

## JOSH RUEBNER

### Shattered Peace: Israel-Palestine

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Thank you for coming out to talk about what I think is an incredibly important foreign policy issue, which is the way that our country relates to Israel and the Palestinian people and how we may or, more accurately, may not help bring about a just and lasting peace between the two, given the configuration of our current politics.

Obama's Failure to Broker Israeli-Palestinian Peace. I often get chided by people. Why am I picking on President Obama? Isn't it true that all presidents, Democrats, Republicans alike, since Harry Truman, recognized the state of Israel in 1948, have tried their hand at brokering Israeli-Palestinian peace and all of them have failed? Yes, this is true. So this is not a singling out of the current president, but rather a case study in how the U.S. under Obama has continued our country's policies of providing Israel with nearly unlimited and unconditional military, diplomatic, and political support for its ongoing oppression of the Palestinian people.

This policy of what I would argue to be U.S. complicity in Israel's human rights abuses of the Palestinian people has only strengthened over the past six years, despite the fact that President Obama has been the most rhetorically sympathetic to the Palestinian people of any president, including Jimmy Carter, by the way. Jimmy Carter never got further than expressing support for a homeland for the Palestinian people and for self-determination for the Palestinian people. President Barack Obama has gone well beyond that. When he spoke in Cairo in the summer of 2009, just six months into his presidency, he talked about the daily indignities and humiliations the Palestinians face under Israeli military occupation, and he also talked about the fact that Palestinian refugees languish in refugee camps, denied their right to live in peace and security. No U.S. president has ever talked this forthrightly about the injustices done to the Palestinian people by the state of Israel over the past 67 years.

I think what occurred summer in the Gaza strip is a perfect example of exactly how the U.S. supports Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people no matter how egregious Israel's behaviors and policies might be. Before I share with you some of the statistics which emerged from the Gaza Strip this summer, I think it's important to share a few stories of actual human beings who were

impacted by events that took place in the Gaza Strip, because as much as we discuss statistics when we talk about the Israeli-Palestinian issue, it's always important to remember, to realize that behind all of these statistics there are real human beings with lives and hopes and aspirations and dreams and desires to live in dignity and in liberty.

Who can forget the images of the four young Bakr cousins blown to bits by an Israeli naval artillery shell on the beaches of Gaza City in full view of the international media? Or the story of Shayma al-Sheikh Qanan, aged 23, who was 8 months pregnant for the first time in her life when she was struck down by an Israeli artillery shell, which demolished her house, burying her under the rubble. Shayma was pulled from the rubble, brought to the hospital, where her unborn child was miraculously delivered by Caesarean section, despite the fact that she had already perished. This miracle child was named after her mother, Shyama, and symbolized to Palestinians, both in the Gaza Strip and further afield than that, the rebirth of Palestinian society, of Palestinian life, hopes, and dreams. But the miracle child, sadly, only lived for just five days, because the life sustaining her was in the form of an incubator, and the incubator lost power after Israel deliberately targeted for destruction Gaza's only power plant, knocking it off line, cutting off electricity to the hospital where this child was being kept alive.

I just read yesterday a new update from the United Nations actually documenting that the destruction by Israel in the Gaza Strip this summer was more widespread than initially thought. The numbers are now that Israel in just 50 days of fighting killed more than 2,250 Palestinians, more than 70% of all Palestinians killed were definitively civilians, according to the United Nations. More than 11,000 people were wounded, many grievously, losing limbs. And 538 children were killed, or more than 10 children per day, in Israel's attack.

We often hear from our mainstream media, from Israel's supporters in this country that it is Israelis who face political violence from Palestinians. We even hear some people assert that this level of political violence by Palestinians against Israelis is tantamount to some form of an existential threat against the state of Israel. And from these dire analyses we might expect that, yes, indeed, Israelis are dying at far higher rates than Palestinians in

political violence. But this flips reality on its head. This is not at all true. This summer, more children were killed by Israel in 50 days of fighting than the entire number of Israelis killed in Palestinian political violence, adults and children, civilians and all soldiers in more than 10 years. Five hundred thirty-eight children were killed by Israel this summer, 347 Israelis have died in the last decade. This is the reality. This is the magnitude, this is the scale of Israel's oppression in maintaining its 47-year military occupation of the Gaza Strip, of the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. Because, of course, in order to strip a people of dignity and self-determination and to maintain them under these types of oppressive conditions, systematic violence is necessary to keep them pinned down under these circumstances. Because no people will ever agree voluntarily to give up their freedom and their dignity and their right to self-determination. It's the violence inherent in the system which leads to these kinds of horrific statistics.

Originally the UN thought that 18,000 Palestinian homes were damaged, initially the estimates were that 6% of the entire population of the Gaza Strip were made homeless by Israel. But the revised figures indicate that actually 100,000 housing units were either damaged or destroyed by Israel, affecting one-third of the entire population of the Gaza Strip.

We saw Israel attack, damage, or destroy 140 Palestinian schools in the Gaza Strip. Can you imagine what the reaction would be from our members of Congress, our media, people who support Israel in this country if Palestinians damaged or destroyed one Israeli school? But Israel damaged or destroyed 140 Palestinian schools in the Gaza Strip, including attacking deliberately three UN schools which were serving as safe havens for internally displaced Palestinians.

We often hear that Israel is the "most moral army in the world" because the Israel military does things like call Palestinians on their cell phones and drop millions of fliers saying, "Get out. We're going to bomb your neighborhood, we're going to destroy it." Sometimes Israel does what they call "roof knocking." This is to deliver a so-called dud missile onto the roof of a home that's going to be destroyed. And if you're a Palestinian who resides in one of these houses, perhaps you will have 90 seconds, maybe 60 seconds, maybe 30 seconds to grab your stuff and go, to grab your loved ones and go, to try to get people in wheelchairs out of homes in 60 seconds.

Many Palestinians received this "roof knocking" by Israel, received these cell phone calls, received these fliers that were dropped in the air. And they indeed fled their homes, because Israel did indeed destroy these neighborhoods. They fled to where they thought they would be safe, which were these UN schools which were serving as shelters for internally displaced Palestinians. On three separate occasions Israel bombed these UN schools, despite the fact that the UN had given Israel the

exact GPS coordinates of these schools not once, not twice. This was no accident. The UN gave Israel the GPS coordinates of these UN shelters on a dozen occasions each. Israel still bombed them, knowing full well that innocent civilians by the thousands were taking shelter there.

We hear from Israel that this was a war against Hamas, an attack to destroy its arsenal of weapons, to destroy its network and infrastructure of tunnels, so on and so forth. And, of course, there were Israeli military attacks against Hamas targets. But this was certainly not the primary objective. The primary objective of this attack was, in Israeli political parlance, to "mow the lawn." This extremely dehumanizing term refers to Israel's regular efforts to slowly depopulate the Gaza Strip by killing people off.

Today, Amnesty International came out with a report showing that Israel showed "callous indifference" toward Palestinians. This was not an attack against Hamas. This was an attack against Palestinians and their ability to live normal lives in the Gaza Strip, which is, of course, impeded in the first place by the fact that you've had this illegal Israeli blockade on the Gaza Strip for now seven years, which has prevented the importation of essential foods and medicines and equipment for running infrastructure like water treatment, like sewage treatment. So this blockade has created a humanitarian catastrophe in the Gaza Strip.

The United Nations has estimated that it's going to cost about \$8 billion to rebuild the damage that Israel inflicted on the Gaza Strip this summer. Or to put it in other terms, a little bit less than three years in the amount of military aid, weapons that we as U.S. taxpayers provided to the state of Israel to demolish the Gaza Strip in the first place.

This is, of course, not the first time that Israel has completely demolished the Gaza strip. It did so in 2012, it did so in 2008-2009, it did so in 2006 as well. Every few years Israel demolishes billions of dollars' worth of civilian infrastructure and homes in the Gaza Strip. And we keep paying Israel, giving Israel money and weapons to destroy it yet again. On top of that, then we go to international donors' conferences in Cairo and pledge to rebuild it. And John Kerry says that this will never happen again: Gaza won't be attacked again. Who is he kidding?

Because of Israel's blockade on the Gaza Strip, the UN has actually estimated that it's going to take 20 years to rebuild Gaza to the very precarious point that it was on July 6th. Twenty years. Can you imagine having a foreign army come in and destroy your home, destroy your children's school, and the international community says, Oh, sorry, you're not going to get any compensation, but you're going to have to wait 20 years to have your house rebuilt? This is the situation today that faces Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. And even if somehow one thought that it was fair, just or right to have to wait 20 years to have

your infrastructure rebuilt due to these massacres, Palestinians in the Gaza Strip don't have 20 years. That's the reality of the situation. Because the United Nations published a report a few years ago that documented that because of the environmental degradation foisted upon the Gaza Strip by Israel's blockade, and due to the growing overpopulation of the Gaza Strip, it simply won't be habitable for human beings by 2020. That's just six years from now. So by the time the international community gets around to paying to rebuild what Israel demolished this summer in the Gaza Strip, it will be too late. It won't be habitable anymore for human beings.

What was the response of our government? Was it to demand that Israel stop employing these U.S. weapons, in violation of U.S. law, to commit these human rights abuses? Was it to demand that Israel be held accountable for the war crimes that it had committed in the Gaza Strip? And, yes, when you deliberately target civilians and civilian infrastructure, it is a war crime. It is a war crime under international law. For those of you who know this issue, I think you know the answer. The answer is, of course, no. The U.S. didn't say anything of the sort. In fact, John Kerry, Secretary of State, referred to Israel's actions as being "appropriate and legitimate."

We often hear that Israel acted in "self-defense" by "responding to Hamas rockets." So a reporter at the State Department's daily press briefing asked the State Department spokesperson, If the right of self-defense is a universal right that pertains to every human being, don't Palestinians also have the right to defend themselves? Don't Palestinians have the ability to defend their families and protect their homes and their schools and their businesses? The response of our government was to say that this was an "offensive notion." It was an "offensive notion" to think that what Palestinians might be doing is simply defending their lives and their property.

The Obama administration, on behalf of the U.S., cast the only no vote in the UN Human Rights Council against the establishment of simply a fact-finding mission to examine the actions and the behaviors of both Israel and Palestinian groups. Do you know why the State Department claimed that the Obama administration voted against the establishment of this fact-finding mission? It was because it was "one-sided" and "unbalanced" and "biased" despite the fact that they hadn't investigated anything, despite the fact that the composition of the investigation team hadn't been decided upon, and despite the fact that the UN Human Rights Council passed a resolution to examine the conduct of all parties. This is the extent of bias that is inherent in our foreign policy when it comes to Israel and the Palestinian people.

You might be thinking, Well, isn't it true that the U.S. got really mad at Israel the third time that it bombed a UN school? Yes, that's true. Maybe you're thinking, Isn't it true that President Obama expressed his remorse about Palestinian civilian casualties? Yes, that's true as well. But

at the same time that President Obama was saying how sorry he was for all these Palestinian children dying, the U.S. was actually rearming Israel. President Obama gave special authorization to Israel during the attack to take stockpiles of U.S. weapons that are located in Israel and to draw from these stockpiles of U.S. weapons to replenish their arsenal. The very same tank artillery shells, the very same bazooka shells that had demolished entire neighborhoods like Shejaiya in the Gaza Strip, these weapons were given Israel to continue the attack. How can you say that you're concerned about the death of Palestinian civilians when you're arming Israel to continue the attack?

To understand what happened to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip one first has to understand the collective brutality inflicted upon Palestinian society in 1948, when Israel was established, what Palestinians refer to as the Naqba, or catastrophe, because indeed it was a catastrophe for the Palestinian people. It was a catastrophe for the Palestinian people because when Israel established its sovereignty on more than three-quarters, 78%, of historic Palestine, it engaged in a premeditated and very systematic campaign of ethnic cleansing to drive out as many Palestinians from their homes, from as much of historic Palestine as possible. This is all documented in books like Ilan Pappé's *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, where he talks about how Israel wiped off the face of the map 531 Palestinian villages in 1948, how Israel emptied 11 Palestinian urban neighborhoods of their inhabitants. And what Israel would like you not to know is that between 80% and 90% of the indigenous population of Palestinians were driven, expelled from their homes by Israel in 1948 to create the so-called Jewish state.

The only reason why Israel today is a country which has a majority of its citizens who are Jewish is because of this act of ethnic cleansing and the refusal to make it right. Under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, every human being has the right to leave their home at any time and for any reason and to return at any time and for any reason. And despite Israel's agreeing, upon joining the UN in 1949, that Palestinian refugees who wished to return to their homes could do so, despite that fact, here we are 65 years after Israel joined the United Nations, and Palestinian refugees still don't have their right of return to their homes and their properties.

Why? Because Israel does not view Palestinian refugees as human beings with human rights. They view them as a "demographic threat." And Israel believes that it has a so-called "right" to maintain the bitter fruits of this ethnic-cleansing campaign and to deny these refugees their rights of return because they are not the "right nationality," they're not the "right religion." You can scour the international law books for such a right to ethnically cleanse people and to deny them their right of return based on their ethnicity or their nationality, but I'll tell you right

now, you're not going to find it. There is no such right under international law.

Not all Palestinians were ethnically cleansed by Israel in 1948. Some resisted this ethnic-cleansing campaign, stayed where they were, and eventually became citizens of the state of Israel. Israel claims to be a "democracy" because these Palestinian citizens of Israel have the right to vote, they have the right to run for office. There are, in fact, Palestinian members of Israel's parliament today. All of this is undeniably true. But does having the right to vote equal democracy? I would say no. I would say voting is, of course, a prerequisite to having a democratic country, but voting is not the be-all and end-all. The cornerstone of living in a democratic state is that the state treats you with equality regardless of your race, regardless of your ethnicity, regardless of your religion. This is the notion on which democracy is founded.

Palestinian citizens of Israel, who, by the way, are 20% of Israel's population, so one in five Israelis are Palestinian, are not at all treated equally. They're not even really second-class citizens. That would be putting it kindly. They're more like unwanted reminders to the state of Israel that the ethnic-cleansing campaign of 1948 did not fully succeed. So Palestinian citizens of Israel today face more than 50 discriminatory laws, which privilege Jewish citizens of the state and discriminate against them in housing, in land use, in governmental services, in health care delivery, in educational spending. The Israeli government spends \$10 on education for its Jewish citizens for every \$1 that's spent on the education of its Palestinian citizens. And the two school systems are completely segregated except for one or two examples of private schools. Completely segregated. So that if you're Palestinian, you must go to the inferior and underfunded Arabic-language school; but if you're Jewish Israeli, you go to the well-funded Jewish only, Hebrew-speaking school. As we know from the tortured racial history of our country, separate always means unequal.

This was the situation in a nutshell up until 1967, when Israel conquered the remaining 22% of historic Palestine, what we today call the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Since that time Israel has held those territories, in the words of the Israeli Supreme Court, by the way, under "belligerent military occupation." Under this "belligerent military occupation," Palestinians are stripped of all of their political rights whatsoever. Every single right that you and I take for granted in this country does not apply to Palestinians under military occupation.

The very first military order that Israel passed when it occupied these territories, military order No. 101, made it illegal for Palestinians to write an article in the Palestinian media, which is critical of Israel. It made it illegal for Palestinians to join a political party. All political parties are illegal under Israeli military occupation, including, technically, the parties that Israel sits at the negotiating

table with. They're all illegal. It's illegal to wave a Palestinian flag under Israeli military occupation. And it's illegal for Palestinians to gather in groups of 10 people or more for any political purpose whatsoever, including the right of nonviolent protest and nonviolent political expression. These rights are denied to Palestinians under Israeli military occupation. These are not denied, however, to Israeli Jews who have come to colonize expropriated Palestinian lands in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. In fact, of course, they come there at the behest of the Israeli government and are given tax breaks to come live on expropriated Palestinian lands.

The discrimination between these two populations in the occupied Palestinian territories is so blatant that there are actually those of you who have been there know this—two different colored license plates, one for Palestinians under military occupation, the other for Israeli Jewish colonizers. Israel has actually built a whole road infrastructure in the West Bank that Palestinians are not even allowed to drive on. This is the degree and the blatant nature of the discrimination that exists between these two populations.

So when you look at the totality of Israel's policies toward the Palestinian people, what we have is certainly no democracy. Israel is at best what I think political scientists call an ethnocracy, meaning democracy for a limited ethnic segment of the population. Calling Israel, either today or in 1948 or at any time in between, a democracy is like saying that the U.S. was a democracy upon our founding, when only white males who owned substantial amounts of property had the right to vote. We completely excluded from the body politic women, the indigenous population that we were busy exterminating, and the millions of Africans who were brought to this country as slaves to build the wealth and power of this nation. That's no democracy. South Africa liked to claim that it was a democracy under apartheid. Who were they kidding that it's a democracy if only white people can vote? Who are we kidding by saying that Israel is a democracy when even Palestinian citizens of Israel face 50 discriminatory laws? And when we factor in that Palestinian refugees have been driven from their homes and not allowed to return? And when we factor into the equation Palestinians who have lived under Israeli military occupation for now nearly half a century, denied all of their political rights whatsoever. This is not a democracy. This is an apartheid regime.

Yes, the word "apartheid" comes to us via the South African context, but, no, it's not limited in its application to a discussion of South Africa. Because in the 1970s, the international community passed a treaty defining apartheid as a crime against humanity and giving it universal applicability. The UN defined apartheid as any governmental system that privileges one set of people and discriminates against another set of people based on factors such as their race, their religion, their ethnicity,

their national origin. This is exactly what Israel admits to doing when it demands to be recognized not as a state of all of its citizens, not as a country with equal rights for all of those over whom it rules, but as a "Jewish state"-a "Jewish state" that's set up for the exclusive privilege and prerogative of Jewish people, whether they're citizens of the state or not.

The problem with the U.S.-led so-called peace process has not been about ending Israel's apartheid domination over the Palestinian people but the reverse. It is about making permanent and even reifying the notion that Israel should be an apartheid state. Some of you may be thinking, This doesn't make any sense whatsoever, because I thought the goal of this peace process was the establishment of a Palestinian state on parts or all of land occupied by Israel in 1967: the West Bank, East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip. Isn't it true, you might be thinking, that all of the parties to these negotiations agree that this should be the goal, this should be the outcome of these talks? So how can I say this is about strengthening Israeli apartheid when the goal is the establishment of an independent Palestinian state through which Palestinians can exercise self-determination?

The reason I say this is that just because all the parties say that they want the same thing, it doesn't mean the same thing. So when the Palestinian negotiating team says that they want a state, what they mean is they want a state that has all the powers and sovereignties and prerogatives of 193 other nations in the world. But when Israel, backed by the U.S., says that it wants a "Palestinian state," this means something completely different. This is a diametrically opposed vision, 180 degrees different.

The proposal put forward by John Kerry at the behest of Israel this spring of 2014 would not have created an independent and sovereign Palestinian state. It would have created a non-sovereign entity under the complete control and domination of the state of Israel from without. This is the main reason why Kerry's so-called peace process failed. What Kerry was offering the Palestinians on behalf of Israel-and by the way, this is always how the negotiations work-was the U.S. proposing to Palestinians Israel's ideas for how to maintain control over them. This is the rigged nature of the game.

So what Kerry put forward was that Palestinians would have no control over the borders of their so-called state. Those would be controlled by Israel. In fact, the West Bank would be cut off from its neighbor Jordan by a long-term Israeli-U.S. joint military presence there. Think of all the things that we do as a sovereign state: we control our borders, our airspace, our territorial waters, our natural resources, we have our own army, our own foreign policy, our own foreign economic policy. All these things we associate with sovereignty in the modern political system. Not a single one of these things would apply to the so-called state that John Kerry was proposing. In fact, Palestinians would not even have control over their

electromagnetic sphere under John Kerry's proposal. I have to confess, I don't know anything about science, and I had no idea what an electromagnetic sphere meant until the Israeli prime minister started talking about it all the time. It refers to things like radio signals and cell phone networks and so forth. Palestinians won't even be able to control their cell phones under the deal put forward by John Kerry. All of the military infrastructure that Israel has built in the West Bank and East Jerusalem over the last half century stays where it is. The apartheid wall that Israel has built stays where it is. The military bases Israel has built stay where they are.

Eighty to 90% the settlement population would get annexed to Israel, chopping the West Bank up into tiny little disconnected fragments of land cut off from one another by these Israeli settlements, by Israel's apartheid road infrastructure network, by Israel's apartheid wall. And what would be created in the West Bank would be a second version of what the Gaza Strip is today, a blockaded, non-sovereign entity completely under Israel's control from without, with Israel able to attack it and demolish it at any time. Palestinians also would have no sovereignty in Jerusalem under John Kerry's plan. Instead, John Kerry talked about "future aspirations" for Palestinians to have sovereignty in Jerusalem. What "future aspirations" are we talking about when John Kerry said this deal is a be all and end all, there are no more claims after this? What kind of "future aspirations" are we talking about? Palestinian refugees would not have the right of return, and Israel would maintain its more than 50 discriminatory laws against Palestinian citizens of Israel.

So as the contours of this deal became clear to the Palestinians and that they weren't going to get a fair shake out of the U.S. yet again, the negotiating team was debriefing with the White House, and the lead Palestinian negotiator, Dr. Saeb Erekat, runs into Susan Rice, Obama's national security adviser, in the corridors of the White House. Saeb Erekat said, "Susan, I see we've yet to succeed in making it clear to you that we Palestinians aren't stupid." To this Rice gets indignant, she gets livid. She can't believe that the dispossessed, the colonized, the oppressed of the world would dare to challenge the superpower in this way, would dare not to accept the crumbs being thrown at their feet. And Susan Rice said, "You Palestinians can never see the fucking big picture." This is how our government talks to the representative of a dispossessed, colonized, oppressed people denied self-determination.

So where are we today, now that Kerry's so-called peace process has collapsed for good? We are at the end of what I believe is basically the second historical phase in how Zionism and the state of Israel relate to the indigenous population that it colonized and dispossessed. I say the end of the second phase. Let me give you the first one first.

The first phase lasted approximately from 1880 up until 1980, basically a century, and was summed up in the pithy expression of Zionism being a movement for "a land without a people for a people without a land." If this were true about Zionism, that it really was a land without a people, then perhaps there would be no moral problems with Zionism and the state of Israel. But, of course, to colonize lands, there has to be an indigenous population who gets colonized, who gets dispossessed, who gets moved off of that land. That is, of course, the Palestinian people.

In the 1980s, when it became increasingly untenable for Israel to deny the existence of this Palestinian people, largely because of the first Intifada, or uprising, against Israeli military occupation, we entered the second phase, which was basically to provide Palestinians under Israeli military occupation with limited autonomy, under the complete domination of the state of Israel. This notion of providing limited autonomy to the Palestinians has basically been the defining Israeli political project since the 1980s. It's just changed names a little bit. It's gone from autonomy to "state." But this "state" is really no different from the powers envisioned for this limited autonomy way back in the 1980s.

So what we're seeing as an end of this paradigm today, in 2014, is that this is not me, Josh Ruebner, little old nobody, who is standing up here and saying that this so-called two-state resolution paradigm is dead, this is John Kerry, our Secretary of State, who has admitted as much. He admitted as much in the spring of 2013, when he testified before Congress—mind you, this was about 18 months ago—that there is a one- to one-and-a-half- to two-year window of opportunity for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian issue on a two-state basis. So if even John Kerry has recognized that this window has now closed, what are we still doing pretending that it's an option? How long is it going to take our politicians to recognize that the tired, hide-bound platitudes simply don't apply anymore to understanding how to resolve this issue fairly and justly? So the question is, How do we get from where we are today, which is stuck, to getting to a just and lasting peace?

The first thing I think we have to do is we have to pressure our politicians, because we as American citizens, no matter what our religious or ethnic backgrounds are, are complicit in Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people by virtue of both the weapons that we give to Israel and the diplomatic support which prevents Israel from being held accountable for its actions in the international community, no matter how egregious. So, one, we have to demand that our politicians change this morally bankrupt policy.

The second thing we need to do is to respond to what Palestinians are asking people of conscience around the world to do, which is to engage in campaigns of boycott, divestment, and sanctions against Israel, against

corporations which are literally profiting from their oppression of the Palestinian people. We're seeing this BDS movement rise and grow stronger by the day. Macy's has announced that it has pulled SodaStream from its line of products because SodaStream is a product made in an illegal Israeli colony in the West Bank. Actually, because of this pressure from the international BDS campaign, SodaStream last week announced that it is indeed shutting its factory in this illegal Israeli colony in the West Bank. These types of campaigns are working. We see the Presbyterian Church (USA) divest from Caterpillar, divest from Motorola, divest from Hewlett-Packard, corporations which all sell equipment to the Israeli military, used to commit human rights abuses of the Palestinian people. This movement is working, despite what Israel claims, despite what its supporters claim. By the way, they're throwing millions of dollars into the campaign to try to defeat the BDS movement and they're still failing. So they're relying more and more on outright repression, because the debate has been lost.

Israel has lost the debate. The only question is, For how much longer can it continue the repression of dissent against this policy and prevent people from organizing and do the moral thing? I don't think it's much longer. Because structures of oppression can, I think, appear very solid from the outside but yet might be rotting from within, might be coming under so much pressure from without that they buckle and collapse. This is indeed what the BDS movement is doing: It is helping to pull out the pillars of support that sustain Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people. And when enough of these pillars are pulled out, I think the whole structure will become unstable and collapse very quickly. All of the people whom I have spoken to who were involved in the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa told me they never thought they would see the day when apartheid in South Africa ended. Then one day it did.

So this is our job—to continue this work, to not despair, and to continue until enough of these pillars of oppression are pulled out. And only when Israel's superstructure of apartheid toward the Palestinian people has ended, can the parties then come and discuss a just and lasting peace. Thank you.

## Q&A

The first question was related to the recent provocations by extreme Israeli Jews who want to demolish the Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem and build a new Jewish temple on their ashes. Obviously, such types of plans and actions could be cataclysmic, could invoke the specter of religious war. What's happening in al-Aqsa is extremely worrying. It's obviously a very sensitive site. The new sort of Israeli Jewish extremist line is that, Oh, well, we just want equal rights. We just want the ability for Jews to pray at this site,

too. This is not equal rights. This is about demolishing one religious site to build another religious site there. We've seen how that's worked out in history. So it's very worrying. And, yes, there are lots of tensions in Jerusalem right now. I think the probability of another uprising or Intifada against Israel's military occupation is likely. Even Secretary of State John Kerry, even President Barack Obama say over and over again that the situation is unsustainable. Agreed, it's not sustainable. It's going to erupt. It's always erupting, but it's really going to erupt sometime soon.

Hamas. What is Hamas's culpability in terms of the violence inflicted on Palestinians in the Gaza Strip? Let me start off by backing up a step and saying that as an organization that supports human rights and international law, we believe that the deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure is a war crime, is wrong, is immoral. So we condemn that when Israel does it with U.S. weapons, and we're against it as well when Hamas launches rockets against Israeli civilians. In terms of Hamas's use of force, we have to distinguish between what is legitimate use of force and what's not legitimate. So it's not legitimate to fire rockets against civilian populations. Agreed. But does Hamas have the right to pick up weapons and defend itself and fight back against Israeli troops attacking Palestinians in the Gaza Strip? Yes, they do. You might not like the fact that Hamas is doing so. You might think that Palestinians might be better off pursuing a wholly nonviolent strategy. But under international law it's the right of occupied people to resist occupation by military means. That means when Hamas strikes at Israeli military targets, it's legitimate under international law.

We heard a lot in the recent attack this summer that Hamas was using Palestinians as "human shields." Congress, in fact, passed a resolution, I believe by unanimous consent, condemning Hamas for using Palestinians as "human shields." "Human shields" is a term that has a distinct meaning under international law, and it means forcing civilians to remain in harm's way during fighting between militaries or paramilitaries. *The New York Times*, certainly no friend of Hamas, and certainly no friend of the Palestinian people, I would argue, actually said-I believe it was two days before Congress passed this resolution-that there was "no evidence whatsoever of Hamas using Palestinians as human shields." There was no evidence and no one has put forward any evidence that Hamas forced Palestinians to stay in harm's way, which is the definition of "human shields."

On the contrary, Israel has a long record, which is well documented by international human rights organizations and Israeli human rights organizations, of using Palestinians as human shields. You can go on the

Internet and do a Google image search-and, yes, I know Photoshop distorts images and so forth-and look at these credible human rights organizations' reports on Israel's practice of using Palestinians as human shields. And you will see how Israel ties Palestinian kids to their half-tracks, to their armored personnel carriers, to try to prevent stones from being thrown at them. In fact, in this latest attack in Gaza, Defense for Children International Palestine documented the case of Israel abducting, I believe it was, a 15-year-old boy in the Gaza Strip and forcing him to dig for Hamas tunnels for three days, putting him in harm's way rather than the military. This is the definition of "human shields." And the reality is Israel is the one that is engaged in this practice.

What would a one-state solution look like? There are basically two models for how this would work. One would be a majoritarian system a la South Africa. In other words, one person, one vote, a unitary structure for the state. The other model would be some kind of bi-national setup, kind of like what you have in Belgium today, where you have two distinct national communities with separate identities and some separate institutions that come together at the federal level for joint decision making. These are basically the two options for what a one-state resolution might look like. They could all be configured lots of different ways, and political scientists have, I think, put out dozens of different studies about how this would work constitutionally and legally. But ultimately I think any just and fair resolution to this issue has to involve Palestinians attaining equal rights to Israeli Jews, no matter how you slice that, no matter how you set it up constitutionally.

What to say to your pro-Israel friends who might be open to hearing what you have to say but would not necessarily agree with what I've said here tonight? The first principle of organizing is to start where people are at, not where you want them to go. So it's with that organizing maxim in mind that I think we have to approach people, to recognize their fears, their concerns, their ignorance in many cases, and to, I think, engage people not on a debate on the issues right away but to engage them on what their values are. What do you value? Do you value life? Do you value dignity for human beings? Of course everyone is going to say yes. Then you can engage on the factual issues at hand to show how this is actually conflicting with what they say they're in support of.

What can you do physically on the ground? There are a number of Palestinian villages that hold weekly nonviolent protests that you can get involved with. They're always open to Israeli, Jewish participation in solidarity with them. There are a number of good Israeli peace

organizations that are doing on-the-ground work, like ICAHD, the Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions, which engages in the rebuilding of destroyed Palestinian homes. There's Rabbis for Human Rights, which helped to replant uprooted olive trees. There's Anarchists Against the Wall, which go and protest every Friday, I believe, against Israel's apartheid wall. So there's lots of different ways that you can get involved and lots of good organizations doing good, hands-on type of work there.

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