**The children of Gaza**

Patrick Howlett-martin

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“Why must children suffer as well? Will it be said that they bear in their flesh the sins of their parents, and are therefore complicit? Some may jest that the child will grow up and sin in their turn, when the time comes. But this 8-year-old boy did not have the chance to grow up; he was torn apart by dogs. No amount of future harmony will redeem a single tear shed by this child martyr. If the tears of children are necessary to perfect the sum of suffering that serves as ransom for the Truth, I categorically state that it does not deserve to be paid such a price.” – Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov

The Gaza Strip has been the target of four Israeli attacks since 2009: in 2009, 2012, 2014, and 2021. Since 2000, the Israeli armed forces have killed 7,759 Palestinians in Gaza, including 1,741 children and 572 women, according to the Israeli humanitarian organization B’Tselem. This fifth military israeli offensive since October 9, 2023, in retaliation for the killing of 1,400 Israelis, the vast majority of whom were civilians, and the kidnapping of 200 hostages of whom 30 children, by armed elements of Hamas from Gaza, more than 7 028 people have died, including 2,913 children and 1709 women, under Israel 7 000 bombs (up to October 26).

In just 18 days, Israeli bombings have killed more Palestinian children in Gaza than in the past 23 years. The hospitals of Gaza reported 18,484 wounded individuals. When will this macabre accounting come to an end? Are Israeli and Palestinian children responsible for the current situation in Palestine? How come Palestinian children could be responsible for the military intervention carried out by the armed branch of the Hamas which is brandished by the Israeli authorities to justify the destruction of Gaza? For what purpose are these children being killed? Has the death of Palestinian children in previous Israeli bombings and attacks in Gaza, in any way, contributed to preserving the security of the Israeli state?

Otto Ohlendorf, one of the leaders of the Einsatzgruppen, admitted during the Nuremberg Trials to executing 90,000 people in Ukraine, including Jews and communists, without any military necessity, and not sparing children for fear that they would take revenge when they grew up. Justifying the execution of children, Ohlendorf stated:

“I believe that it is very easy to explain if one starts from the fact that this order was not only trying to ensure temporary security but permanent security. For this reason, these children would grow up, and with their parents having been killed, they would certainly represent as significant a danger as their parents did” (“Die judischen Kinder von heute unsere Gegner von morgen seien“)

In February 2008, Matan Vilnai, the Israeli Deputy Defense Minister, made a statement, saying, “The more Qassam rocket fire intensifies and the rockets reach a longer range, they will bring upon themselves a bigger ‘Shoa’ because we will use all our might to defend ourselves.”

In July 2014, Ayelet Shaked, a member of the Israeli parliament and Justice Minister, called for genocide against the mothers of the “snakes” during the Gaza conflict one week after the Palestinian teenager Muhammad Abu Khadeir was snatched and burned alive by six Israeli Jewish youths: “Behind every terrorist stand dozens of men and women, who support and enable their actions. They are all enemy combatants, and their blood shall be on all their heads. Now this also includes the mothers of the martyrs, who send them to hell with flowers and kisses. They should follow their sons, nothing would be more just. They should go, as should the physical homes in which they raised the snakes. Otherwise, more little snakes will be raised there”.

In August 2014, Moshe Feiglin, a member of Benjamin Netanyahu’s Likud party, called for the destruction of Gaza and proposed a detailed plan to relocate Palestinians to camps in the border area of the Sinai Desert. He stated, “The IDF will take control of the entire Gaza, using any means necessary to minimize harm to our soldiers, without any other considerations.[3]”

On October 10, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant declared, “We are dealing with animals and will respond accordingly… We are sealing off Gaza. No electricity, no food, no water, no fuel.”

In the same conflict, the Israeli Interior Minister Eli Yishai expressed the desire to “send Gaza back to the Middle Ages.”

Benny Gantz, who commanded the Israeli forces during the 2014 offensive and later became the Defense Minister, declared, “Gaza will burn. There is no other equation.

Benjamin Netanyahu, referring to Gaza as the ‘City of Evil’, stated in a televised address, “We will turn all the places where Hamas takes cover into ruins.”

These statements bear a resemblance to those made by SS-Brigadefuhrer Jurgen Stroop in front of the Warsaw Ghetto”. Are there significant differences between the Warsaw Ghetto and the Gaza Strip?

“The inhabitants of the ghetto had not only built bomb shelters but actual bunkers that communicated throughout the ghetto through underground corridors….. The buildings were burned, but it was constantly demanded before that people leave them” … “The children were killed because they ran with their parents into the fire” or because “they jumped out of the burning buildings of their own accord.”

In a population of 2.3 million people, the overcrowding Gaza Strip comprises more than one million children and teens. How many orphans, how many widows, how many mourners will it take to recognize the current Israeli military’s intervention in Gaza as a genocide?

The infrastructure of Gaza – schools, hospitals, healthcare centers, businesses, water supply network, and urban housing – is the target of bombings. The Director of the UN Assistance Program for Palestinian Territories, Roberto Valent, estimated in an interview with the Associated Press correspondent that it would take at least 30 years to rebuild the buildings destroyed by the Israeli army since the previous offensive in 2014. Few buildings have been reconstructed since then, given the blockade on cement imports by Israel and, since the assumption of power by Marshal Abdel Fattah Al-Sissi, by Egypt.

“Gaza is a huge prison. Virtually all industrial activity has ceased,” according to Paz Fernandez, in charge of external relations for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). The United States significantly reduced its funding for UNRWA during the Trump administration. The annual per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Gaza is less than $2,000, compared to nearly $40,000 in Israel. The Israeli blockade of Gaza since 2007 and the Israeli bombings have led to the virtual disappearance of the industrial and manufacturing base. In July 2015, the United Nations Development Conference estimated that the Gaza Strip would no longer be economically viable by 2030. What will be its situation after the current Israeli offensive?

What was the purpose of the conference held in Cairo in October 2014, during which international aid was decided to rebuild Gaza’s destroyed facilities, if these facilities, assuming they have been rebuilt, are destroyed again by Israel with impunity? One can remember the Gaza International Airport, the construction of which cost $90 million from international donors, inaugurated by Yasser Arafat and President Bill Clinton in November 1998, and destroyed in 2001 and 2002 by Israeli bombers and bulldozers.

Not to mention the approximately 200 humanitarian centers built with funding from the European Union and destroyed by the Israeli army in 2013 and 2014, according to revelations from the United Nations Agency for Palestine, without any compensation ever being demanded from Tel Aviv.

Excerpted: ‘The Children of Gaza’. Courtesy: Counterpunch.org