

Who Is Responsible for the Suffering of the Palestinians?

There is no doubt that there is real suffering among the Palestinians living in Gaza and the West Bank (which is actually ancient Judea and Samaria). The question is who, precisely, is most responsible for their suffering?

Certainly, Israel is far from blameless in its treatment of the Palestinians, and it helps no one when we overlook or whitewash Israel's failings, as some Christian Zionists are prone to do.

But is Israel primarily responsible for the difficult living conditions faced by the Palestinians today? Absolutely not. The blame lies squarely at the feet of the Palestinian leadership.

Consider that in 1936, Haj Amin Husseini, the grand mufti of Jerusalem, later a collaborator with Hitler and the father of many of today's radical Islamic movements, had this to say about living in peace with the neighboring Jews: "There is no place in Palestine for two races. The Jews left Palestine 2,000 years ago. Let them go to other parts of the world, where there are wide vacant places."

In contrast, in 1937, David Ben-Gurion, later to be Israel's first prime minister, said, "We do not wish and do not need to expel Arabs and take their place. All our aspiration is built on the assumption—proven throughout all our activity in the land of Israel—that there is enough room in the country for ourselves and the Arabs."

Ten years later, when the U.N. had proposed separate states for the Jews and the Arabs, Golda Meir said, "We are happy and

ready for what lies ahead. Our hands are extended in peace to our neighbors. Both states can live in peace with one another and cooperate for the welfare of their inhabitants.”

And Ben-Gurion invited the Arabs living in what would be the new state of Israel to remain among them as partners (which many of them did, and they have grown from 200,000 then to 1.6 million today): “If the Arab citizen will feel at home in our state ... if the state will help him in a truthful and dedicated way to reach the economic, social and cultural level of the Jewish community, then Arab distrust will accordingly subside and a bridge will be built to a Semitic, Jewish-Arab alliance.”

In stark contrast, Azzam Pasha, secretary of the Arab League, would have none of it, calling instead for an all-out war against Israel: “It will be a war of annihilation. It will be a momentous massacre in history that will be talked about like the massacres of the Mongols or the Crusades.”

And so, the five surrounding Arab nations attacked Israel and were defeated in a war that was costly and difficult for everyone, resulting in about 800,000 Jewish refugees who fled from the neighboring Muslim countries and about 600,000 Arab refugees who fled from the war on Israel.

What happened to those refugees? Most of the Jewish refugees were absorbed by the fledgling state of Israel; the Arab refugees were not absorbed by their neighboring countries.

Why? Because they were used as human pawns against Israel, to the point that in 1959, the Arab League passed Resolution 1457: “The Arab countries will not grant citizenship to applicants of Palestinian origin in order to prevent their assimilation into the host countries.”

That’s why, until this very day, there are hundreds of thousands of Palestinians living in refugee camps in countries like Lebanon and Syria, never integrated into the larger

population or absorbed as citizens with full rights.

How dare the anti-Zionists blame Israel for this atrocious treatment of the Palestinians. The fault lies with their own leaders, who have betrayed them in their hatred of Israel. (This is why historian Efraim Karsh entitled his very important book *Palestine Betrayed*, where much more relevant information can be found.)

As recently as 2004, Hisham Youssef, spokesman for the 22-nation Arab League, stated, "Palestinians live in very bad conditions. That official policy is meant to preserve their Palestinian identity. If every Palestinian who sought refuge in a certain country was integrated and accommodated into that country, there won't be any reason for them to return to Palestine."

Do these leaders really care about their suffering brothers and sisters, or is their opposition to Israel, fueled by the theology of radical Islam, more important to them?

In 2012, the Palestinian mufti, one of the senior Islamic leaders, repeated a well-known Muslim hadith (authoritative tradition): "The Hour [of Resurrection] will not come until you fight the Jews. The Jew will hide behind stones or trees. Then the stones or trees will call: 'Oh Muslim, servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him.'"

More recently, in a recent program on Hamas' Al-Aqsa TV, Hamas cleric and parliamentary member Yunis Al-Astal cited the Quran in guiding Muslims to "massacre" the Jews. (See for more details.)

With statements like this, which are seconded by many Palestinian leaders, does Israel really have a peace partner among the Palestinian leadership?

As journalist Caroline Glick wrote, "Nearly every day a Palestinian leader announces that the Palestinians will not

make peace with Israel under any circumstances. These statements are part of the public record, and all are published to great approval in the Arabic media. Palestinian children regularly appear on PA-controlled television children's programs, calling for the annihilation of Israel and demonizing Jews as subhuman. Summer camps are named after terrorists."

And as Israel has released thousands of Palestinian prisoners as a gesture of peace, even though many of these prisoners have the blood of Israeli men, women and children on their hands, they are hailed as heroes when they return home. This is a terribly painful slap in Israel's face and yet another stumbling block to peace.

As for the billions of dollars of support that pours into Hamas and the Palestinian Authority from America and Europe, only a small portion of it finds its way into the hands of the people, instead being used to pad the bank accounts of the leaders and to further their war on Israel.

Of course, as followers of Jesus we should care for both Palestinians and Israelis, and we should give ourselves wholeheartedly to bring justice to the victims and relief to the suffering, whoever they may be.

But let us not forget where the ultimate blame lies for the suffering of the Palestinian people: It lies at the feet of their leadership, and shifting the blame to Israel will do these suffering Palestinians no good at all.

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