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**January 27, 2009:
International Holocaust
Remembrance Day**



*How does the city sit solitary, that was full of people! How is she become as a widow!...
She weeps sore into the night, and her tears are on her cheeks:
among all who loved her she has none to comfort her.
(Book of Lamentations)*

Last week, after murdering 1400 people – of whom 400 were children – after bombing hospitals and mosques, schools, universities and humanitarian supplies, and tens of thousand of homes, Israel declared a cease-fire. A shameful parade of European leaders immediately went to Jerusalem to embrace the mass murderers and to pledge their support for the continuing siege of Gaza.

The primary purpose of this massacre was to break the spirit of the Palestinian people until they surrender and accept their fate as lesser human beings. As former Chief of Staff Moshe Yaalon said in 2002, "The Palestinians must be made to understand in the deepest recesses of their consciousness that they are a defeated people." European leaders support this goal, as did previous U.S. administrations, as do the ruling elites of Egypt, Jordan and Saudi-Arabia, despite the fury of their peoples. We wait to see if the freshly inaugurated Obama Administration will break with sixty long years of attack on the Palestinian people armed and financed by the U.S. and Europe.

We grieve with the people of Gaza. We see the faces of the children, of the women and the men; we hear their voices. We also hear the silence of the leaders of Western countries, intermittently broken by evasive platitudes. And we are reminded of the time when the world turned a blind eye while *our* forebears, *our* families, were slaughtered.

100,000 Palestinians were made homeless in Gaza this month. Most of them became refugees in 1948 when they were expelled at gunpoint from their towns and villages. Now they are homeless again, even in their land of exile, and at risk of being driven out from Palestine altogether.

Yet on January 27, Holocaust Remembrance Day, the leaders of the U.S. and Europe will be joined in honoring the memory of our dead. Even as we seek to remember and to honor the immensity of that loss, we struggle to find words to convey the hypocrisy of these ceremonies, in which those who are silent today pay homage to the victims of yesterday's silence.

The radical Jewish writer Walter Benjamin, who died while fleeing the Nazis, wrote, "not even the dead will be safe from the enemy, if he is victorious. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious." The Third Reich was defeated, and yet, "the enemy has not ceased to be victorious." Racism, mass murder, and genocide continue to be accepted tools of statecraft. Even our dead are not safe. They have been called up, disturbed, dredged from their mass graves and forced to testify against their fellow human beings in pain, to confess a hatred that was alien to them and to offer themselves up as justification for a new cycle of suffering in Palestine. Their ghosts have been enlisted to help displace fellow Jews from Arab homelands, and to bequeath to them that same alien hatred, conscripting those of us descending from Arab lands to become enemies of our own memory and past.

The Jewish British MP Gerald Kaufman spoke in anguish while the massacres in Gaza were taking place: "My grandmother did not die to provide cover for Israeli soldiers murdering Palestinian grandmothers in Gaza." We share and echo that refusal. Let not the memory of Jews murdered by the Nazi regime serve as cover for the attempted destruction of the Palestinian people!

Although the guns are relatively silent, this genocidal assault on the Palestinian people is not over. The siege, the lack of food and fresh water, the disease-threatening broken sewage system, and economic collapse and humanitarian crisis persist in Gaza with the full support of the U.S., Europe and the Egyptian government. As the siege of Gaza continues, so does the slow ethnic cleansing of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the home demolitions, the building of the apartheid wall, the settlement build-up, the economic devastation of the towns and villages strangled by checkpoints, the assault on Palestinian neighborhoods in Jaffa, Akka, Lydda, the Galilee and the Negev, the mass imprisonment of Palestinians (over 11,000), and all the large and small ways by which Israel is seeking to crush the spirit and erase the presence of the Palestinian people in their homeland.

Faced with the threat of annihilation in Europe, Jews resisted. From ghettos to concentration camps and within countries under occupation, Jews led resistance to the Nazi regime. Today, from the ghetto of Gaza to the Bantustans of the West Bank and from the neighborhoods of Jaffa and Akka to cities across the globe, Palestinians resist Israel's attempt to destroy them as a people. On January 27th, honoring the memory of our dead is for us inseparable from honoring more than sixty years of Palestinian survival and resistance. Only when the Palestinian people regain their freedom will the dead rest safely. Then we will all celebrate another victory for life.

International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network

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