So long as Palestinians are resisting, living, loving in Gaza, West Bank, Jerusalem, in Haifa, Jaffa, throughout Palestine; So long as Palestinians are resisting, living, loving throughout the refugee camps, -- and living and loving IS resistance -- So long as resistance lives - and it lives - we will continue the struggle for liberation, for freedom, for equity. We will be the Resistance.

- They want to teach us hate. We shall teach them life. We shall teach them resistance. We shall teach hope, love, and resistance.