Here is the link to all OMNI topical newsletters:

http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/  For a knowledge-based peace, justice, and ecology movement and an informed citizenry as the foundation for change.  Here is the link to the Index:

http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/

Contents #4 and #5 at end

Contents #6
Shehadeh: The Occupation
Kestler-D'Amours: Israel’s Apartheid Wall Extending
Social Forum in Brazil on the Occupation
Veterans for Peace
APN Call to Jews to Defend Civility and Justice
Rachel Corrie Verdict
Parallel Cases
Bachevich, Israel/US
Safieh: Israel’s Mistreatment of Its Palestinians
Loewenstein & Moor: One State Solution

Contents #7
Sign J-Street Petition Against Closing Palestinian Mission
Live from Palestine
Breaking the Silence: Israeli Soldiers’ Confessions
U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation
Free Palestine Movement

Contents #8 March 29, 2013
2012 Russell Tribunal on Palestine
UN Welcomes Palestinian State: 3 Views
Film: 5 Broken Cameras, Resistance
Carey, Four Films: Cameras, The Gatekeepers, The Law in These Parts, Towards a Common Archive
Hajjar, Israeli Court System Palestinians, Courting Conflict
Kaufman-Lacusta: P&I Nonviolent Resistance
Jamiel Rev. of Lerner, Embracing Israel/Palestine (see Newsletter #2, 2-16-12)
What is the RToP?

The Russell Tribunal on Palestine is an International People's Tribunal created by a large group of citizens involved in the promotion of peace and justice in the Middle East.

Latest News

Aki Kaurismaki becomes a patron of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine.

Press Corner

The RToP media center
Barcelona Session
The first international session of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine (RToP) took place in Barcelona. This session’s objective was to consider the **compliances and omissions of the European Union and its member states** in the ongoing occupation of Palestinian territories by Israel and the perpetuation of the violations of international law committed by Israel, in total impunity.

London Session
The second international session of the RToP took place in London, on 20, 21 and 22 November 2010. It examined **International corporate complicity in Israel’s Violations of International Human Rights Law, International Humanitarian Law, and War Crimes.**

Cape Town session
The third international session of the RToP took place in Cape Town, on 5, 6 and 7 November 2011. It asked the question: “**Are Israel practices against the Palestinian People in breach of the prohibition on apartheid under International Law?**”

New York Session
The fourth session of the Russell Tribunal continued its historic mission of articulating civic protest and giving voice to insufferable conditions at a moment when world society is facing its most incredible challenges. The session took place in New York and focused on **UN and U.S. complicity in Israel’s violations of international law.**

Brussels Session
The final session of the RToP will take place in Brussels on 16-17 March 2013. Jury will comment on the final findings of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine.
Russell Tribunal

russelltribunal Honoured to hear that Christiane Hessel and Edgar Morin will be joining us on 17th March in Brussels to pay... fb.me/1AOJWagIH1

russelltribunal Journalists who want to attend the closing session of the #RToP (Brussels, 16-17 March) can register at press@russelltribunalonpalestine.com

russelltribunal Download the press pack for the russelltribunal closing session, Brussels 16-17 March is.gd/anHeEb

russelltribunal Many thanks to @Richard Falk for his great message of support. The contributions of the Russell Tribunal in... fb.me/1zxs5xEeVA

Join the conversation

Quick Links

- About us
- Support us
- Barcelona Findings
- London Session
- Cape Town Session
Russell Tribunal on Palestine

...is an International People’s Tribunal created by a large group of citizens involved in the promotion of peace and justice in the Middle East — Read more...

Copyright © Rus
Faced with a landslide vote for Palestinian statehood on Nov. 29, Israel settled itself firmly into the sour grape-pressing business by declaring that the resolution they had fought so tenaciously against and wagged the American dog so hard to oppose, was meaningless and symbolic.

Indeed—just like the resolution adopted in the General Assembly 65 years earlier to the day, which partitioned mandatory Palestine and legitimized the establishment of a Jewish state there! The new sour grapes statements were somehow supposed to wipe out the memory of bluster and threats from Israeli ministers, the haranguing of
foreign diplomats and the U.S. attempts to bully the Palestinians into accepting a "compromise" that would negate the whole point of gaining accepted statehood.

Doublethink is, of course, a pervasive characteristic of Israeli hasbara, or propaganda, but the U.S. was equally inconsistent over the vote in ways that must have had State Department lawyers groaning in frustration. The positions expressed by Washington on the issue offer an arsenal of rhetorical weaponry to Russia and China on many other key votes. One can almost hear the Russian and Serbian foreign ministries taking statements from Western officials opposing Palestinian statehood as texts to use next time the Kosovo recognition issue comes up in the United Nations.

Adding to the irony is the former trust territories lining up to deny the sovereignty and statehood of Palestine—the Marshall Islands, Micronesia and Palau (see John Whitbeck's analysis on the facing page)—who formed half the votes the U.S. could muster.

When their membership in the U.N. was proposed, the British representative, just for the record, mused aloud about the changing definition of sovereignty that allowed "nations" whose entire foreign policy and defense legally depended on the U.S. to join the United Nations.

Years later, that adds poignancy to the United Kingdom's anomalous position, as expressed by Foreign Secretary William Hague, that London would support the Palestinian vote—if the Palestinians promised not to use its confirmed attributes of statehood to join the International Court of Justice (ICJ) or the International Criminal Court (ICC). The interesting implication is that there is indeed prima facie evidence of Israeli war crimes, otherwise what do they have to fear? It's akin to issuing a driver's license to someone with the proviso that they not sit behind a wheel!

So what are the implications? In fact, many countries around the world have hosted embassies of the state of Palestine for decades and thus recognized its statehood. But the U.N. vote now gives clear legal title to the state of Palestine—which is not, one should note (as befits the region that gave the world the subtleties of the Athanasian creed) the same thing as the Palestinian Authority.

For more than 15 years the Palestinian delegation to the U.N. has been involved in a campaign of attrition to enhance its status while at the same time reaffirming and clarifying the Palestinian legal position on the right to return and title to the occupied territories. The vote in the General Assembly is the culmination of this incremental legal campaign. By accepting Palestine as an observer state, the Assembly has accorded it the same status currently held by the Vatican—and, until recently, also held by Switzerland, whose government had never secured enough votes in domestic referenda to join as a full member.
Those are powerful precedents for Palestine having the full attributes of statehood. Switzerland is unchallenged on its credentials as a state, having had sovereign existence for longer than most U.N. member states! The Vatican's status has been challenged, but certainly not by Washington, which under other administrations has worked closely with the Holy See’s postage stamp state to thwart conventions on birth control and abortion. So, even if dubious in a strictly legal way, in terms of U.S. politics it is an unassailable precedent. To challenge Palestine's prerogatives would throw doubt on the Vatican's, and all the many conventions it has signed.

Of course, it would have been better if the U.S. had not threatened to veto Palestine’s full membership in the U.N., but being an Observer State is entirely adequate. There is little doubt that bodies like the ICJ and ICC, which have rather more respect for the General Assembly and its decisions than Washington has had, will accept Palestine as a legitimate signatory to international treaties.

While neither the U.S. nor Israel accepts the jurisdiction of the ICC, Palestine's signature to the Convention setting up the Court means that crimes committed on its territory, that is the occupied territories, come under its mandate. Israeli officials involved in settlement building, for example, or land confiscation, let alone human rights violations, could face arrest in the many states, including most of Europe, that are signatory states.

Israeli officials and officers already have to check with their lawyers as well as their travel agents when going abroad, but this vote will almost certainly exacerbate their isolation. So the state that kidnapped Adolf Eichmann and brought him to trial, and supported the International Tribunals in Yugoslavia and Rwanda, would then have to explain to a guffawing world why it was only kidding about combating impunity for war crimes.

The real issue, however, is less the prospect of prosecution than negotiations, which in Israeli and U.S. orthography is spelled "capitulation." Israeli apologists complain that the statehood issue could "tie the hands" of Palestinian negotiators—by which they mean that the U.N. has given the Palestinians clear and unequivocal title to what Israel prefers to call "disputed" territories. Palestine's accession to, for example, the International Court of Justice, adds extra force to that body's 2004 opinion on the Separation Wall with its definitive description of the territories, not to mention the Geneva Conventions.

So the resolution does not "tie the hands" of the negotiators, it frees them from the task of proving title to what they are negotiating about. It doesn't even prevent the Palestinians from negotiating land exchanges and border changes, but they will do so with Israel on even shakier ground than hitherto, since the preposterous Israeli claims would not just be against a defenseless Bantustan, but against the world community as expressed in the U.N.
Ever since the Clinton presidency, the shared aim of U.S. and Israeli diplomacy has been to by-pass and ignore the international legal positions expressed by the United Nations and other international bodies, and rely on "free negotiations" between a disarmed and occupied authority whose members can be and are locked up and bombed on a whim, and the regional superpower that is doing the occupying.

The U.S. position has been to bully the Palestinian Authority into giving away one of its few effective weapons, which is its legal position as expressed in innumerable U.N. resolutions. That is why the U.S. invented cumbersome mechanisms like the Quartet to implicate others in the sell-out. However, it has been unsuccessful. With the exception of Israel, the rest of the world is unequivocal on the status of the territories, and even the U.S. officially pays lip service to the 1967 boundaries as the basis.

Now Israel's own lawyers are faced with the dilemma of denying the authority of a body whose Resolution 181 of all those years ago is Israel's own legal foundation. They will do just that, of course, but the more legalistic will wriggle in doing so.

---

*Ian Williams is a free-lance journalist based at the United Nations who blogs at* [www.deadlinepundit.blogspot.com](http://www.deadlinepundit.blogspot.com).

**The World Has Spoken**

*By John V. Whitbeck*

The U.N. General Assembly has now voted, by 138 votes to 9, with 41 abstentions and 5 no-shows, to recognize the existence as a state "of the State of Palestine on the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967."

The "no" votes were cast by Israel, the United States, Canada, the Czech Republic, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau and Panama.

The Marshall Islands, Micronesia and Palau, all former components of the U.S. Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, are "freely associated states" of the United States, with U.S. zip/postal codes and "Compacts of Free Association" which require them to be guided by the United States in their foreign relations. They more closely resemble territories of the United States than genuine sovereign states—rather like the Cook Islands and Niue, "freely associated states" of New Zealand which make no claim to sovereign statehood and are not U.N. member states. They sneaked into the U.N. in the flood of new members consequent upon the dissolutions of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, when the previous standards for admission were effectively ignored.
Nauru, a tiny island of 10,000 people in the central Pacific, has, since the exhaustion of the phosphate deposits which briefly made it the country with the world's highest per capita income, had virtually no sources of income other than marketing its U.N. votes (reliably joining the United States in voting against Palestine) and diplomatic recognitions (joining Russia, Nicaragua and Venezuela in recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia) and housing in tents aspiring illegal immigrants who had been hoping to reach Australia. It is a sad place, an island with no beaches, the world's highest obesity rate and no real alternative to diplomatic prostitution.

Accordingly, only three "real" states joined Israel and the United States in voting against Palestine and the two-state solution: Canada, the Czech Republic and Panama. They must make their own excuses.

In population terms, the opponents of Palestine represent approximately 5 percent of the world's population—370 million out of more than 7 billion—and, of those, the United States accounts for 314 million. It follows that countries with less than 1 percent of the world's population supported the United States in this vote.

The 41 states abstaining in the vote were Albania, Andorra, Australia, Bahamas, Barbados, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Colombia, Congo (DRC), Croatia, Estonia, Fiji, Germany, Guatemala, Haiti, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Malawi, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Netherlands, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Poland, Romania, Rwanda, Samoa, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Togo, Tonga, the United Kingdom and Vanuatu.

It is worth noting (and a bit puzzling) that 15 of these states (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Congo (DRC), Hungary, Malawi, Mongolia, Montenegro, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Poland, Romania, Rwanda, Togo and Vanuatu) have extended diplomatic recognition to the State of Palestine, although most of the formerly communist states of eastern Europe did so when they had communist governments.

They have been more than balanced out by the 28 states which have not yet recognized the State of Palestine but which voted in favor of Palestine: Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Eritrea, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Mexico, Myanmar, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, Solomon Islands, South Sudan, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Trinidad & Tobago and Tuvalu. The Japanese and Mexican votes in favor of Palestine mean that 18 of the 20 most populous states (all except the United States and Germany) voted in favor of Palestine.

Five states did not vote: Equatorial Guinea, Kiribati, Liberia, Madagascar and Ukraine. Kiribati is no surprise. For economic reasons, it is the only U.N. member state which does not maintain a permanent mission in New York. Why the other four, all of which have extended diplomatic recognition to the State of Palestine, failed to push any
of the three buttons is a mystery.

The European Union vote was 14 "yes," 1 "no" and 12 abstentions. Aside from Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, all of the old "Western" members voted for Palestine. All 10 of the new "Eastern" members (the three Baltic states, formerly part of the Soviet Union, the six former members of the Warsaw Pact and Slovenia) abstained or, in one case, voted against Palestine. These "Eastern" states have passed from domination by one empire to domination by another empire without ever daring to fully assert their independence. That said, all except the Czech Republic did at least dare to abstain.

It may take some time for the results of this vote to be fully digested. In the best of all possible worlds, one might hope that the United States would finally recognize that, on the issue of Palestine, it is totally divorced and isolated from the moral and ethical conscience of mankind and must now stop blocking progress toward peace with some measure of justice, step aside and permit other states with a genuine interest in actually achieving peace with some measure of justice to take the lead in helping Israelis and Palestinians to achieve it.

Since we do not live in the best of all possible worlds, and since Americans persist in believing that they are the "indispensable" nation, other states will need to make clear to the United States that its vote on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People has definitively disqualified it not only from its prior monopoly control over the "Middle East peace process" but even from any further role in it, and that its further involvement in the pre-eminent moral issue facing the international community is no longer needed or wanted.

John V. Whitbeck is an international lawyer who has advised the Palestinian negotiating team in negotiations with Israel.

SIDEBAR
Statement by Dr. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey Nov. 29, 2012 at the U.N. General Assembly Regarding Palestinian Statehood

His Excellency Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine,

President of the United Nations General Assembly,
Mr. Secretary-General,

Excellencies, Heads of Delegations,

In Turkish we have a saying:

One who closes his eyes only makes himself a night.

For 60 years the whole world has shut their eyes to the plight of the Palestinian people.

For many decades, we closed our eyes to the right of Palestinian people to their state.

And for 60 years, no resolution that this august body accepted for a Palestinian state has been honored.

However, no one can wash away the sorrow of the Palestinian people by just closing his eyes.

The reality about Palestine is simple, yet a harsh one.

It is on the streets of Gaza, where thousands of people live through an inhumane blockade in an open prison.

It is in the streets of the West Bank, where people have to go through checkpoints nearly on every corner.

It is in the heart of the Palestinian people, who have been subjected to exiles, massacres, wars, collective punishment and blockade for many decades.

And the reality of Palestine is a bleeding wound in the conscience of all humanity.

I have personally witnessed that reality when I visited Gaza with a group of Arab ministers at the height of the recent crisis.

In Shifa hospital of Gaza, I came across a father, Basil Asheva, who lost his daughter Yusha a moment ago during the bombardment, which also left his wife heavily wounded.

Leaning his head on my chest to seek some relief, he had no words but only tears to tell his family's tragedy.

His tears reflected not only his personal sorrow, but also the tragedy of a whole Palestinian nation, in desperate search for relief.

Today is a milestone.
Finally, today we have a chance to open our eyes to the reality.

Today, we have an opportunity to give comfort to the Palestinian people, who aspire for having a chance to uphold their dignity after years of humiliation.

Therefore, I am pleased to participate in this historical meeting at the General Assembly.

We have gathered here for correcting an historical injustice against the Palestinian people.

We all believe and cherish the vision of a just, peaceful and harmonious future.

For that future we should all together have to stand behind the Palestinian bid to become a "non-member observer state."

This is a moment of truth for all of us.

We are all aware that the right of the Palestinians to a State has been unfortunately denied for decades.

The denial of this right to the Palestinians has no justification on any grounds, be it moral, political or legal.

Last year, the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas made the application for Palestine for U.N. membership.

Unfortunately the application has been left unanswered at the Security Council.

Here comes the second chance.

We call on the international community, the members of this august body, to honor their already belated obligation to the Palestinians and grant them the status of a "non-member state."

It is high time for all of us to uphold the universal values of justice and dignity.

Excellencies,

If there is one term which characterizes our region, that is dignity.

One could do without bread, but not without dignity.

The struggle of the Palestinian people in the past 65 years has also been about protecting their dignity.

They want respect and recognition of their right to determine their fate and future.
We cannot shy away from supporting a fully legitimate demand by the Palestinian people to have a state of their own.

If we are to talk about an international order and place our trust on the U.N. system, then the Palestinian flag should rise by this building.

That flag will not only represent an independent member state among our family of nations.

It will represent that we finally stood together to correct decades-long injustice to the Palestinian people and the state of Palestine.

This is our responsibility to the Palestinian people.

Let me be clear.

Our vision for justice, international order and human rights will not be achieved until the moment we actually see the flag of the State of Palestine standing side by side with ours, as a full member of the United Nations.

We have three main reasons to do so:

First and foremost, it is a humanitarian and moral obligation on our part.

No one can deny the suffering of the Palestinians since the First World War until today.

There was always an excuse for the inhuman treatment of the Palestinian people.

Today, we are talking about a whole history of this national tragedy continuing for more than 65 years.

Secondly, it is about the political and historical context. Unfortunately, the negotiation process toward a comprehensive peace on the basis of two states, living side by side in peace, has been put on ice.

Instead, we see a deviation day by day from the internationally accepted solution that prescribes an independent Palestine established with East Jerusalem as its capital on its 1967 borders.

The current status quo is neither sustainable nor is it acceptable.

The recent Israeli attack on Gaza, which resulted in the loss of many innocent civilian lives, was a testimony to this fact.
Meanwhile the continued expansion of the illegal settlements undermines the vision of a two-state solution.

The third aspect is about our strategic vision.

Peace in the Middle East and beyond cannot be achieved without a just and comprehensive resolution to the Palestinian issue.

The deadlock in the negotiations and current stalemate in the region serves no one’s interests.

Supporting the Palestinian bid is about whether we want a lasting peace in the Middle East and beyond.

Granting Palestine the status of non-member state at the U.N. can serve as a "booster."

It will create the long-needed momentum for a negotiated, comprehensive solution, rather than becoming a substitute for it.

Our call is for peace, no more and no less.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We need to address this issue in a constructive and unbiased manner.

It requires wisdom, prudence and vision that no more deny the prospect of peace and stability in the region.

It obliges us to listen to the call for relief and justice by the Palestinian people, which we have turned deaf so far.

Here, I would also like to address certain misguided efforts to stop the Palestinians from winning statehood at the U.N.

The argument that the Palestinians must resume negotiations before getting statehood is superficial.

We regret to see that there have been efforts to deter the Palestinians in their bid at the U.N. and efforts to dissuade the U.N. members.

In this episode, we often heard "now is not the right time," as was the case when President Abbas submitted the Palestinian bid for membership to the secretary-general.

For some, the timing was also" "not right" when the late President Arafat read out the Palestinian Declaration of Independence on 15 November 1988.
One can trace this argument back to when the U.N. General Assembly decided (Res.181) on the partition on this very day in 1947.

So let me ask it bluntly: If not now, when will be the right time for the Palestinians to achieve their right to statehood?

The current stalemate in the peace process can no more be used as a pretext to undermine the Palestinian bid for becoming an internationally recognized state.

Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives,

The recognition of Palestinian statehood is not an option but a moral, political, strategic and legal obligation for the international community.

And I want to speak to all Palestinians from Al Khalil to Bethlehem, from Ramallah to Khan Younis, from Jerusalem, Al Quds Sharif to Gaza: We, as Turkey, will stand by you forever.

I call on all U.N. members to fulfill their long overdue responsibility toward the Palestinians.

I call on you to fulfill a long overdue promise, made with the General Assembly Resolution 181 of 1947.

The draft you will be voting on shortly will just be the initial step in the right direction to bring some relief to the entire Palestinian nation.

Now is the moment of truth.

It is the time to defend the basic rights of the Palestinians for statehood.

The flag of Palestine, Ladies and Gentlemen, should rise in this Assembly next to ours.

And the State of Palestine must be taken out of the shade and given its rightful place under the sun.

Thank you

**FIVE BROKEN CAMERAS**

A documentary on a Palestinian farmer's chronicle of his nonviolent resistance to
the actions of the Israeli army.

Directors:
Emad Burnat, Guy Davidi

Stars:
Emad Burnat, Soraya Burnat, Mohammed Burnat | See full cast and crew

Roane Carey, “Documenting Israel-Palestine in Film: The Gatekeepers and 5 Broken Cameras [and The Law in These Parts and Towards a Common Archive].” The Nation (March 11-18, 2013). “If The Gatekeepers gives the perspective of the occupation’s enforcers and 5 Broken Cameras that of Palestinian civil society’s resistance, Ra’anan Alexandrowicz’s The Law in These Parts (2011) exposes the legal machinery of occupation.”

Israel/Palestine From JustForeignPolicy Feb. 27, 2013.
7) Writing in The Nation, Roane Carey reviews several recent films on the Israel-Palestinian conflict, including the two that were nominated for Academy Awards. Dror Moreh, director of The Gatekeepers, which interviews former heads of the Shin Bet, says he was inspired by The Fog of War, Errol Morris’s 2003 portrait of Robert McNamara. A key theme of The Gatekeepers is the irresponsibility of Israel's politicians, who have failed to seek a political agreement to end to the occupation.
Courting Conflict: The Israeli Military Court System in the West Bank and Gaza by Lisa Hajjar January 2005

Israel's military court system, a centerpiece of Israel's apparatus of control in the West Bank and Gaza since 1967, has prosecuted hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. This authoritative book provides a rare look at an institution that lies both figuratively and literally at the center of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Lisa Hajjar has conducted in-depth interviews with dozens of Israelis and Palestinians—including judges, prosecutors, defense lawyers, defendants, and translators—about their experiences and practices to explain how this system functions, and how its functioning has affected the conflict. Her lucid, richly detailed, and theoretically sophisticated study highlights the array of problems and debates that characterize Israel's military courts as it asks how the law is deployed to protect and further the interests of the Israeli state and how it has been used to articulate and defend the rights of Palestinians living under occupation.

ANNOTATE THE FOLLOWING

"Who Is the Client State?"
By Stanley Kutler, History News Network, posted September 24
The author is an emeritus professor of history at the University of Wisconsin

"How We Became Israel"
By Andrew J. Bacevich, The American Conservative, posted September 10
The author teaches history and international relations at Boston University

"US Love Affair with Israel Masks a Real History of Mistrust"
By Jonathan Cook, The National, posted September 10

Information about Refusing to be Enemies

Refusing to be Enemies: Palestinian and Israeli Nonviolent Resistance to the Israeli Occupation is an interview-based study that presents the voices of over 100 practitioners and theorists of nonviolence, the vast majority either Palestinian or Israeli, as they reflect on their own involvement in nonviolent resistance and speak about the nonviolent strategies and tactics employed by Palestinian and Israeli organizations, both separately and in joint initiatives. In their own words, these activists share examples of effective nonviolent campaigns and discuss obstacles encountered in their pursuit of a just peace, as well as the changes required for their organizations—and the nonviolent movement as a whole—to more successfully pursue this goal. Attention is also devoted to the special challenges of joint struggle and to hopes and visions for a shared future in the region.

Author and contributors are:
Maxine Kaufman-Lacusta (author), a Quaker Jew, lived in Jerusalem for seven years and has written widely on Palestinian and Israeli nonviolent activism and related topics.
Ursula Franklin (Foreword) is a Canadian Quaker thinker and writer, pacifist, feminist, social activist, and research scientist—a long-time member of the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace
(VOW)—best known for her extensive writings on the political and social effects of technology. **Ghassan Andoni** (editorial partner and essay contributor) is a cofounder of the Palestinian Center for Rapprochement and the International Solidarity Movement (ISM). **Jeff Halper** (editorial partner and essay contributor) is an anthropologist, author, lecturer, political activist, and co-founder and Coordinator of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD).

**Starhawk** (essay contributor) is a Jewish-American peace, justice, and environmental activist and author, with broad experience in nonviolent activism, including in Palestine. **Jonathan Kuttab** (essay contributor) is a pacifist Palestinian lawyer, writer, human rights advocate, and co-author of The West Bank and the Rule of Law.

For more information and several reviews, please go to the publisher’s website and check out the Reviews page of this blog.

---

**Truthout**

Friday, 29 March 2013 / TRUTH-OUT.ORG

From Torah to Tikkun: Rabbi Michael Lerner's Recipe for Peace in the Middle East

Saturday, 23 March 2013 00:00 By Douglas Jamiel, Truthout | Book Review
A review of "Embracing Israel/Palestine: A Strategy to Heal and Transform the Middle East" finds author Rabbi Michael Lerner's plea for kindness and empathy timeless and necessary, but his moral algebra suspect and his prescriptions for peace in the Middle East inadequate.

From the first pages of Rabbi Michael Lerner's Embracing Israel/Palestine, it's clear: Rabbi Lerner is a mensch. Unfortunately, his prescription for Middle East peace presupposes an unlikely transformation of much of humanity to that rare status he himself enjoys. His understanding of the Torah as a spiritual benchmark embodies, as he claims, "... a higher level of love and caring for one another than currently exists..." and is a worthy model, but to imagine that mass epiphany or a renaissance of lapsed Judaic principles would be enough to reverse the destructive forces behind the debacle in the Middle East is utopian. What is lacking is just secular law and government.

A state is a secular construct. It is antithetical to religious precepts, which are by nature universal. A state is a vehicle for the distribution of temporal power, and how effective it is in parceling that power equitably is a measure of whether it is truly democratic. The genius of the American Constitution lies in recognizing that religious and state power should be separate. European history shows the disastrous results when they are entwined. Yet, the American government routinely violates this precept, with much fanfare, by subsidizing that very fusion in the Jewish State. This has proven incendiary and dangerous in a Middle Eastern neighborhood where Judaism is not the dominant religion.

Rabbi Lerner himself broaches the question: Is the Jewish State one governed by the principles of Judaism as exemplified by the Torah, or is it simply a state with a majority of Jews? If it is the latter, then Israel - the Jewish State - has, by Rabbi Lerner's own estimation,
moral failures. If Israel's domination and incarceration of Palestinians on the West Bank, its
demonization of criticism at home and abroad and its discrimination against Palestinian
Israelis is accepted within Israel as the legitimate status quo, then "... please, please, please
don't call it a Jewish state," Lerner implores. "Call it a state with many Jews, but don't allow
Judaism to be associated with that state. Because doing so imperils the moral integrity of
Judaism and the well-being of Jews around the world."

Rabbi Lerner is naturally drawn to a bifurcated view of human nature and the deity, a view
embedded in Judeo/Christian tradition of a conflicted God, one moment filled with all-
consuming love, the next seized by violent rages and a temperament not above the worst
forms of vengeance and brutality. For Rabbi Lerner, it is a matter of choosing which side of
this schizophrenic deity one wishes to emulate. For him, this conflict is metaphorically
expressed as a choice between God's "Left Hand" - one that holds "hope, trust, and caring for
others" - and the "Right Hand," one filled with "rigid boundaries" and ". . . doing to others what
we suspect they might do to us." However, the very core of representative government and
contract law in Western democracies and the reason for its success is that it is a system that
neither acknowledges nor defers to any of God's appendages: it does not evoke God at all.
This is why modern jurisprudence and civic government trace their roots back to Athens and
Rome, not the Vatican or Jerusalem.

For Rabbi Lerner, the reconciliation process is a "Strategy of Generosity," one involving
listening to the other's narrative and "acknowledging what is plausible in the story of the other
side." Both sides are incapable of doing this because each clings to "the trauma that both
peoples have experienced in their history," what Lerner calls "Socio-Cultural PTSD." Thus,
both sides are incapable of objectivity, something that's impossible in the Israeli/Palestinian
conflict, where the strife itself is driven and subsidized by outside forces. As long as the
American government sees Israel as a vital proxy in the region, as long as huge speaking
fees and funds for K Street can be generated by exploiting the memory of the Holocaust (see
Norman Finkelstein's The Holocaust Industry), and as long as Israel can be used as a wedge
issue by US politicians and the Christian Right, then there's little chance that small cloisters of
Israelis and Palestinians reaching out in a spirit of comity can do much to reverse it.

For Rabbi Lerner, reconciliation is impossible as long as there is blame and finger-pointing.
He dedicates much of his book to a sort of blameless revisionism, dissecting moments in the
region's history from the standpoint of each side as though to absolve each of culpability. He
thereby subjects each historical milestone to a sort of moral algebra whereby both sides'
participation in destructive events somehow balance and, therefore, cancel each other out.
Though Lerner also correctly assesses Zionism's early appeal to oppressed Jews in the
shetls of Eastern Europe, he diminishes Zionism's role as a Trojan horse exploited by western
interests anxious to embed a sympathetic population in the Levant (Eastern Mediterranean
and Greater Syria), where there was oil, and the Suez Canal.

Likewise, I find his interpretation of the 1917 Balfour Declaration tendentious and his
representation of its intent as simply conferring the blessings of the British government on
Zionist claims to Palestine inaccurate. The Balfour Declaration was actually a masterpiece of
cross-purposes, at once promising British support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine while
simultaneously claiming to ensure the rights of the non-Jewish population already there. One
moment, Lerner faults the indigenous Arabs for not welcoming oppressed Jews, the next, he
admits that many of the Zionist Ashkenzim "showed little interest in getting to know Arab
culture, had little respect for local religious institutions . . . and were ignorant of local
customs."
Rabbi Lerner also bemoans the Palestinians' rejection of the 1947 UN Partition Plan. "And yet there is little doubt," he opines, "... that the failure of the Palestinian leadership to accept partition and attempt to negotiate a peaceful transition to statehood for both Jews and Palestinians had disastrous consequences for the Palestinian people." One look at the details, and it's not hard to understand why they acted as they did.

With the possible exception of the Oklahoma land rush, the 1947 UN Partition Plan for Palestine was one of the biggest land grabs in human history. Jews were understandably enthusiastic. To that point, they had only managed to acquire not quite 7 percent of the land, but were to be handed political control of a full 54 percent of Palestine. The area included the most fertile land, which Arabs - who'd worked it for generations - depended on for export income. Jews were also to be given control of the Negev, where 100,000 Bedouins produced most of the country's barley and wheat. (Prior to the partition, there had been only 475 Jewish settlers in all of the Negev.)

Lerner's moral algebra is suspect. Sometimes the sides don't balance. Sometimes an act is simply and inexorably wrong and cries for justice no matter what the offending party's motivation. Despite Rabbi Lerner's best attempts to do the math, one is compelled to say:

• No, Jewish forces did not have the moral authority to forcibly expel a half-million Palestinians and then confiscate their homes.

• No, the migration of blacks from the South in pursuit of work in the white-dominated, northern US - a country of which they were already citizens - is not morally equivalent to Zionists plotting the confiscation of a foreign land (see: "Plan Dalet").

• No, the Israeli occupation of the West Bank is not morally equivalent to US treatment of Native Americans who, despite the US government's despicable treatment of them and their dismal existence on reservations, have at least a modicum of sovereignty and can leave their homes without being subjected to check points, soldiers kicking in their doors or being asked for identification. Nor do they have settlers uprooting their olive trees and stealing their property in the name of God.

In the end, Rabbi Lerner's plea for kindness and empathy is timeless and never irrelevant or unnecessary. But much of what fuels the conflict in Palestine is not as much about events there as about politics and religion here in the US. As long as the power differential between Palestinians and Israelis is so asymmetrical, nothing will change. The US and Israeli governments and the powerful Israel lobby will ensure that the Israeli government will always get the keys to the car, even after a hit-and-run.

Copyright, Truthout.

Douglas Jamiel
Douglas Jamiel is a freelance writer in the Portland, Oregon/Vancouver, Washington area. His work has appeared in the Colorado Labor Advocate, the Rocky Mountain News and Ezine.

Related Stories
Israel and the Palestinians Through the Looking Glass
By Ira Chernus, TomDispatch | Op-Ed
Palestine's Peaceful Protestor: Saeed Amireh
By S Taalay Ahmed, NewReligion | Report

Middle East Plan
By Tom Toles, Universal Uclick

Contents of #4
Jerusalem March
Palestinian Non-Violence
UN Condemns Settlements
Americans for Peace Now
Jean Zaru, Occupied with Nonviolence
Rev. of Two Books Beinart and Bar-On
Atzmon, The Wandering Who

Contents of #5
APN: Reject the Levy Report
Qumsiyah’s Newsletter: Gradual Destruction of Indigenous Palestinians
Qumsiyah, Destruction of Palestinian State
Palestinian Nonviolent Resistance
Leila Khaled Resistance Fighter
Palestinian Gandhi
Palestinian Nakba
Bedisha, Testimonies of Palestine 2011
3 Films:
Christian Zionism, With God on Our Side
Palestinian Child, Miral
Wall in Binin, 5 Broken Cameras

END ISRAELI/PALESTINIAN NEWSLETTER #8
Dick Bennett
My blog:
War Department/Peace Department
http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/
Newsletters
http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/
Index:
http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/
National/International Days
See Newsletters
Peace, Justice, Ecology Birthdays
See INMOtion
jbenet@uark.edu
(479) 442-4600
2582 Jimmie Ave.
Fayetteville, AR 72703