

## **NORMAN FINKELSTEIN**

Gaza Massacre

*Berkeley, CA 13 May 2010*

Norman Finkelstein received his Ph.D. from the Department of Politics at Princeton University. For many years he taught political theory and the Israel-Palestine conflict. He is currently an independent scholar. He is the author of many books including “Beyond Chutzpah,” “The Holocaust Industry,” and “This Time We Went Too Far: Truth & Consequences of the Gaza Invasion.” He is the subject of the documentary “American Radical.”

One of the reasons new opportunities have opened up for reaching into the broad public is what happened in Gaza in 2008-2009. To some extent it's a kind of peculiarity. Why are we talking even about Gaza a year and a half later? As everybody in this room knows, wars come and go with great frequency in that part of the world, death and destruction occur with great regularity in that part of the world. So why, nearly a year and a half later, are people still talking about Gaza? It's a kind of a curiosity. It's the ghost that Israel, try as it does to bury, it can't succeed. It's the shadow that Israel, try as it does to evade, it's unsuccessful. So one of the questions we might want to ponder this evening is, why won't Gaza go away?

Before looking at those 22 days from December 27 to January 18, those 22 days that Amnesty International called “the 22 days of death and destruction,” I want to briefly recall what led up to the Israeli assault. It's always arbitrary where you begin a story. I'll start in January 2006, when there were elections held in the occupied Palestinian territories and, surprisingly, unpredictably, Hamas, the Islamic movement, won. Former President Jimmy Carter, one of the international observers, said the elections were “completely honest and fair.” Israel and the United States reacted to those “completely honest and fair elections” by imposing an economic blockade on Gaza.

In June 2007, the United States, Israel, and some elements among the Palestinian Authority attempted a coup against a legally elected government. In the United States that's called “democracy promotion.” Hamas wasn't too keen on this latest American exercise in “democracy promotion.” It sent the Palestinian elements packing to the West Bank and it took full control over Gaza. Israel and the United States reacted by escalating, tightening the blockade of Gaza, a blockade which Amnesty International now called “a flagrant violation of international law,” a blockade which the Goldstone Mission, to which I'll return, the Goldstone Mission later said that it was “a possible crime against humanity.”

During these months, the former U.N High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, journeyed to Gaza, and she said, Gaza's “whole civilization has been destroyed, I'm not exaggerating.” In June 2008, Hamas and Israel entered into a ceasefire brokered by Egypt, and each side had obligations to meet under the ceasefire. Hamas had to stop its rocket and

mortar attacks on Israel, and Israel had to gradually lift the blockade of Gaza—the blockade which was a flagrant violation of international law, the blockade which was destroying the civilization. According to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Hamas was careful to maintain the ceasefire.” It is true that what Israel calls “rogue terrorist organizations,” not Hamas but other organizations, in Gaza did not honor the ceasefire, but Israel said that Hamas enforced the ceasefire on the rogue terrorist organizations with a great deal of, although not complete, success. So Hamas was careful to maintain the ceasefire but Israel reneged on its obligation to lift the blockade—the blockade which was a flagrant violation of international law.

What happened next? The record is very clear. There is no ambiguity or controversy in what happened next. All you have to do is open up Amnesty International's Yearbook for 2008. You turn to the entry for Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, and you will read this: “A ceasefire agreed in June between Israel and Palestinian armed groups in Gaza, it held for four and a half months, but it broke down after Israeli forces killed six Palestinian militants in air strikes and other attacks on 4 November.” Hamas honored the terms of the ceasefire. Israel reneged on its obligations. And then Israel patiently waited. It waited until our election day, November 4, when the attention of the media and the public was riveted on the result of the historic election. And on that day Israel went into Gaza and it killed several Palestinian militants, knowing full well and wanting the ceasefire to break down, because for many months, indeed for more than a year, they had planned an attack on Gaza, and it needed the pretext. And it created the pretext on November 4.

The ceasefire broke down. But you know these Islamic fundamentalists, these lunatics, irrational, crazy, unpredictable whatever. Well, Hamas kept saying until the end of December, we want to renew the ceasefire. But Israel has to implement its obligation to end the blockade. Israel said no. Hamas had to unilaterally and unconditionally stop the rocket fire, but Israel would not lift the blockade.

By December 2008, Sara Roy of Harvard University, the world's leading authority on Gaza's economy, wrote, “The breakdown of an entire society is happening in front of us, but there is little international response beyond U.N

warnings which are ignored.” The breakdown of an entire society in Gaza is happening before our eyes, and nobody cares.”

And now Hamas was confronted with two stark options: one, to allow the Palestinians to acquiesce in their incremental starvation, or to fight and resist. Hamas chose the second option, although its resistance was largely symbolic. The former Israeli commander in Gaza, a fellow by the name of Shmuel Zakai said, speaking to the Israelis, “You cannot just land blows, leave the Palestinians in Gaza in economic distress and expect that Hamas will just sit around and do nothing.” During the invasion, Hamas leader Khalid Mishal wrote, “Our modest home-made rockets are our cry of protest to the world.” In fact, what were those rocket attacks if not a message being transmitted to an indifferent world? SOS. We’re dying. SOS. We’re dying.

It’s easy enough to condemn the Hamas rocket attacks, and all the human rights organizations did so. But still, it seems to me, in condemning them you still have an obligation to say, What should they have done? What was their other option? If you don’t present another option, you’re in effect saying that the people of Gaza had a legal and moral obligation to just lie still and die. Israel decided, however, to expedite the process, and on December 27 invaded Gaza and stayed there for 22 days.

What happened in Gaza during those 22 days? Nowadays when you read references to those 22 days, they typically refer to the “Gaza war,” “the war in Gaza.” Even reputable human rights organizations like Human Rights Watch, in their recent report referred in the title to “the Gaza war.” And the Israelis are also emphatic that they had fought a war in Gaza. In fact, they said that if there was death and destruction in Gaza, it was because Israel had to fight an asymmetrical war against the Hamas terrorists. They said, Everybody knows in war there is lots of confusion. You have to make split-second decisions. And if regrettably, innocents get killed and civilian targets get hit, that’s inevitable. It’s what’s called the fog of war.

Was there a war in Gaza? After the 22 days, the Israelis were very pleased with themselves. They went around boasting, Now we’ve shown the Arabs who’s who and what’s what, we’ve put the uppity natives in line. Because Israel was very upset after the July-August 2006 war in Lebanon, when it suffered a major military defeat at the hands of the Party of God, the Hezbollah. And Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, the head of the Party of God, went around taunting Israel, We’re not afraid of you anymore. The Arabs are not afraid of you anymore. Go ahead. Attack again. If you attack again, we will defeat you again.

And now Israel was upset because it said its “deterrence capacity” had been undermined. Whenever you hear these polysyllabic phrases coined by political science professors, like “deterrence capacity,” it’s supposed to convey the notion that they know something

that you don’t know, which in fact is very rarely the case, and it’s usually the reverse. Deterrence capacity, all it means is the Arab’s world’s fear of Israel. And Israel was very worried that its deterrence capacity had been undermined because of its defeat in Lebanon. But after Gaza, the Israelis said, We’ve restored our deterrence capacity because we won the war in Gaza. We’ve shown the Arabs that we’re a fighting force again because we won the war in Gaza. But along came an Israeli strategic analyst, and he said, speaking to his fellow citizens, “It is very dangerous for Israeli to believe it won the war in Gaza when there was no war. In reality, not a single battle was fought during the 22 days of fighting.” A former Israeli military official said, “There was no war. Hamas sat in its bunkers and came out when it was all over.” If there was no war in Gaza, what did happen in Gaza?

On a military plane, it’s fairly straightforward. Israel began its assault with what it called the air phase of the war; that is, in the course of the 22 days, it flew about 2,800 to 3,000 combat missions over Gaza. Every plane returned, none was downed. In fact, none was even damaged, which is not altogether surprising, because the Palestinians had no anti-aircraft defenses to speak of. At the beginning of the second week, January 3, Israel launched its ground and air assault on Gaza. The Israeli soldiers were equipped with special night-fighting technology. Hamas couldn’t even see them, let alone fight them.

So what did happen in Gaza? In fact, we have a fairly clear picture from what might call unimpeachable sources, namely, the Israeli soldiers who were in Gaza. After the 22 days, they gave public testimony to what they experienced. And here’s what they had to say. Soldier: “There was nothing there. Ghost towns. Except for some livestock, nothing moved.” Soldier: “Most of the time it was boring. There were really not too many events.” Soldier: “I did not see one single Arab the whole time we were there, the whole week.” Soldier: “Everyone was disappointed about not engaging anyone.” Soldier: “Usually we did not see a living soul. Except for our soldiers, of course, not a soul.” Soldier: “Go ahead. Ask the other soldiers how often they encountered combatants in Gaza. Nothing, no one.” Soldier: “There was supposed to be a tiny resistance force upon entry, but there just wasn’t anyone. There were no battles in Gaza, there was no fighting in Gaza, there was no enemy in the field in Gaza, at any rate, no visible enemy, there was no tangling with the foe.”

That’s only half the story. The other half, if I can give you a homework assignment—all you have to do is go to your computers and enter in your Google search the words “breaking the silence.” If you enter those words, what will come up on your screen is one of the collections of testimonies by Israeli soldiers. And then enter under the search function the word “insane.” And if you enter under the search function the word “insane,” it will come up

once, twice, three times, four times, five times, six times, seven times. The soldiers were interviewed separately, they weren't cueing each other, but the same word leapt to mind for one soldier after another. The context was this, one soldier after another. "Israel used insane amounts of firepower in Gaza." "Israel used insane amounts of firepower in Gaza." Israel used insane amounts of firepower in Gaza." There were no the battles, there was no fighting, there was no tangling with the foe, but Israel used insane amounts of firepower in Gaza. One soldier said, "This was firepower such as I had never known. There were blasts all the time. The earth was constantly shaking." Another soldier said, "On the ground you hear these thunderous blasts all day long. Not just tank shelling, which was a tune we've all gotten used to, but blasts that actually rocked the outpost, to the extent that some of us were ordered out of the house we were quartered in for fear it would collapse." Israeli soldiers commandeered Palestinian homes. They were firing into the horizon. But the insane amounts of firepower are causing the ground underneath their feet to quake.

So what did happen in Gaza? Actually, the Israeli soldiers came up with the most telling metaphors. One soldier said, "It was like hunting season had begun. Sometimes it reminded me of a PlayStation computer game." Another soldier said, "You felt like a child playing around with a magnifying glass burning up ants." I was a kid once. I had my magnifying glass. I can still see now in my mind's eye focusing the rays of the sun on the anthills, turning the ants into crispy critters. I'm not proud of it, but I don't suffer and didn't suffer then under the delusion that I was engaged in a war with the ants.

In fact, the metaphor was remarkably apt. One of Israel's tools of the trade is its promiscuous use of white phosphorus. I first got involved publicly on the Israel-Palestinian conflict in 1982, when Israel invaded Lebanon. And I remember even then Israel's use of white phosphorus. But I never paid much attention to the fine print on what it was. It had a sinister-sounding name, but I didn't go much further. This time around, however, Human Rights Watch had put out a report that was called "Rain of Fire," and it went on at some length on what white phosphorus really is. White phosphorus reaches a temperature of 1,500 degrees Fahrenheit. As Oprah would say, try wrapping your mind around that. What did Israel do with the white phosphorus? Well, Human Rights Watch said that "Israel repeatedly exploded white-phosphorus munitions in the air over populated areas, killing and injuring civilians and damaging civilian structures. It dropped the white phosphorus on a school, marketplace, a humanitarian-aid warehouse. It dropped the white phosphorus on two hospitals: Al-Wafa' Hospital and Al-Quds Hospital." Human Rights Watch says, "The hospitals were clearly marked, and there does not appear to have been fighting in that immediate area."

By the end of the 22 days, 1,400 Palestinians had been killed. Between 1,000 and 1,200 were civilians, five-sevenths to four-fifths. On the Israeli side, 13 Israelis were killed: 3 civilians, 10 combatants. Of the 10 combatants, half were killed by other Israelis by accident, friendly fire. So for every 100 Palestinian killed, one Israeli was killed, for every 400 Palestinian civilians killed, one Israeli civilian was killed. That's evidently not a war. It's a bloodbath, it's a slaughter, it's a massacre, but it's most emphatically not a war. Every time you or anyone you know refers to those 22 days as a war, he or she or you has become, unwittingly or wittingly, an instrument of Israeli propaganda. There wasn't a war in Gaza. There was a massacre.

After those 22 days, Israel tried very desperately to rebut or to refute the allegations of the most egregious crimes it committed. Israel damaged or destroyed 29 ambulances, it damaged or destroyed half of Gaza's 122 health facilities, including 15 hospitals. But Israel said, You have to understand, Hamas militants were taking refuge in those hospitals. Numerous human rights organizations investigated the claim. They all reached the same conclusion: There is just no evidence that Hamas militants were using hospitals as refuge. Israel said, You have to understand, Hamas is using the ambulances to transport militants and transport weapons. All the human rights organizations investigated that allegation, and they came to the same conclusion: There is just no evidence to support it. In fact, Israel's own ambulance service, Magen David Adom, testified, "There was no use of Palestinian ambulances in the transport of weapons or ammunition." It just never happened.

But, of course, I'm only telling half the story, because I'm partisan, I'm prejudiced, I'm one-sided. Because everybody here in the room knows that the real reason Israel ended up targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure is because Hamas was using Palestinians as human shields. In a cowardly fashion, they were hiding themselves behind Palestinians, forcing Palestinians to face the brunt of Israeli firepower. The Israelis didn't want to kill Palestinians, but they had to, they were forced to, because Hamas was using them as human shields. How many of you in this room are familiar with the allegation that Hamas was using Palestinian as human shields? Raise your hands. Okay. Near unanimity. You would have to be suffering from a degenerative brain disease or an excessive consumption of mind-altering drugs not to have heard the allegation, because it was so widely disseminated.

All the human rights organizations, of course, investigated that allegation. They investigated it at great length. They all reached the same conclusion. So if I were to ask this audience, what's the most respected human rights organization in the world, you would all say Amnesty International. Exactly. So let's see what Amnesty International had to say. It probably issued the

most exhaustive study of the human shield issue. It said the following: “Contrary to repeated allegations by Israeli officials of the use of human shields, Amnesty International found no evidence that Hamas or other Palestinian fighters directed the movement of civilians to shield military objectives from attacks. Amnesty International found no evidence that Hamas or other armed groups forced residents to stay in or around buildings used by fighters. Amnesty International found no evidence that fighters prevented residents from leaving buildings or areas which had been commandeered by militants.”

Here’s the interesting question. When I asked how many of you are familiar with the allegation that Hamas used Palestinian civilians as human shields, nearly everyone in the room raised his or her hand. Now, speaking honestly and candidly, how many of you are aware that every human rights organization and fact-finding mission that investigated the question reached the same conclusion: There is no evidence that Hamas engaged in human shielding? So raise your hand. Look around you. And bear in mind, this is an informed audience and one generally sympathetic to the rights of Palestinians. It tells you something about the huge gulf that exists between what the mainstream media report and the findings of the human rights organizations.

But even if it were true that Hamas engaged in human shielding, it still couldn’t possibly explain the deaths in Gaza. Why not? Let’s see what Amnesty had to say. It said, “In the attacks that caused the greatest number of fatalities and injuries, Palestinian civilians were not caught in the crossfire of battles between Palestinian militants and Israeli forces, nor were the Palestinian victims shielding militants or other legitimate targets.” Then how did they die? Amnesty says, “Many were killed when their homes were bombed while they slept. Others were going about their daily activities in their homes, sitting in their yard, hanging the laundry on the roof, when they were targeted in air strikes or tank shelling.” How did the children die in Gaza? About 358 Palestinian children were killed. How did they die? Was Hamas using them as human shields? Amnesty says, “The children were studying or playing in their bedrooms or on the roof or outside their homes when they were struck by missiles or tank shells.”

It’s emphatically not true, of course, that there was no human shielding in Gaza. Of course, there was extensive human shielding—human shielding by Israel, using Palestinians as human shields. All the human rights organizations concluded that Israel committed multiple war crimes and possibly or definitely crimes against humanity in Gaza. They also concluded that Hamas committed comparable crimes, but on an incomparably smaller scale. How many crimes can ants commit against a child incinerating them with a magnifying glass?

After those 22 days, many human rights organizations investigated what happened in the course of the Israeli invasion. The best known of the investigations was the one commissioned by the U.N Human Rights Council and headed up by Richard Goldstone. Mr. Goldstone is a distinguished South African jurist who went on to be the former prosecutor of the international criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. Within several months time, the mission he headed produced a very substantial report, running to some 500 densely argued pages. It’s impossible, obviously, in the confines of this evening’s event to go through with any kind of depth the findings of the Goldstone Report, but it is worth reporting what he concluded.

First, the Goldstone Report concluded that “Israel launched a deliberately disproportionate attack designed to punish, humiliate, and terrorize a civilian population.” Notice what he doesn’t say. He doesn’t say Israel launched the attack because of Hamas rocket and mortar attacks. How could he say that? If Israel didn’t want Hamas to fire rockets and mortars at Israel, it wouldn’t have broken the ceasefire, because it was breaking the ceasefire that triggered those attacks.

But maybe all that death, maybe all that destruction was because some Israeli soldiers went berserk. Everyone knows in every army there are some rotten apples. But the Goldstone Report concluded, that’s just not possible. It said, “The systematic and deliberate nature of the activities leave the mission in no doubt that responsibility lies in the first place with those who designed, planned, ordered, and oversaw the operations, that is, Israel’s political and military leadership.”

Some people after the report came out and said, This is awfully extreme. Maybe Mr. Goldstone exaggerated a little. The problem was, the Goldstone Report couldn’t have concluded anything other than what it concluded, because the Israeli leaders were very forthright, they were very candid before, during, and after the invasion about what they were up to. You can’t fault them for being dishonest. They were remarkably forthright. Before the attack, the head of Israel’s northern command said, “We will wield disproportionate power against every village from which shots are fired on Israel. We will cause immense damage and destruction.” The former chief of Israel’s National Security Council said before the attack, “The next war will lead to intense suffering among the enemy population—the destruction of homes and infrastructure and the suffering of hundreds and thousands of people.”

During the invasion, Israel’s foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, said, “Hamas now understands that when you fire on Israeli citizens, it responds by going wild. And that is a good thing,” said Ms. Livni. The day after the attack, Ms. Livni went on Israel’s Channel 10 news and she said, “Israel demonstrated real hooliganism during the course of the recent operation, which is what I demanded.” And

then a strange thing happened. A few months later, Ms. Livni was on her way to the U.K., and a British court authorized that she could be served with papers for being a war criminal. But Ms. Livni was shocked, she was perplexed, she was bewildered. She was certain that real hooliganism was protected by the Geneva Conventions.

A former Israeli defense official said that “with an armada of fighter planes attacking Gaza, Israel decided to pay the role of a mad dog for the sake of” restoring its “deterrence.” A former Israeli security official boasted that Israel had regained its deterrence capacity. How? It “has shown Hamas, Iran, and the region that it can be as lunatic as any of them.” “Lunatic,” “mad dog,” “real hooliganism,” “wild,” “causing immense suffering.” What else could the Goldstone Report conclude except that “Israel’s leadership launched a deliberately disproportionate attack designed to punish, humiliate, and terrorize the civilian population.” Nonetheless, the Goldstone Report evoked a huge outcry of outrage across the Israeli political spectrum, not just what we call the right-wingers in the West but also the doves.

Let’s take the case of that Nobel laureate for peace, Shimon Peres. Actually, we should defer to his title, because the British recently knighted him, so we should call him Sir Shimon. Sir Shimon said of the Goldstone Report, It’s a “mockery of history,” and that Goldstone is a “small man devoid of any sense of justice.” And then Sir Shimon wanted to set the historical record straight for those who are suffering from some misapprehensions. Anyone here from the West Bank? Do you want to raise your hand? Just a couple. He said it was Israeli military operations in the West Bank which are what brought “economic prosperity” there. Anyone here from Lebanon? He said, What happened in 2006, it was Israeli military operations which liberated Lebanon from the wrath of Hezbollah.

They also liberated 1,200 Lebanese from their earthly existence. And then there is Gaza. What happened in Gaza? Well, according to Sir Shimon, it was Israeli military operations that enabled Gaza residents to return to their daily routine. Thank you very much, Sir Shimon.

And then there is the Israeli ambassador to the United States, Michael Oren. Some people even think he’s a historian. He said, The Goldstone Report was even worse than “Ahmadinejad and the Holocaust deniers,” which, as you can imagine, is pretty awful. Then back in the United States, Alan Dershowitz of Harvard Law School alleged that the Goldstone Report is “so filled with lies, distortions and blood libels that it could have been drafted by Hamas extremists.” That it recalled the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion.” He said Goldstone is “an evil, evil, evil man, an absolute traitor.” You can just imagine how indignant Mr. Dershowitz would have been if he actually read the report. But then, as Sinclair Lewis famously said in **Elmer Gantry**, “Every circus needs a clown,” so along came Elie

Wiesel and said that the report was “a crime against the Jewish people.”

A really interesting question is, why this hysteria over the Goldstone Report? The Goldstone Report was the last in a long series of reports issued by respected human rights organizations, all of which reached roughly the same conclusions. Amnesty International produced two very large reports. Human Rights Watch produced—as of this morning, we’re now up to seven reports on what happened in Gaza. Palestinian human rights organizations issued reports, Israeli human rights organizations issued reports. There were fact-finding missions, and so forth. The Goldstone Report, you might say—I have read through all of the reports quite carefully—was the most cautious, the most careful, the most judicious, the most circumspect of all of them.

So why did Israel become so hysterical? And the answer, I think, is not very hard to find. Mr. Goldstone is not only Jewish but he is, by his own reckoning, a Zionist. He says, “I’ve worked for Israel all of my adult life. I fully support Israel’s right to exist. I’m a firm believer in the absolute right of the Jewish people to have their home there.” Mr. Goldstone sits on the board of governors of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He’s the recipient of an honorary doctorate from the Hebrew University. His mother was an activist in the Zionist movement. His daughter did Zionist immigration to Israel. When Mr. Goldstone was asked, “Why did you become a human rights lawyer?” he said, “It was because of the Nazi Holocaust.”

Now Israel had a real problem on its hands, because for many decades it had honed, it had perfected these ideological weapons in order to discredit any critics of Israel. So if you criticize Israel, you must be an anti-Semite, a self-hating Jew, a Holocaust denier. But Mr. Goldstone’s persona and his profession neutralized those weapons. As the Israeli columnist Gideon Levy put it, “This time,” referring to Mr. Goldstone, “the messenger is propaganda-proof.” Mr. Goldstone didn’t have the typical profile of an anti-Semite. He didn’t seem like a self-hating Jew. He said, “I love Israel. I’m a Zionist.” He wasn’t your run-of-the-mill Holocaust denier, because he said it was because of the Holocaust that he became a human rights lawyer. So if he was not an anti-Semite, he was not a self-hating Jew, he was not a Holocaust denier, if he wasn’t an incompetent or a fool—and the former chief prosecutor in major tribunals couldn’t be an incompetent or a fool—there was only one plausible explanation for why he wrote what he wrote in the report. The only possible explanation is it was true. So Israel panicked and continues to this day to panic.

There were many major repercussions of the Gaza massacre and the ensuing Goldstone Report. I’ll only focus on one, since time is getting late. In many ways Richard Goldstone is your quintessential, classical liberal Jew—a staunch defender of human rights and the rule of

law. More in more, in recent years it's become impossible to call yourself liberal and defend Israel's conduct. What does liberal mean in the American context, at any rate? To be liberal means to support international institutions, to support the rule of law, to support human rights. Amnesty International is a liberal organization. Human Rights Watch is a liberal organization. And most Jews consider themselves liberal. In the last American presidential election, 80% of American Jews voted for Mr. Obama. Latinos, it wasn't nearly as close. It was 67%. Among whites in general it was around 43%. When you factor in incomes, Jews being far and away the wealthiest ethnic economic group in the United States, Jews should be voting overwhelming Republican. But, no, they're voting Democratic, because Jews are liberal.

It's now, as I said, become more and more difficult to call yourself liberal and to support Israeli policy, especially when it's liberal organizations like Human Rights Watch, liberal organizations like Amnesty International who are in the forefront of the condemnations of Israeli conduct. It's quite clear that support for Israel is breaking up among American Jews just as support for Israel is breaking up among the general public.

I want to just end, if I might, on a personal note. I very rarely introduce my person when I'm speaking. I prefer to do what I think is my responsibility, which is to go through the factual record. But here I'll speak now for myself. I'm not interested in being a victor over the Israelis or vanquishing them. I have no desire to degrade, to humiliate, or to embarrass Israel. I don't want to push it into a corner such that it feels that it has no option except to strike out. I think our concern should be one thing and one thing alone—as the old African American spiritual put it, to “keep your eyes on the prize.” And remember what that prize is. The prize is to try to reach a reasonable settlement of the conflict such that all parties to the conflict, everyone, can lead a proud, peaceful, and productive life. If you're willing to subscribe to the most elementary principles of justice, the most elementary principles of decency, if you're willing to subscribe to those principles, then, I'll recall the late Professor Edward Said. At the end of his life, he liked to cite the Caribbean poet, Aimé Césaire. The line he liked to use was, “There is room for everyone at the rendezvous of victory.” Just be reasonable, just be fair, just allow everyone to live a full life of human dignity. Allow everyone a fair chance at life's happiness, because that's what it's all about in the end. There is no guarantee of happiness in this world. Human beings seem to have a remarkable propensity for messing things up for themselves. But everybody should have the right, a fair chance at life's happiness.

I think the formula for trying to resolve the conflict is very straightforward. Number one, we have to be principled. As Mr. Gandhi liked to say, I'm all for compromise, but not when it comes to principles, because

when you start compromising principles, he says, it's all give and no take. So nobody has the right to tell Palestinians that they should or they have to forfeit any of their rights under international law. On the other hand, we should also be reasonable. We should show people there is a way out. It doesn't have to continue this way. Just allow for others what you want for yourself. If we're principled and we're reasonable, then I think we can achieve a resolution of the conflict.

I've been involved in this for my entire adult life. It's about three decades now since I first got involved in June 1982. And it's a very sobering feeling to realize that your whole life has passed devoted to and studying one pinprick on the world's map. It's such a vast range of knowledge. Knowledge has such breadth and such depth. And yet I find myself my entire life just mastering facts, periods, commas, and semicolons, about the Israel-Palestine conflict. But I'm more determined than ever, because of that, that I'm going to be there at that rendezvous of victory. I hope I'll see all of you there with me. Thank you.

For more info - [www.mecaforpeace.org](http://www.mecaforpeace.org)

*For information about obtaining CDs, MP3s, or transcripts of this or other programs, please contact:*

David Barsamian

Alternative Radio

P.O. Box 551

Boulder, CO 80306-0551

(800) 444-1977

[info@alternativeradio.org](mailto:info@alternativeradio.org)

[www.alternativeradio.org](http://www.alternativeradio.org)

©2010

