

# November 13: In the aftermath of Paris, the Israeli way is not the answer

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When I arrived in Paris on the evening of Friday, 13 November, my host asked our taxi driver to take us to her home at Fontaine au Roi; the taxi's GPS system displayed that a shooting was taking place at that very moment. It wasn't until the next morning that we understood the full details of the tragedy. Shortly after that trip to Paris, I went to Brussels to find that the security alert had reached "level four" and the metro and schools had been closed in anticipation of a terror attack. The purpose of both of these trips had been to respond to organisations in solidarity with the Palestinian people, organisations which had invited me to speak with the public in Europe about life in occupied Palestine.

I feel an attachment to France, where I once lived and studied and where I still have friends and comrades. I am agonised by the killing of innocents in Paris, just as I am agonised by the killing of Lebanese in Beirut the day before, the killings in Bamako the following week, and the recent killing of pro-Kurdish demonstrators in Ankara and Russian tourists in Sinai. The anguish for me is double: it is about the loss of life of the "other" as well as about the severe damage to the value system of my own extended "self".

The attack in Paris provided Israeli officials and their followers with an opportunity, as usual, to discredit Palestinian resistance to Israel's brutal military occupation. The prime minister claimed that those who condemn the Paris attacks but do not condemn violence against Israelis are "hypocrites and blind. Behind these terrorist attacks stands radical Islam, which seeks to destroy us, the same radical Islam that struck in Paris and threatens all of Europe." Pushing for yet more binary thinking, a division of "we versus them" and "good versus evil" he added, "As I've said for many years, militant Islamic terrorism attacks our societies because it wants to destroy our civilisation and our values." Israel's Defence Minister, Moshe Ya'alon declared in a similar vein: "What we have is Jihadist Islam that is calling to destroy Western culture." This cliché is broadcast even though most of the victims of the terrorist "Islamic" groups are Muslims and these victims are often, like the Palestinian refugees from Syria, opponents of Israel.

"They want to kill us because we are Jews," is the assertion of Israeli officials in the face of Palestinian acts of resistance, with complete denial of the context of the occupation. In France, Veronique Mortaigne and Nathalie Guibert's article, appearing in *Le Monde* two days after the Paris attack, linked the attack on the Bataclan with earlier calls by pro-Palestinian groups to boycott the theatre because it held a gala event benefitting Israeli soldiers. In spite of a prompt condemnation of the Paris attack by Palestinian Islamic resistance groups and the expression of their solidarity with its victims, a 2012 photo of Palestinians celebrating the signing of a reconciliation agreement was circulated on social media in France with the fraudulent claim that they were celebrating the attacks in the French capital. Only later was this falsehood exposed. There were subtle hints by Israeli journalists that Europe deserved the terrorist attack for adopting a policy of labelling products accurately when they are sourced in Israel's illegal settlements, and louder declarations such as that by Rabbi Dov Lior: "The wicked ones in blood-soaked Europe deserve it for what they did to our people 70 years ago." Such outrageous sentiments were less commonplace in Europe.

The truth is that the “Jewish State” was established through excessive violence and aggression against the Palestinians, the native people of the land. Like other native peoples whose land was colonised, whose resources were stolen, and whose families and relatives were killed, the Palestinians have been capable of using violence to retaliate against their oppressors and to deter them from further oppression, as well as utilising nonviolent campaigns and diplomatic channels to achieve liberation. That is all entirely within their rights under international law.

Palestinians are known for their hospitality to foreigners who come to Palestine, not for killing them. In rare cases such as the killing of the Italian pro-Palestine activist Vittorio Arrigoni by a Salafi group in Gaza, the perpetrators were punished by law and condemned by the full spectrum of political parties. In stark contrast, the killing of an endless list of foreign activists and journalists by the Israeli army has received justification (“self-defence”) not punishment and justice. Admittedly, during the 1970s, some Palestinians took Israeli hostages in places outside the borders of historic Palestine to exchange them with political prisoners - most dramatically in Munich - but those responsible were secular resistance groups who never used Islamic rhetoric to advance their ideology. Islamic Palestinian groups have always restricted their fight to occupied Palestine and not beyond. It is the Israelis who pride themselves that the Mossad (the Israeli Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations) has killed Palestinians activists, intellectuals and representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organisation and other resistance groups in European as well as Arab capitals.

It is thus more reasonable to compare the tactics of Daesh with those of the terrorist groups behind the founding of the state of Israel rather than with the Palestinian resistance. Both Daesh and the “Jewish state” were established through horrible massacres leaving a population of refugees in their wake. Both display expansionist ambitions. The strategy of Daesh is to attack the West, with the goal of provoking further discrimination against Western Muslims to get them out of the “grey zone”; Israel’s Mossad was behind terror attacks against Jews in Iraq, Egypt and Morocco intended to induce them to move to Israel. Operation Sushana, in which Israeli spies planned bombing attacks against Egyptian Jews; the deliberate and sustained attack by Israeli aircraft and motor torpedo boats against the USS Liberty, killing 34 crew members and wounding 171 others; and various false-flag operations around the world are examples of heinous crimes committed by Israelis for which blame was pinned elsewhere.

In addition to reaping political benefit through reframing the occupation of Palestine and the imposition of Israeli policies as a “war on terror” and smearing the character of Palestinians as inhumane, uncivilised terrorists, Israel also takes the current opportunity to peddle its security apparatus and policies as “know-how” that has been field-tested on Palestinians. This “know-how” has been used to repress freedom and democracy in Europe and to inflame a “war on terror” whose victims already include more than 4,000 civilians. At a time when Israel is decreasing the age of criminal responsibility for Palestinian children to 12, pushing them into interrogation centres and exposing them to torture, we can only hope that Europe will step forward by expanding its democratic legislative system and human rights efforts with the goal of helping the Palestinians to seek justice in their currently occupied territories. It is more democracy, more solidarity and more policies supporting human rights and anti-imperialism that will eventually stop terrorism, not repression, binary thinking and the export of Israeli “lessons” to Europe.

**Samah Jabr**

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\* "In the aftermath of Paris, the Israeli way is not the answer". MEM Wednesday, 02 December 2015 13:12:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/articles/europe/22610-in-the-aftermath-of-paris-the-israeli-way-is-not-the-answer>

\* Samah Jabr is a psychiatrist and psychotherapist in Jerusalem, who cares about the wellbeing of her community, beyond issues of mental illness. She writes regularly on mental health in occupied Palestine.