

PAPER 9: RESISTANCE

A CRASH COURSE ON THE TRUTH

Is the Ghandi way the only way? Violent vs. non-violent resistance



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RESISTANCE

When the topic of resistance comes up in terms of Israel's occupation of Palestine, we are often told that if Palestinians didn't advocate violence, peace would be a reality. Further, with our glorification of the Ghandi doctrine, we often encourage "non-violent" resistance, which we see as a moral and righteous resistance, as opposed to one that is more "violent". While the lethal violence of the Israeli army is justified as self-defence, Palestinians are called on to resist through "peaceful" means only.

Disclaimer: Though we shouldn't have to say this, we want to emphasize that we are not justifying the use of any violence against any innocent civilian.

THE AGGRESSOR VS THE TERRORIST

Before we delve into the subject, we must ask ourselves: **what makes a terrorist a terrorist?** Is it the lack of a uniform, or the fact that the person is not state sanctioned? Do we extend the right of self-defence to Palestinians under occupation or do we reserve this right for the Israeli army? The hypocrisy in our answers might shock us, but it is important that we address these questions.

MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT THROUGH THE EYES OF ISRAEL

THE UGLY
AGGRESSOR



THE POOR
VICTIM



Further, it is vital that we fully understand the position the Palestinian people are in. It is clear (from the previous papers) that it is the Palestinians who are in a position to truthfully claim self-defence, and it is Israel who is acting in aggression. Palestinians have been denied the right to self-determination due to Israeli aggressions for more than sixty years. Like all human beings, they too, have the right to self-

determination and the right to defend themselves against Israeli aggressions. At the very least, they also have the right to a sovereign state, according to international law.

It is also important to note the imbalance of this occupation. Israel has one of the most powerful armies in the world (ranked fifth most powerful army in the world), whereas the Palestinians do not have anything resembling an army. While Israel has nuclear weapons, rockets that are rarely fatal are the most lethal weapon of any Palestinian.

NON VIOLENT VS VIOLENT RESISTANCE

While it is not necessarily 'wrong' to deem "peaceful" resistance as the moral high ground, it can be problematic to enforce this value on others, given that the right of self-defence is a **right**. And it may be controversial to state this, but without the use of lethal force against tyrants, would toppling them have been possible? For example, if

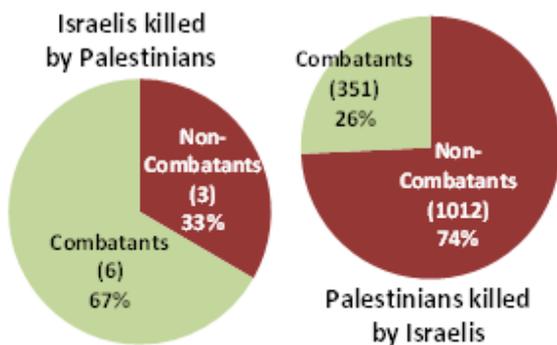
the Allies fighting Nazi Germany decided to participate solely in a non-violent resistance, where would we be?

Norman Finkelstein argues that according to Ghandi's doctrine, non-violence is only effective when it evokes sympathy. Therefore, in the case of Palestine, non-violence is ineffective. Palestinians have been bearing the brunt of Israeli warfare for over sixty years—and this has not evoked any sympathy accompanied with the penalization of Israel. The Palestinians have tried “peace processes” and have not received any of their rights. For example, the Oslo Accords resulted in a sharp increase of settlers, expanded settlements and the continuous disregard for Palestinian human rights. In the Hamas-Israel ceasefire, Israel broke the ceasefire, and then bombarded the encaged Gaza Strip, massacring 1400 Palestinians, more than 20% of whom were **children**.

The Israeli withdrawal of South Lebanon after almost 20 years of occupation is evidence to the fact that a more forceful resistance, like that of Hizbullah, has been effective and **can** work with Israel. Furthermore, the prisoner exchange in 2011 between Hamas and Israel was more evidence to the fact that taking a rather forceful stand against Israel can achieve more tangible results. Never before in the history of the occupation, have 1000 Palestinian prisoners been freed.

USING THE TERRORIST LABEL

We hear it so often, that it has become a dominating word in our vocabulary. Those who fight Israel (i.e. Palestinians, Hizbullah and Hamas) are “**terrorists**”. Israel claims that the difference between them and these “terrorist” groups is that Israel doesn't **aim** for civilians: civilians are just unfortunate and inevitable collateral damage. Israel also claims that it is more humane as it does not suicide bomb (In recent years, groups like Hamas and Hizbullah have abandoned suicide-bombing, however, this subject is too vast to cover here). This being said, Hizbullah and Hamas, using petty rockets in comparison to Israel's top of the line military, have managed to kill a higher ratio of soldiers to civilians than Israel managed to (in 2006 and 2008). Israel has also been found guilty of crimes against humanity: including aiming at civilians and using disproportionate force. It was and is Israel that has ethnically cleansed and is occupying Palestine, making it the Palestinians who are defending themselves. Therefore, it must be asked, given the facts, are we applying the term “terrorist” fairly and without bias?



CASUALTIES IN OPERATION CAST LEAD

Graph: 33% of Israelis killed were civilian, whereas 74% of Palestinians killed were civilians and non-combatants. **Data taken from B'Tselem.**

FORMS OF RESISTANCE

Palestinians are resilient. In fact, their very existence is a form of resistance to their ethnic cleansing. Because of how powerless they often are against the overly-armed Israeli army, many Palestinians will show dissent, through whatever means, even by throwing stones- the only weapon at their disposal (and rarely, if ever, fatal). One thing is clear, it may have been more than 60 years, but they are not giving up.

It is also important to note that the “non-violent” resistance of the Palestinians is rarely discussed. We are so obsessed with the idea of “terrorism” that we forget to see the many instances of everyday non-fatal Palestinian resistance. For example, art has become an important form of expressing dissent. One only needs to google the apartheid wall to see miles of beautiful art, expressing resistance to Israeli apartheid. Every day, there are protests against Israeli violence, settlements, occupation, and apartheid. Often, these protests are met with violence from the IDF, including tear gas, skunk spray, and live ammunition. Many unarmed protestors have been shot and severely injured or killed by the IDF. Most recently, Mustafa Tamimi was murdered when a tear gas canister was shot directly at his head. Rachel Corrie was bulldozed and killed when she stood in protest of a house demolition. The village of Bil'in is particularly noteworthy for its creative protesting, including a rendition of Avatar.

Perhaps most importantly, is the Palestinian call on the international community to participate in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Campaign against Israel. While it is not lethal to the human body, it is seen as one of the biggest threats to Israel, and is lethal to the very soul of apartheid (if it had one). The growing BDS movement is perhaps one of the most potent and powerful means of resistance.



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