

## Gaza in Context Narration Script

### Part 1

The Gaza strip is home to 1.8 million Palestinians. 1.2 million of whom are refugees from surrounding areas – to which Israel does not allow them to return.<sup>1</sup>

In the Summer 2014, Israel attacked the population of Gaza with unprecedented force. The 11<sup>th</sup> most powerful military in the world<sup>2</sup> used warships, drones, missiles, one-ton bombs, and hellfire missiles to pummel the besieged Palestinian population, which had nowhere to hide.

*[Statistics on Screen]*<sup>3</sup>

But this register of death and destruction was not merely the ugly outcome of war. Israel directly targeted Palestinian civilians as well.

Israeli warplanes attacked seven UNRWA schools providing shelter. In Jabaliya, for example, the UN gave Israel its GPS coordinates 17 times to avoid hitting a school sheltering 3,000 people. Israel struck the school anyway and killed 17 Palestinians, including 4 children.<sup>4</sup>

Though unprecedented in degree, such military offensives have become a common feature of the coastal enclave.

*[List of Operations]*<sup>5</sup>

This was the 3<sup>rd</sup> attack in 6.5 years, the 14<sup>th</sup> time since Israel's settler withdrawal in 2005, and undoubtedly not the last onslaught against the Palestinians of Gaza.<sup>6</sup>

*[News footage]*

During the devastating offensive, news media repeatedly framed the issue as Israel's fight against a marauding Muslim mob driven by religious hatred.

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<sup>1</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), *Humanitarian Response Plan: January-December 2016* (United Nations: November 2015), [https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/2016\\_hrp\\_22\\_january%202016.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/2016_hrp_22_january%202016.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Amanda Macias, Jeremy Bender, and Skye Gould, "The 35 Most Powerful Militaries In The World," *Business Insider*, accessed June 14, 2016, <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-worlds-most-powerful-militaries-2014-12>.

<sup>3</sup> World Health Organization, "Situation Report #11: 29 August–5 September 2014," accessed June 14, 2016, [http://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/palestine/documents/WHO\\_Sitrep\\_on\\_Gaza\\_11.pdf?ua=1&ua=1](http://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/palestine/documents/WHO_Sitrep_on_Gaza_11.pdf?ua=1&ua=1).

<sup>4</sup> United Nations, President of the Security Council Dina Kawar, *Summary by the Secretary-General of the report of the United Nations Headquarters Board of Inquiry into Certain Incidents that Occurred in the Gaza Strip between 8 July 2014 and 26 August 2014*, S/2015/286, April 27, 2015, <http://blog.unwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/Board-of-Inquiry.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> "Israeli Military Operations Against Gaza, 2000-2008," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 38.3 (2009): 122-138.

<sup>6</sup> "Chronology" and "Quarterly Update on Conflict and Diplomacy" from *Journal of Palestine Studies* 33.3-43.4 (issues from November 2003 through June 2014).

Gaza seemed to float outside of history. But understanding these systematic offensives means understanding where Gaza fits in the larger question of Palestine.

Israel claims that it's responding to Hamas rocket fire.<sup>7</sup> But no one stopped to ask: If Hamas didn't launch its first rocket until 2001, nor its first suicide attack until 1994, then what explains an ongoing conflict for nearly 7 decades? If Hamas was not established until 1988, then why has Israel occupied the Gaza Strip since 1967?

There are no rockets from the West Bank, from East Jerusalem, from Palestinian cities within Israel, so what explains Israel's abject disregard for those Palestinians? What explains settler takeovers, home demolitions, forced displacement, disproportionate use of force, arrest without due process, denial of entry, land confiscations, and movement restrictions?

The explanation is found in Israel's relationship to all Palestinians.

## **Part 2**

Israel's campaign against the Gaza Strip is not Gaza specific. It's Palestine specific. Israel doesn't have a Hamas problem; it has a Palestine problem.

And it is guided by two primary policies:

- To obtain the maximum amount of Palestinian land with the minimum number of Palestinian people and
- To concentrate a maximum number of Palestinians onto a minimum amount of land

Israel pursues a settler-colonial project. It removes Palestinians and replaces them with Jewish Israelis.

*[Video of settler takeover of Umm Il Kurd's home in Sheikh Jarrah, East Jerusalem]*

And it does so through dispossession, displacement, and concentration towards all Palestinians regardless of where they live or what legal jurisdiction governs their lives.

Israel achieves its goals using civil law in Israel<sup>8</sup>, martial law in the West Bank<sup>9</sup>, a mix of martial and administrative law in East Jerusalem<sup>10</sup>, and all-out warfare in the Gaza Strip.

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<sup>7</sup> Israeli Defense Forces, "Operation Protective Edge," *IDF Blog*, accessed 14 June 2016, <https://www.idfblog.com/operationgaza2014/>.

<sup>8</sup> Noura Erakat with Tamara Elsayyad and Temi Adekandabi, *Israel's Serious Breaches of Its Obligations under the International Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination* (Geneva: BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, 2012), 12-17.

<sup>9</sup> "Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, September 28, 1995," Document 549 in *Documents on the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, edited by M. Cherif Bassiouni, 2 vols. (New York: Transnational Publishers, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Erakat, Elsayyad, and Adekandabi, *Israel's Serious Breaches*, 12-14.

In 1948, Zionist militias together with European support established Israel in Mandatory Palestine. This necessitated the systematic removal of the native Palestinian population and the demolition and destruction of their villages. Palestinians, thus regard Israel's establishment as the Nakba, or catastrophe.

For nearly two decades, Israel imposed martial law on its Palestinian citizens and dispossessed them in a series of land laws.<sup>11</sup>

Military orders together with municipal master plans have concentrated 46% of Palestinian-Israelis in the northern district.<sup>12</sup> In the Negev, simmering plans will uproot up to 70,000 Palestinians and concentrate them in urban townships.<sup>13</sup>

Since occupying the West Bank in 1967 and, especially under the veneer of the peace process, Israel has removed, displaced, and concentrated Palestinians through settlement expansion<sup>14</sup>, military roads<sup>15</sup>, firing zones<sup>16</sup>, bypass roads, para-statal settler takeovers, the annexation wall<sup>17</sup>, and land confiscations. The Israeli Knesset is making plans to formally annex Area C or 62% of the West Bank.<sup>18</sup>

The same policy is being pursued in the Gaza Strip. In addition to those displaced and killed in 2014, Israel expanded its buffer zone by 44%, intensifying the territory's severe density.<sup>19</sup>

Since Israel can no longer deploy boots on the ground in Gaza, though not for a lack of trying, it concentrates Palestinians from the perimeter and maintains their subjugation with repeated military campaigns euphemistically known as "mowing the lawn."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Amjad Alqasis and Nidal al Azza, *Israeli Land Grab and Forced Population Transfer of Palestinians: A Handbook for Vulnerable Individuals and Communities* (Bethlehem: BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, 2013), 144-45.

<sup>12</sup> State of Israel Prime Minister's Office: Central Bureau of Statistics Center for Statistical Information, "The Arab Population in Israel," *Statistilite* 27 (2002), <http://www.cbs.gov.il/statistical/arabju.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Adalah – the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, "The Praver-Begin Bill and the Forced Displacement of the Bedouin," May 2013, <http://www.adalah.org/uploads/oldfiles/Public/files/English/Publications/Articles/2013/Praver-Begin-Plan-Background-Adalah.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> OCHA, oPt, *The Humanitarian Impact of Israeli Settlement Policies* (United Nations, 2012), [https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_settlements\\_factsheet\\_december\\_2012\\_english.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_settlements_factsheet_december_2012_english.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> MA'AN Development Center, *Apartheid Roads: Promoting Settlements, Punishing Palestinians* (Ramallah: MA'AN Development Center, 2008), [https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/opt\\_prot\\_maan\\_apartheid\\_roads\\_dec\\_2008.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/opt_prot_maan_apartheid_roads_dec_2008.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> OCHA, oPt, *The Humanitarian Impact of Israeli- Declared "Firing Zones" in the West Bank*, (United Nations: August 2012), [https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_firing\\_zone\\_factsheet\\_august\\_2012\\_english.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_firing_zone_factsheet_august_2012_english.pdf), [https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_firing\\_zone\\_factsheet\\_august\\_2012\\_english.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_firing_zone_factsheet_august_2012_english.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> Karine Mac Allister and Ingrid Gassner Jaradat, *Displaced by the Wall*, (Bethlehem and Geneva: BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2006), [http://www.badil.org/phocadownloadpap/Badil\\_docs/publications/DisplacedbytheWall-en.pdf](http://www.badil.org/phocadownloadpap/Badil_docs/publications/DisplacedbytheWall-en.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> Naftali Bennett, "The Israel Stability Initiative," Document "C1" from "Documents and Source Material" in *Journal of Palestine Studies* 41.4 (2012).

<sup>19</sup> OCHA, oPt, *Gaza Emergency Situation report (as of 22 July 2014)*, (United Nations: July 2014), [https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_sitrep\\_23\\_07\\_2014.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_sitrep_23_07_2014.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> Steve Niva, "Israel's 'Operation Mow the Lawn'," *Middle East Research and Information Project*, December 7, 2012, <http://www.merip.org/israels-operation-mow-lawn>.

Despite the different approaches, the outcome is the same: Israel controls the greatest amount of Palestinian land with the least number of Palestinians and concentrates the greatest number of Palestinians on the least amount of fragmented lands.

### **Part 3**

But why would Israel pursue warfare in the Gaza Strip, rather than use its West Bank policy for displacement and control—where it outsources security to Palestinian forces and foots the bill to international donors?<sup>21</sup>

Because Israel wants the West Bank.

Its religious claims there are more pronounced.<sup>22</sup>

It desires control of the Western Aquifer, one of the most significant sources of water in the region; and it wants to control the eastern most border—the Jordan Valley.<sup>23</sup>

In contrast, Israel does not want the Gaza Strip.

*[Text on screen: At least not anymore...]*

By 2005, Israel only had 8,000 settlers in the Gaza Strip compared to 400,000 in the West Bank.<sup>24</sup> It considers Gaza a cancer.<sup>25</sup> The Strip has always been a hotbed of popular resistance, well before the establishment of Hamas. Israel has repeatedly tried and failed to suppress the population using violence as well as cooptation strategies.

Since the early nineties, Israel has set Gaza apart from the rest of the conflict and pursued a policy of isolation, de-development, and control. As early as 1993, Shimon Peres told a UNESCO conference that he saw the Gaza Strip progressively evolving into a Palestinian state, while the West Bank becomes an autonomous polity of Palestinians and Israeli settlers whose status and borders would eventually be defined.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Tariq Dana, “The Beginning of the End of Palestinian Security Coordination with Israel?,” *Jadaliyya*, July 4, 2014, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/18379>.

<sup>22</sup> Gershon Gorenberg, *The Accidental Empire: Israel and the Birth of the Settlements, 1967-1977* (New York: Times Books, 2006), 4.

<sup>23</sup> David B. Brooks and Stephen C. Lonergan, “Watershed: the Role of Freshwater in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” (Ottawa: International Development Research, 1995); Palestinian Hydrology Group, “Fast Facts,” [http://www.phg.org/fast\\_facts.asp](http://www.phg.org/fast_facts.asp).

<sup>24</sup> U.K. Parliament, House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, *Human Rights Annual Report 2005*, First Report of Session 2005-06, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmselect/cmfaff/574/574.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> Ari Shavit, “The Enemy Within,” *Ha’aretz*, August 29, 2002, <http://www.haaretz.com/the-enemy-within-1.35604>; Scott Ratner, “‘There is no co-existence with cancer:’ Right-wing Israelis demand gov’t give military ‘free hand’ to fight Palestinians,” *Mondoweiss*, October 9, 2015, <http://mondoweiss.net/2015/10/existence-military-palestinians/#sthash.ej3icDpd.dpuf>.

<sup>26</sup> Amnon Brazili, “For Peres—Yet Another Vision,” in *Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories 5.1*, listed as “How Peres Sees the Future,” edited by Geoffrey Aronson (Foundation for Middle East Peace: January 1995), 2; Chris Hedges, “Arafat and Peres Confer on Accord,” *New York Times*, December 10, 1993,

In preparation for a peace deal ending the first intifada, Israel imported foreign labor to replace its Palestinian labor force.<sup>27</sup> Together with the impact of the first Gulf War, the economic downturn in the Gaza Strip was severe.<sup>28</sup>

*[Stats for food]*

In March 1993, Israel imposed a complete closure of Gaza, which was never fully lifted again. By this time, the Gazan economy was already dependent on Israel and incapable of self-sustenance.<sup>29</sup>

Nine months later, Israel and the PLO signed the Oslo Accords on the White House lawn.<sup>30</sup>

By 1993, Israel had made Gaza dependent, announced an intention to transform it into the Palestinian state, and had sealed it off.<sup>31</sup>

All of this without a single rocket or a single suicide attack.

Hamas launched its first suicide attack on April 7, 1994 in retaliation for the murder of 29 Palestinians praying in the Ibrahimi mosque in Hebron.<sup>32</sup> Two years later, Benyamin Netanyahu assumed office and explicitly opposed the peace process.<sup>33</sup>

*[PM Netanyahu boasts to constituents that he “stopped” the Peace Process.]*<sup>34</sup>

When the peace process crumbled four years later, it set off the second Palestinian Intifada. In this context, Hamas launched its first mortar into Israel in March 2001.<sup>35</sup>

In April 2004, then Prime Minister Ariel Sharon proposed complete withdrawal from Gaza in exchange for consolidation and control of settlements in the West Bank. Unilateral disengagement in 2005, realized Israel’s vision articulated by Peres in 1993.<sup>36</sup>

In the 18 months between Sharon’s proposal and its execution, Israel launched 8 military

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<http://www.nytimes.com/1993/12/10/world/arafat-and-peres-confer-on-accord.html>; Leila Farsakh, "Palestinian Labor Flows to the Israeli Economy: A Finished Story?" *Journal of Palestine Studies* 32.1 (2002): 13-27.

<sup>27</sup> Leila Farsakh, *Palestinian Labour Migration to Israel: Labour, Land and Occupation*, Routledge Political Economy of the Middle East and North Africa (Routledge, 2005).

<sup>28</sup> “Chronology” and “Quarterly Update” from *Journal of Palestine Studies* 33.3-43.4.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Brazili, “For Peres—Yet Another Vision,” 2; Hedges, “Arafat and Peres Confer on Accord.”

<sup>32</sup> On this Day, “1994 Jewish settler kills 30 at holy site,” BBC, February 25, 1994,

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/25/newsid\\_4167000/4167929.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/25/newsid_4167000/4167929.stm).

<sup>33</sup> “Shattered Dreams of Peace,” *Frontline*, 2002.

<sup>34</sup> IMEUDotnet, “PM Netanyahu: I stopped the Oslo Process,” YouTube video, 5:43, posted July 21, 2010,

[https://youtu.be/Cl60X\\_jOsR0](https://youtu.be/Cl60X_jOsR0).

<sup>35</sup> “Chronology” and “Quarterly Update” from *Journal of Palestine Studies* 33.3-43.4; Tracy Wilkinson, “Palestinians’ New Weapon: Mortars; Israel Reports 56 Ariel Attacks in Recent Months The Small Canons Have a Range of 2 1/2 Miles,” *Contra Costa Times (California)*, April 10, 2001, A11.

<sup>36</sup> Brazili, “For Peres—Yet Another Vision,” 2.

campaigns that expanded the northern and southern buffer zones between the Gaza Strip and Israel and assassinated several Hamas political and military leaders.<sup>37</sup>

Those campaigns have never stopped.

Together with the naval blockade and land siege, the Gaza Strip has become a zone of death.

## **Part 4**

Rocket fire and Hamas do not adequately explain what is happening in Gaza today. Israel militarily occupied the Gaza Strip in 1967 and has enclosed and impoverished it since 1991.<sup>38</sup> Hamas did not emerge until 1988.<sup>39</sup> It did not launch its first suicide attack until 1994 and did not launch the first rocket attack until 2001.

Even if Hamas were to disappear, Israel's policies towards the tiny coastal enclave would go uninterrupted. What Israel demands is for Palestinians to accept Israeli domination as a way of life - an unfathomable possibility to all humans whose first instinct is to be free.

The Palestinian leadership in the West Bank has gone to great lengths to meet Israel's demands.<sup>40</sup> In response to their overtures, Israel has increased its settler population from 200,000 in 1993 to 600,000 today and continues to remove and concentrate Palestinians.<sup>41</sup>

Israel does not have a Hamas problem, it does not have a Gaza problem. It has a Palestine problem.

The Gaza Strip represents the most vivid and grotesque form of Israel's settler-colonial ambitions.

Even before the start of Operation Protective Edge, the World Health Organization stated that the Gaza Strip would be unlivable by 2020.<sup>42</sup> Much like Mars, where humans cannot survive due to a lack of oxygen, Palestinians will not be able to survive in Gaza due to the lack of hygiene, access to clean water, and food. While Mars's harsh conditions are a product of nature, Gaza's conditions are the consequence of human collusion and complicity. Under these circumstances, a confrontation between Palestinians and Israel is inevitable. If we do nothing, Palestinians who continue to defy all odds will survive, as they have multiple onslaughts and decades of structural violence, but we should pay attention beyond the spectacle of war.

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<sup>37</sup> "Israeli Military Operations Against Gaza, 2000-2008," 122-138.

<sup>38</sup> Sara Roy, "Gaza: New Dynamics of Civic Disintegration," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 22.4 (1993): 20-31.

<sup>39</sup> "Hamas Covenant 1988 (The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement)," from the *Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy*, accessed June 14, 2016, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/hamas.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp).

<sup>40</sup> Tariq Dana, "The Beginning of the End."

<sup>41</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), "Press Release by PCBS on the Occasion of Land Day, March 30, 2016," Ramallah: PCBS, March 30, 2016,

<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?tabID=512&lang=en&ItemID=1627&mid=3171&wversion=Staging>.

<sup>42</sup> United Nations oPt country team, "Gaza in 2020: A Liveable Place?," (United Nations, 2012).

<http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/file/publications/gaza/Gaza%20in%202020.pdf>.

Escaping this holding position demands a political solution: one that addresses the root of the conflict – and that root is Israel’s desire to remove Palestinians and to implant of Jewish-Israelis in their places. US-brokered peace talks have proposed and furthered ghettoized sovereignty as a solution. Palestinians reject this and continue to demand freedom, equality, and dignity wherever they live, within Israel, within the Gaza Strip, within the West Bank, and beyond, in the diaspora.

What we see in Gaza is merely a symptom of this broader condition. It is untenable, it does not work, and unless we insist upon a viable alternative, we will see this horror repeated. Achieving a solution depends on each and every one of us. This is a human-made disaster and it can, and must, be resolved with a human-made solution.