

What's The Difference Between Peace and Quiet?

Several weeks ago, the news media were giving us daily updates on the horrendous battle between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. Then a cease-fire finally took hold for more than a few days. Over 2000 Gazans, mostly civilians, including about one in four who were children, died under the



Israeli bombing offensive. Israel lost a few dozen soldiers and two civilians. About a quarter of Gaza's 1.7 million residents were left homeless.

Both Israel and Hamas had fired at civilians in violation of the internationally recognized laws of war.

In Israel's case the onslaught was grossly disproportionate to the provocation.

After the noise of battle, a somber silence descended over Gaza. Families searched for missing loved ones and began the quest for housing. Human service workers, exhausted from months of carnage, struggled to catch their breath. Elsewhere, Gaza became a fading memory, literally "yesterday's news" in an age when there is always another battle in progress or about to begin. Pope Francis calls this our "piecemeal Third World War" already underway.

So there is a kind of "quiet" now in Gaza, but it is far from "peace." Palestinians have a legal right to be free of occupation and to resist if the occupier refuses to leave. The Gaza war of 2014, like the two before it, in 2012 and 2008, was described by Israeli military officers as a routine operation to give Palestinian resistance capability a periodic "haircut." While Israel claims that it "left Gaza" in 2005, what it actually did was abandon all its responsibilities as an occupying power while enforcing a blockade that cripples Gaza's economy and prevents freedom of travel in

the world, even to connect with family members in the West Bank.

And Gaza is only a part of the problem. Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem are almost twice the number in Gaza. All these Palestinians are held in an ever-tightening grip, while Israel builds new settlements, in violation of its legal responsibilities as the occupying power since 1967, meanwhile deflecting all efforts to negotiate a final settlement.

In the West Bank and Gaza, Israel has been pressing to silence protest and impose "quiet" for 47 years, while seizing ever more Palestinian lands. Rightwing Zionists in Israel still aim to annex all of Palestine. Other Israelis want a separate Palestinian state, provided it is powerless, so that Jews remain the majority in Israel. These are contradictory goals and reflect no real desire to make a lasting and just peace with the Palestinians, who were forced from their original homes nearly seventy years ago.

To be sure, a small and embattled Israeli peace movement knows the difference between real peace and a "quiet" born of oppression. We as members of Jewish Voice for Peace honor their resolve and join with them to support an end to the Israeli occupation.

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