

# Outrage - The White House selective horrendous crimes

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Almost every day brings news of awful crimes, but some are so heinous, so horrendous and malicious, that they dwarf all else. One of those rare events took place on July 17, when Malaysian Airlines MH17 was shot down in Eastern Ukraine, killing 298 people.

The Guardian of Virtue in the White House denounced it as an “outrage of unspeakable proportions,” which he attributed to “Russian support.” His UN Ambassador thundered that “when 298 civilians are killed” in the “horrific downing” of a civilian plane, “we must stop at nothing to determine who is responsible and to bring them to justice.” She also called on Putin to end his shameful efforts to evade his very clear responsibility.

True, the “irritating little man” with the “ratlike face” (Timothy Garton Ash) had called for an independent investigation, but that could only have been because of sanctions from the one country courageous enough to impose them, the United States, while Europeans had cowered in fear.

On CNN, former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine William Taylor assured the world that the irritating little man “is clearly responsible...for the shoot down of this airliner.” For weeks, lead stories reported on the anguish of the families, the lives of the murdered victims, the international efforts to claim the bodies, the fury over the horrific crime that “stunned the world,” as the press reported daily in grisly detail.

Every literate person, and certainly every editor and commentator, instantly recalled another case when a plane was shot down with comparable loss of life: Iran Air 655 with 290 killed, including 66 children, shot down in Iranian airspace in a clearly identified commercial air route. The crime was not carried out “with U.S. support,” nor has its agent ever been uncertain. It was the guided-missile cruiser USS Vincennes, operating in Iranian waters in the Persian Gulf.

The commander of a nearby U.S. vessel, David Carlson, wrote in the U.S. Naval Proceedings that he “wondered aloud in disbelief” as “The Vincennes announced her intentions” to attack what was clearly a civilian aircraft. He speculated that “Robo Cruiser,” as the Vincennes was called because of its aggressive behavior, “felt a need to prove the viability of Aegis (the sophisticated anti-aircraft system on the cruiser) in the Persian Gulf, and that they hankered for the opportunity to show their stuff.”

Two years later, the commander of the Vincennes and the officer in charge of anti-air warfare were given the Legion of Merit award for “exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service” and for the “calm and professional atmosphere” during the period of the destruction of the Iranian Airbus, which was not mentioned in the award.

President Reagan blamed the Iranians and defended the actions of the warship, which “followed standing orders and widely publicized procedures, firing to protect itself against possible attack.” His successor, Bush I, proclaimed that “I will never apologize for the United States — I don’t care what the facts are... I’m not an apologize-for-America kind of guy.”

No evasions of responsibility here, unlike the barbarians in the East.

There was little reaction at the time: no outrage, no desperate search for victims, no passionate denunciations of those responsible, no eloquent laments by the US Ambassador to the UN about the “immense and heart-wrenching loss” when the airliner was downed. Iranian condemnations were occasionally noted, but dismissed as “boilerplate attacks on the United States” (Philip Shenon, New York Times).

Small wonder, then, that this insignificant earlier event merited only a few scattered words in the US media during the vast furor over a real crime, in which the demonic enemy might have been indirectly involved.

One exception was in the London *Daily Mail*, where Dominick Lawson wrote that although “Putin’s apologists” might bring up the Iran Air attack, the comparison actually demonstrates our high moral values as contrasted with the miserable Russians, who try to evade their responsibility for MH 17 with lies while Washington at once announced that the US warship had shot down the Iranian aircraft — righteously. What more powerful evidence could there be of our nobility and their depravity?

We know why Ukrainians and Russians are in their own countries, but one might ask what exactly the Vincennes was doing in Iranian waters. The answer is simple. It was defending Washington’s great friend Saddam Hussein in his murderous aggression against Iran. For the victims, the shoot-down was no small matter. It was a major factor in Iran’s recognition that it could not fight on any longer, according to historian Dilip Hiro.

It is worth remembering the extent of Washington’s devotion to its friend Saddam. Reagan removed him from the terrorist list so that aid could be sent to expedite his assault on Iran, and later denied his terrible crimes against the Kurds, including the use of chemical weapons, blocking congressional condemnations. He also accorded Saddam a privilege otherwise granted only to Israel: there was no serious reaction when Iraq attacked the USS Stark with missiles, killing 37 crewmen, much like the case of the USS Liberty, attacked repeatedly by Israeli jets and torpedo ships in 1967, killing 34 crewmen.

Reagan’s successor, Bush I, went on to provide further aid to Saddam, badly needed after the war with Iran that he launched. Bush also invited Iraqi nuclear engineers to come to the US for advanced training in weapons production. In April 1990, Bush dispatched a high-level Senate delegation, led by future Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole, to convey his warm regards to his friend Saddam and to assure him that he should disregard irresponsible criticism from the “haughty and pampered press,” and that such miscreants had been removed from Voice of America. The fawning before Saddam continued until he turned into a new Hitler a few months later by disobeying orders, or perhaps misunderstanding them, and invading Kuwait, with illuminating consequences that are worth reviewing once again, though I will leave this interesting matter aside here.

Other precedents had long since been dismissed to the memory hole as without significance. One example is the Libyan civilian airliner that was lost in a sandstorm in 1973 when it was shot down by US-supplied Israeli jets, two minutes flight time from Cairo, towards which it was heading. The death toll was only 110 that time. Israel blamed the French pilot, with the endorsement of the New York Times, which added that the Israeli act was “at worst...an act of callousness that not even the savagery of previous Arab actions can excuse.” The incident was passed over quickly in the United States, with little criticism. When Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir arrived in the US four days later, she faced few embarrassing questions and returned home with new gifts of military aircraft.

The reaction was much the same when Washington's favored Angolan terrorist organization UNITA claimed to have shot down two civilian airliners at the same time, among other cases.

Returning to the sole authentic and truly horrific crime, the *New York Times* reported that American UN ambassador Samantha Power "choked up as she spoke of infants who perished in the Malaysia Airlines crash in Ukraine [and] The Dutch foreign minister, Frans Timmermans, could barely contain his anger as he recalled seeing pictures of thugs' snatching wedding bands off the fingers of the victims." At the same session, the report continues, there was also "a long recitation of names and ages – all belonging to children killed in the latest Israeli offensive in Gaza." The only reported reaction was by Palestinian envoy Riyad Mansour, who "grew quiet in the middle of" the recitation. The Israeli attack on Gaza in July did, however, elicit outrage in Washington. President Obama "reiterated his strong condemnation" of rocket and tunnel attacks against Israel by the militant group Hamas," The Hill reported. He "also expressed 'growing concern' about the rising number of Palestinian civilian deaths in Gaza," but without condemnation. The Senate filled that gap, voting unanimously to support Israeli actions in Gaza while condemning "the unprovoked rocket fire at Israel" by Hamas and calling on "Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to dissolve the unity governing arrangement with Hamas and condemn the attacks on Israel."

As for Congress, perhaps it's enough to join the 80% of the public who disapprove of their performance, though the word "disapprove" is rather too mild in this case. But in Obama's defense, it may be that he has no idea what Israel is doing in Gaza with the weapons that he is kind enough to supply to them. After all, he relies on US intelligence, which may be too busy collecting phone calls and email messages of citizens to pay much attention to such marginalia. It may be useful, then, to review what we all should know.

Israel's goal had long been a simple one: quiet-for-quiet, a return to the norm (though now it may demand even more). What then is the norm?

For the West Bank, the norm has been that Israel carries forward its illegal construction of settlements and infrastructure so that it can integrate into Israel whatever might be of value to it, meanwhile consigning Palestinians to unviable cantons and subjecting them to intense repression and violence.

For the past 14 years, the norm has been that Israel kills more than two Palestinian children a week. The latest Israeli rampage was set off by the brutal murder of three Israeli boys from a settler community in the occupied West Bank. A month before, two Palestinian boys were shot dead in the West Bank city of Ramallah. That elicited no attention, which is understandable, since it is routine. "The institutionalised disregard for Palestinian life in the West helps explain not only why Palestinians resort to violence," the respected Middle East analyst Mouin Rabbani reports, "but also Israel's latest assault on the Gaza Strip."

Quiet-for-quiet has also enabled Israel to carry forward its program of separating Gaza from the West Bank. That program has been pursued vigorously, always with US support, ever since the US and Israel accepted the Oslo accords, which declare the two regions to be an inseparable territorial unity. A look at the map explains the rationale. Gaza provides Palestine's only access to the outside world, so once the two are separated, any autonomy that Israel might grant to Palestinians in the West Bank would leave them effectively imprisoned between hostile states, Israel and Jordan. The imprisonment will become even more severe as Israel continues its systematic program of expelling Palestinians from the Jordan Valley and constructing Israeli settlements there, enjoying quiet-for-quiet.

The norm in Gaza was described in detail by the heroic Norwegian trauma surgeon Mads Gilbert, who has worked in Gaza's main hospital through Israel's most grotesque crimes and returned again for the current onslaught. In June 2014, immediately before the latest Israeli onslaught, he submitted a report on the Gaza health sector to UNRWA, the UN Agency that tries desperately, on a shoestring, to care for refugees.

"At least 57 % of Gaza households are food insecure and about 80 % are now aid recipients," Gilbert reports. "Food insecurity and rising poverty also mean that most residents cannot meet their daily caloric requirements, while over 90 % of the water in Gaza has been deemed unfit for human consumption," a situation that is becoming even worse as Israel again attacks water and sewage systems, leaving over a million people with even more severe disruption of the barest necessity of life.

Gilbert reports that "Palestinian children in Gaza are suffering immensely. A large proportion are affected by the man-made malnourishment regime caused by the Israeli imposed blockage. Prevalence of anaemia in children <2yrs in Gaza is at 72.8%, while prevalence of wasting, stunting, underweight have been documented at 34.3%, 31.4%, 31.45% respectively." And it gets worse as the report proceeds.

The distinguished human rights lawyer Raji Sourani, who has remained in Gaza through years of Israeli brutality and terror, reports that "The most common sentence I heard when people began to talk about ceasefire: everybody says it's better for all of us to die and not go back to the situation we used to have before this war. We don't want that again. We have no dignity, no pride; we are just soft targets, and we are very cheap. Either this situation really improves or it is better to just die. I am talking about intellectuals, academics, ordinary people: everybody is saying that."

Similar sentiments have been widely voiced: it is better to die with dignity than to be slowly strangled by the torturer.

For Gaza, the plans for the norm were explained forthrightly by Dov Weissglass, a confidant of Ariel Sharon, the person who negotiated the withdrawal of Israeli settlers from Gaza in 2005. Hailed as a grand gesture in Israel and among acolytes and the deluded elsewhere, the withdrawal was in reality a carefully staged "national trauma," properly ridiculed by informed Israeli commentators, among them Israel's leading sociologist, the late Baruch Kimmerling.

What actually happened is that Israeli hawks, led by Sharon, realized that it made good sense to transfer the illegal settlers from their subsidized communities in devastated Gaza, where they were sustained at exorbitant cost, to subsidized settlements in the other occupied territories, which Israel intends to keep. But instead of simply transferring them, as would have been simple enough, it was clearly more useful to present the world with images of little children pleading with soldiers not to destroy their homes, amidst cries of "Never Again," with the implication obvious. What made the farce even more transparent was that it was a replica of the staged trauma when Israel had to evacuate the Egyptian Sinai in 1982. But it played very well for the intended audience at home and abroad.

Weissglass provided his own description of the transfer of settlers from Gaza to other occupied territories: "What I effectively agreed to with the Americans was that [the major settlement blocs in the West Bank] would not be dealt with at all, and the rest will not be dealt with until the Palestinians turn into Finns" – but a special kind of Finns, who would quietly accept rule by a foreign power. "The significance is the freezing of the political process," Weissglass continued. "And when you freeze that process you prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state and you prevent a discussion about the refugees, the borders and Jerusalem. Effectively, this whole package that is

called the Palestinian state, with all that it entails, has been removed from our agenda indefinitely. And all this with [President Bush's] authority and permission and the ratification of both houses of Congress."

Weisglass explained further that Gazans would remain "on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger" - which would not help Israel's fading reputation. With their vaunted technical efficiency, Israeli experts determined precisely how many calories a day Gazans needed for bare survival, while also depriving them of medicines and other means of decent life. Israeli military forces confined them by land, sea and air to what British Prime Minister David Cameron accurately described as a prison camp. The Israeli withdrawal left Israel in total control of Gaza, hence the occupying power under international law. And to close the prison walls even more tightly, Israel excluded Palestinians from a large region along the border, including a third or more of Gaza's scarce arable land. The justification is security for Israelis, which could be just as well achieved by establishing the security zone on the Israeli side of the border, or more fully, by ending the savage siege and other punishments.

The official story is that after Israel graciously handed Gaza over to the Palestinians, in the hope that they would construct a flourishing state, they revealed their true nature by subjecting Israel to unrelenting rocket attack and forcing the captive population to become martyrs to so that Israel would be pictured in a bad light. Reality is rather different.

A few weeks after Israeli troops withdrew, leaving the occupation intact, Palestinians committed a major crime. In January 2006, they voted the wrong way in a carefully monitored free election, handing control of the Parliament to Hamas. The media constantly intone that Hamas is dedicated to the destruction of Israel. In reality, its leaders have repeatedly made it clear and explicit that Hamas would accept a two-state settlement in accord with the international consensus that has been blocked by the US and Israel for 40 years. In contrast, Israel is dedicated to the destruction of Palestine, apart from some occasional meaningless words, and is implementing that commitment.

True, Israel accepted the Road Map for reaching a two-state settlement initiated by President Bush and adopted by the Quartet that is to supervise it: the US, the European Union, the United Nations, and Russia. But as he accepted the Road Map, Prime Minister Sharon at once added fourteen reservations that effectively nullify it. The facts were known to activists, but revealed to the general public for the first time in Jimmy Carter's book "Palestine: Peace not Apartheid." They remain under wraps in media reporting and commentary.

The (unrevised) 1999 platform of Israel's governing party, Binyamin Netanyahu's Likud, "flatly rejects the establishment of a Palestinian Arab state west of the Jordan river." And for those who like to obsess about meaningless charters, the core component of Likud, Menahem Begin's Herut, has yet to abandon its founding doctrine that the territory on both sides of the Jordan is part of the Land of Israel.

The crime of the Palestinians in January 2006 was punished at once. The US and Israel, with Europe shamefully trailing behind, imposed harsh sanctions on the errant population and Israel stepped up its violence. By June, when the attacks sharply escalated, Israel had already fired more than 7700 [155 mm] shells at northern Gaza.

The US and Israel quickly initiated plans for a military coup to overthrow the elected government. When Hamas had the effrontery to foil the plans, the Israeli assaults and the siege became far more severe, justified by the claim that Hamas had taken over the Gaza Strip by force - which is not entirely false, though something rather crucial is omitted.

There should be no need to review again the horrendous record since. The relentless siege and savage attacks are punctuated by episodes of “mowing the lawn,” to borrow Israel’s cheery expression for its periodic exercises of shooting fish in a pond in what it calls a “war of defense.” Once the lawn is mowed and the desperate population seeks to reconstruct somehow from the devastation and the murders, there is a cease-fire agreement. These have been regularly observed by Hamas, as Israel concedes, until Israel violates them with renewed violence.

The most recent cease-fire was established after Israel’s October 2012 assault. Though Israel maintained its devastating siege, Hamas observed the cease-fire, as Israeli officials concede. Matters changed in June, when Fatah and Hamas forged a unity agreement, which established a new government of technocrats that had no Hamas participation and accepted all of the demands of the Quartet. Israel was naturally furious, even more so when even the US joined in signaling approval. The unity agreement not only undercuts Israel’s claim that it cannot negotiate with a divided Palestine, but also threatens the long term goal of dividing Gaza from the West Bank and pursuing its destructive policies in both of the regions.

Something had to be done, and an occasion arose shortly after, when the three Israeli boys were murdered in the West Bank. The Netanyahu government knew at once that they were dead, but pretended otherwise, which provided the opportunity to launch a rampage in the West Bank, targeting Hamas. Netanyahu claimed to have certain knowledge that Hamas was responsible. That too was a lie, as recognized early on. There has been no pretense of presenting evidence. One of Israel’s leading authorities on Hamas, Shlomi Eldar, reported almost at once that the killers very likely came from a dissident clan in Hebron that has long been a thorn in the side of Hamas. Eldar added that “I’m sure they didn’t get any green light from the leadership of Hamas, they just thought it was the right time to act.” The Israeli police have since been searching for two members of the clan, still claiming, without evidence, that they are “Hamas terrorists.”

The 18-day rampage however did succeed in undermining the feared unity government, and sharply increasing Israeli repression. According to Israeli military sources, Israeli soldiers arrested 419 Palestinians, including 335 affiliated with Hamas, and killed six Palestinians, also searching thousands of locations and confiscating \$350,000. Israel also conducted dozens of attacks in Gaza, killing 5 Hamas members on July 7.

Hamas finally reacted with its first rockets in 19 months, Israeli officials reported, providing Israel with the pretext for Operation Protective Edge on July 8.

There has been ample reporting of the exploits of the self-declared Most Moral Army in the World, which should receive the Nobel Peace Prize according to Israel’s Ambassador to the US. By the end of July, some 1500 Palestinians had been killed, exceeding the toll of the Cast Lead crimes of 2008-9, 70% of them civilians including hundreds of women and children. And 3 civilians in Israel. Large areas of Gaza had been turned into rubble. During brief bombing pauses, relatives desperately seek shattered bodies or household items in the ruins of homes. The main power plant was attacked – not for the first time; this is an Israeli specialty — sharply curtailing the already very limited electricity and worse yet, reducing still further the minimal availability of fresh water. Another war crime. Meanwhile rescue teams and ambulances are repeatedly attacked. As atrocities mount throughout Gaza, Israel claims that its goal is to destroy tunnels at the border.

Four hospitals had been attacked, each yet another war crime. The first was the Al-Wafa Rehabilitation Hospital in Gaza City, attacked on the day the ground forces invaded the prison. A few lines in the New York Times, within a story about the ground invasion, reported that “most but not all of the 17 patients and 25 doctors and nurses were evacuated before the electricity was cut and heavy bombardments nearly destroyed the building, doctors said. [We evacuated them under](#)

fire,' said Dr. Ali Abu Ryala, a hospital spokesman. Nurses and doctors had to carry the patients on their backs, some of them falling off the stairway. There is an unprecedented state of panic in the hospital'."

Three working hospitals were then attacked, patients and staff left to their own devices to survive. One Israeli crime did receive wide condemnation: the attack on a UN school that was harboring 3300 terrified refugees who had fled the ruins of their neighborhoods on the orders of the Israeli army. The outraged UNWRA Commission-General Pierre Kraehenbuehl said "I condemn in the strongest possible terms this serious violation of international law by Israeli forces.... Today the world stands disgraced." There were at least three Israeli strikes at the refugee shelter, a site well known to the Israeli army. "The precise location of the Jabalia Elementary Girls School and the fact that it was housing thousands of internally displaced people was communicated to the Israeli army seventeen times, to ensure its protection," Kraehenbuehl said, "the last being at ten to nine last night, just hours before the fatal shelling."

The attack was also condemned "in the strongest possible terms" by the normally reticent Secretary-General of the UN Ban Ki-moon. "Nothing is more shameful than attacking sleeping children," he said. There is no record that the US Ambassador to the UN "choked up as she spoke of infants who perished" in the Israeli strike - or in the attack on Gaza altogether.

But White House spokesperson Bernadette Meehan did respond. She said that "We are extremely concerned that thousands of internally displaced Palestinians who have been called on by the Israeli military to evacuate their homes are not safe in UN designated shelters in Gaza. We also condemn those responsible for hiding weapons in United Nations facilities in Gaza," she added, omitting to mention that these facilities were empty and that the weapons were found by UNRWA, who had condemned those who hid them.

Later, the administration joined in stronger condemnations of this particular crime - while at the same time releasing more weapons to Israel. In doing so, however, Pentagon spokesman Steve Warren told reporters. "And it's become clear that the Israelis need to do more to live up to their very high standards ... for protecting civilian life" - the high standards it has been exhibiting for many years while using US arms, and again today.

Attacks on UN compounds sheltering refugees is another Israeli specialty. One famous incident is the Israeli bombardment of the clearly identified UN refugee shelter in Qana during Shimon Peres's murderous Grapes of Wrath campaign, killing 106 Lebanese civilians who had taken refuge there, including 52 children. To be sure, Israel is not alone in this practice. Twenty years earlier, its South African ally had launched an airborne strike deep into Angola against Cassinga, a refugee camp run by the Namibian resistance SWAPO.

Israeli officials laud the humanity of the army, which even goes so far as to inform residents that their homes will be bombed. The practice is "sadism, sanctimoniously disguising itself as mercy," in the words of Israeli journalist Amira Hass: "A recorded message demanding hundreds of thousands of people leave their already targeted homes, for another place, equally dangerous, 10 kilometers away." In fact, no place in the prison is safe from Israeli sadism.

Some find it difficult to profit from Israel's solicitude. An appeal to the world by the Gaza Catholic Church quotes a priest who explains the plight of residents of the House of Christ, a care home dedicated to looking after disabled children. They were removed to the Holy Family Church because Israel was targeting the area, but now, he writes, "The church of Gaza has received an order to evacuate. They will bomb the Zeitun area and the people are already fleeing. The problem is that the priest Fr George and the three nuns of Mother Teresa have 29 handicapped children and nine old



ladies who can't move. How will they manage to leave? If anyone can intercede with someone in power, and pray, please do it."

Actually, it shouldn't be difficult. Israel already provided the instructions at the Wafa Rehabilitation hospital. And fortunately, at least some states are interceding, as best they can. Five Latin American states — Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador and Peru — withdrew their ambassadors from Israel, following the course of Bolivia and Venezuela, which had broken relations in reaction to earlier Israeli crimes. These principled acts are another sign of the remarkable change in world relations as much of Latin America begins to free itself from western domination, sometimes providing a model of civilized behavior to those who controlled it for 500 years.

The hideous revelations elicited a different reaction from the Most Moral President in the World, the usual one: great sympathy for Israelis, bitter condemnation of Hamas, and calls for moderation by both sides. In his August 1 press conference, he did express concern for Palestinians "caught in the crossfire" (where?) while again vigorously supporting the right of Israel to defend itself, like everyone. Not quite everyone. Not of course Palestinians. They have no right to defend themselves, surely not when Israel is on good behavior, keeping to the norm of quiet-for-quiet: stealing their land, driving them out of their homes, subjecting them to a savage siege, and regularly attacking them with weapons provided by their protector.

Palestinians are like black Africans, the Namibian refugees in the Cassinga camp for example, all terrorists for whom the right of defense does not exist.

A 72-hour humanitarian truce was supposed to go into effect at 8am on August 1. It broke down almost at once. As I write, a few hours later, there are conflicting accounts and a good deal remains unclear. According to a press release of the Al Mezan Center for Human Rights in Gaza, which has a solid reputation for reliability, one of its field workers in Rafah, at the Egyptian border in the south, heard Israeli artillery firing at about 8:05am. By about 9:30am, after reports that an Israeli soldier had been captured, intensive air and artillery bombing of Rafah was underway, killing probably dozens of people and injuring hundreds who had returned to their homes after the ceasefire entered into effect, though numbers could not yet be verified.

The day before, on July 31, the Coastal Water Utility, the sole provider of water in the Gaza Strip, announced that it could no longer provide water or sanitation services because of lack of fuel and frequent attacks on personnel. Al Mezan reports that by then, "almost all primary health services have stopped in the Gaza Strip due to the lack of water, garbage collection and environment health services. UNRWA had also warned about the risk of imminent spreading of disease owing to the halt of water and sanitation services." Meanwhile, on the eve of the cease-fire, Israeli missiles fired from aircraft continued to kill and wound victims throughout the region.

When the current episode of sadism is finally called off, whenever that will be, Israel hopes to be free to pursue its criminal policies in the occupied territories without interference, and with the US support it has enjoyed in the past: military, economic, and diplomatic; and also ideological, by framing the issues in conformity to Israeli doctrines. Gazans will be free to return to the norm in their Israeli-run prison, while in the West Bank they can watch in peace as Israel dismantles what remains of their possessions.

That is the likely outcome if the US maintains its decisive and virtually unilateral support for Israeli crimes and its rejection of the longstanding international consensus on diplomatic settlement. But the future will be quite different if the US withdraws that support. In that case it would be possible to move towards the "enduring solution" in Gaza that Secretary of State Kerry called for, eliciting hysterical condemnation in Israel because the phrase could be interpreted as calling for an end to



Israel's siege and regular attacks. And – horror of horrors – the phrase might even be interpreted as calling for implementation of international law in the rest of the occupied territories.

It is not that Israel's security would be threatened by adherence to international law; it would very likely be enhanced. But as explained 40 years ago by Israeli general Ezer Weizman, later president, Israel could then not “exist according to the scale, spirit, and quality she now embodies.”

There are similar cases in recent history. Indonesian generals swore that they would never abandon what Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans called “the Indonesian Province of East Timor” as he was making a deal to steal Timorese oil. And as long as the ruling generals retained US support through decades of virtually genocidal slaughter, their goals were realistic. Finally, in September 1999, under considerable domestic and international pressure, President Clinton informed them quietly that the game was over and they instantly withdrew – while Evans turned to his new career as the lauded apostle of “Responsibility to Protect,” to be sure, in a version designed to permit western resort to violence at will.

Another relevant case is South Africa. In 1958, South Africa's foreign minister informed the US ambassador that although his country was becoming a pariah state, it would not matter as long as US support continued. His assessment proved fairly accurate. Thirty years later, Reagan was the last significant holdout in supporting the apartheid regime, which was still sustaining itself. Within a few years, Washington joined the world, and the regime collapsed – not for that reason alone of course; one crucial factor was the remarkable Cuban role in the liberation of Africa, generally ignored in the West though not in Africa.

Forty years ago Israel made the fateful decision to choose expansion over security, rejecting a full peace treaty offered by Egypt in return for evacuation from the occupied Egyptian Sinai, where Israel was initiating extensive settlement and development projects. It has adhered to that policy ever since, making essentially the same judgment as South Africa did in 1958.

In the case of Israel, if the US decided to join the world, the impact would be far greater. Relations of power allow nothing else, as has been demonstrated over and over when Washington has demanded that Israel abandon cherished goals. Furthermore, Israel by now has little recourse, after having adopted policies that turned it from a country that was greatly admired to one that is feared and despised, a course it is pursuing with blind determination today in its resolute march towards moral deterioration and possible ultimate destruction.

Could US policy change? It's not impossible. Public opinion has shifted considerably in recent years, particularly among the young, and it cannot be completely ignored. For some years there has been a good basis for public demands that Washington observe its own laws and cut off military aid to Israel. US law requires that “no security assistance may be provided to any country the government of which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights.” Israel most certainly is guilty of this consistent pattern, and has been for many years. That is why Amnesty International, in the course of Israel's murderous Cast Lead operation in Gaza, called for an arms embargo against Israel (and Hamas). Senator Patrick Leahy, author of this provision of the law, has brought up its potential applicability to Israel in specific cases, and with a well-conducted educational, organizational, and activist effort such initiatives could be pursued successively. That could have a very significant impact in itself, while also providing a springboard for further actions not only to punish Israel for its criminal behavior, but also to compel Washington to become part of “the international community” and to observe international law and decent moral principles.

Nothing could be more significant for the tragic Palestinian victims of many years of violence and

repression.

**Noam Chomsky**

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