

GAZA AND ISRAEL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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1988

Corrected copy

1. WHAT IS GAZA?

Gaza is a narrow strip of land 30 miles long and 5 miles wide at the border of Egypt, Israel, and the Mediterranean Sea. For hundreds of years, Gaza was a part of the Turkish Empire but Great Britain ruled over it as the Mandate Power after World War One. Egypt seized Gaza as part of the 1948 war of the Arab countries against the newly declared State of Israel.

Under the Turks, the British, and Egypt, Gaza was no different from hundreds of other Arab populated areas. Poverty, lethargy, and backwardness dominated. The normal problems in Gaza were complicated by the 1948 war when large numbers of Arabs who had lived in other Palaestinian areas fled the progress of the war and came to Gaza hoping for Egyptian protection. Make-shift homes were erected. The Egyptians enclosed the Gaza area, placed a curfew on all inhabitants, but otherwise made no effort to improve living conditions. Gaza resembled many areas in Egypt. Except for farming and some fruit and olive growing, Many adult Gazans had little to do, almost no income. Health conditions were abysmal, but then not worse than in most other Arab controlled areas.

In 1967, ^{NASSER,} Egypt's militaristic leader, marshalled his troops in the Sinai, closed the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping, and called for the annihilation of Israel. Israel responded by driving the Egyptians out of the Sinai and capturing Gaza.

2. WHY DID ISRAEL GIVE THE SINAI BACK TO EGYPT AND WHY DID IT NOT RELEASE GAZA?

Israel suffered still another war of aggression from the Arabs in 1973, the so-called Yom Kippur War. While Jews were in their synagogues praying, the Arab States on all sides attacked and at first made substantial gains. Having lost the war he started, then President Sadat of Egypt came to Jerusalem and subsequently, Prime Minister Begin, Sadat, and President Carter worked out the now famous "Camp David" accords. Under these accords Egypt agreed not to continue its attacks on Israel, and in return Israel ceded the Sinai to Egypt. In one of the most selfless

acts ever recorded in human history, Israel gave up an area much larger than itself in the search for peace. Not enough credit is given to Israel for this unique ceding of conquered land.

Israel did not surrender Gaza and the West Bank as part of the Camp David accords but hoped that these areas could be given autonomy. Egypt did not want Gaza because it meant assuming a poverty-stricken area that had little to offer Egypt, and besides Gaza did not belong to Egypt before the 1948 war instigated by the Arabs. Gaza's importance to Israel was that it would provide something of a barrier if Egyptian armies were to invade again. Gaza is important to tiny Israel as a buffer zone. Further, Israel wanted to use Gaza and the West Bank as bargaining points in its continuing search for a negotiated peace with other Arab countries.

3. WHY CANNOT ISRAEL PERMIT GAZA TO BECOME INDEPENDENT?

An independent Gaza means an armed Gaza. Gaza before and after 1948 war was a staging area from which Arabs clandestinely attacked Israel. Israel speaks of giving Gaza autonomy, which means it can govern itself from within, but it will not have the right to arm itself and to have an army. Israel wants Gaza neutralized as a potential enemy.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE IN GAZA UNDER EGYPTIAN AND NOW ISRAELI GOVERNANCE?

There is no question but that Israel has improved the living conditions of people in Gaza. Time magazine said in its article on Gaza (January 25, 1988), "Israel has made major improvements in living standards within the territories-particularly in Gaza, which in 1967 was one of the most underdeveloped swatches of land in the world. Today half of Gaza's residents have running water, compared with 14% a decade ago. Nearly 80% own refrigerators and television sets, up from 3%. Per capita income has risen from \$100 to about \$1,000." Health care systems have been substantially improved and "life expectancy has risen from 48 to 62 years."

While Egypt did not permit the Gazans to go to other Egyptian cities to work, about 50,000 Gazans travel daily to jobs in Israel. Jerusalem contributed \$240 million in aid and investment in Gaza in 1987 (and collected somewhat more than that in taxes).

4. IF THINGS ARE BETTER IN GAZA UNDER THE ISRAELIS, WHY ARE THE GAZANS COMPLAINING?

The Gazans who work in Israel cannot help but see that the standard of living in Israel is much higher than in Gaza. The 700,000 Arabs who are Israeli citizens have shared in the relative prosperity that Jews have brought to the desert. Even with the improvements that have come to Gaza under the Israelis, it is still a backward slum, for the most part. The Gazan Arabs want what the Israeli Arabs have, and they have recently been fed by Islamic extremism to go out and get it.

5. WHY DOESN'T ISRAEL GIVE THE GAZANS THE SAME CITIZENSHIP THAT IT HAS GIVEN THE ISRAELI ARABS?

There are some Israelis who have proposed that Israel give the Gazan Arabs and the Arabs in the West Bank Israeli citizenship and officially annex both of these territories to greater Israel. The problem with this procedure is that this greater Israel will then have a majority of Arabs and the Zionist dream of a state with a Jewish majority, where Jews will no longer be persecuted and can decide their own fate, will have been ended.

6. WHAT IS THE SO-CALLED "JORDAN OPTION"?

The Israelis have been talking to King Hussein, unofficially of course, for years, trying to get Jordan to annex the West Bank and to establish special ties with Gaza. This would make the Arabs in the West Bank citizens of Jordan, but again the West Bank would not be permitted to have its own army. It is the arming of a large Arab mass so close to the Israelis which is the major stumbling block in the peace process. Having suffered a number of Arab major attacks and countless individual incursions, Israel cannot afford to authorize the arming of a population which has demonstrated over and over again that it will seek the extermination of Israel if it can.

Hussein, on the other hand, is afraid to negotiate directly with Israel. Other Arab leaders, like Sadat, have been coldly murdered for daring to try to make peace with Israel. The Jordanian option might work very well, but the PLO and other Arab states are not willing to see it established. Indeed they have worked mightily against it.

7. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE PROBLEMS WITH A DELAYED PEACE SETTLEMENT?

The Arabs have not been willing to make a peace because this implies the acceptance of Israel. This is why Egypt, until recently, was blackballed by the other Arab States. Egypt has dared to make a peace with Israel. With the Sinai ceded to Egypt, Israel has been left with certain territories captured in the 1967 and 1973 wars (both started by the Arabs) which consist of highly populated Arab communities, such as Gaza and the West Bank. The longer these areas remain in Israeli hands, ~~the less likely it seems that a rational peace can be arranged.~~ ^{the more complicated the situation becomes.} Many Israelis now claim that the West Bank can never be returned to Arab governance because it is in the area of Judea and Samaria, which the Bible says are Jewish lands. Tens of thousands of Jews, who think in this way, have settled near the West Bank and swear they will never move. The longer the Arabs delay in making a peace, the more difficult it becomes to make a peace.

To make a peace and to recover the West Bank and possibly Gaza, the Arabs will have to admit that they lost the wars of 1967 and 1973. They may also have to give up the right to form armies within these territories. The Arabs seem unable to do this.

8. WHAT IS THE ARAB STRATEGY?

At times it seems the Arabs have no strategy at all other than to hope for some miracle to oust the Israelis. The PLO charter states as a principle that the PLO will drive the Israelis into the sea. The Arab birthrate greatly exceeds that of the Israelis, and some Arab commentators see the rising Arab population itself as a proof that the Arabs will ultimately overwhelm the Israelis.

Arafat has lately been calling for an "international conference" to which the United Nations will be invited as a participant. Having lost the wars it initiated, the Arab bloc now hopes that the UN, or perhaps the Soviet Union and the United States, will win the victory for it. Certainly the UN would give the victory to the Arabs, for the UN is dominated by the Soviet bloc and Arab bloc nations. This is how the UN is able to condemn Israel constantly. When Peres, the Labor leader in Israel speaks of his approval of an "international conference", he means something very different from Arafat. Peres would not accept UN participation, but he would accept U.S. participation and that of certain neutral countries provided that Israel would not have to accept any peace that it deemed inimical to its interests. Shamir, the Likud

leader, is suspicious of the whole trend to "international" participation. He holds to the basic line: the Arabs sought to defeat us militarily; they failed; they have to sit down with us and negotiate a peace.

9. WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS THAT GO WITH NO SETTLEMENT?

Arabs do not really win with the constant drift of affairs. The Israelis are moving gradually to the right, to the hard line. What was once a liberal majority in Israel is slowly losing its hold. When the Arabs finally decide to negotiate, they may find that there is no one with whom to negotiate.

As for the Israelis, they are experiencing the problems of all military governors. It is degrading to the governor to stand over the vanquished with a gun and to demand that he do what you want him to do. Such a situation breeds contempt from both sides. The governor comes to think of the vanquished as inferior. The vanquished comes to hate the governor as being cruel and inhumane.

As things drift, the extremists are able to have more influence. As hope of a settlement is lost, people begin to listen to hot-headed radicals promising quick and easy solutions. On the Arab side the martyrs are multiplying. On the Israeli side the likes of Rabbi Kahane are proliferating.

On the other hand, this does not seem to be a place for naive Utopian solutions. Realists like Conor Cruise O'Brien, author of "The Siege", an Irish diplomat and historian, state that Israel must continue to show strength or it will quickly become the victim itself. O'Brien cites the dozens of times that Arab leaders could have accepted offers for settlement and refused. Admittedly, the negotiation of peace, is more difficult now than it would have been in the past.

10. IS ISRAEL'S TREATMENT OF THE ARABS TO BE COMPARED TO RACISM IN SOUTH AFRICA?

South Africa is a nation governed by a white minority which openly declares its right to rule over a vast majority of blacks which it states are from an inferior race. These blacks are denied the right to vote and to participate in the economic development of the nation. Israel has no doctrine of racial superiority. The Israelis have a considerable segment of blacks from Yemen and from Ethiopia, all of whom

have equal rights in every respect in Israel.

Also Israel has a large bloc of Arabs living within the boundaries of the state who are full citizens of Israel with the right to vote and to participate in the political and economic life of the nation. The standard of living of these Arabs is much higher than the standard of living of most Arabs in Arab lands, (although not quite as high as Jewish Israelis).

On the other hand, the Arab populations in the conquered territories, Gaza and the West Bank do not have the rights of Israeli citizens. Indeed, because the Arabs have refused for many years to make peace, the Israelis remain as the military governors of these areas and are required by the Geneva Convention to apply the laws of the government which reigned over these areas prior to the conquest. The West Bank had formerly been conquered by Jordan. Gaza had been conquered by Egypt. And both areas had been ruled by the British as part of the British Mandate area, after World War One. Israeli law cannot apply in the conquered territories under the terms of the Geneva convention.

11. ^{SN'} WHY DOESN'T ISRAEL GIVE THE ARABS IN THE CONQUERED TERRITORIES THE SAME CIVIL LIBERTIES THEY GIVE TO ARABS WHO ARE CITIZENS OF ISRAEL AND WHO LIVE IN ISRAEL?

The Arabs who live in Israel affirm loyalty to Israel and are citizens of Israel with full civil rights. The Arabs who live in Gaza and the West Bank affirm loyalty to the PLO which in its charter states that it is committed to destroy Israel. The residents of these conquered territories (as the result of wars initiated by the Arabs) are allied to Arabs outside Israel who refuse to negotiate a peace and maintain the posture of an enemy.

Those who are comparing Israel to South Africa are blaming Israel for refusing to give its avowed enemies the blessings of citizenship. Further, the Arabs living in the territories have never requested the right of citizenship in Israel. They don't want to pay Israel this compliment, and they are committed through their loyalty to the PLO to destroying Israel.

Some TV commentators see the violence going on in Gaza but they

apparently do not understand the difference between a military occupation and the restrictions imposed by a nation on a segment of its own population. What may seem to be comparable is as different as pole beans and watermelons.

12 HAS ISRAEL'S ACTIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE CONQUERED TERRITORIES BEEN CONSIDERATE?

Considering the circumstances under which Israel acquired the territories, they have certainly treated the people in the territories reasonably. These populations, along with the Arab states, have on many occasions waged war on the Israelis. These populations have exhibited by the use of weapons of death their hatred and contempt for the Israelis. As victors in the Arab instigated wars, the Israelis are faced with the task of serving as military governors until such time as a formal peace is arranged by all parties to these several wars. The Arabs have shown no desire to negotiate a peace and thus make it necessary for Israel to continue to serve as military governor.

A military governor, necessarily, rules by might. The Arab governed population, as the prior aggressor, is naturally antagonistic. Such a situation can never be cordial, but it is only fair to state that the Israelis have shown more kindness to their former adversaries than the Arabs have frequently shown to themselves; witness the 17,000 Christian Arabs killed by Druse Arabs in the villages near Beirut in 1982*; witness the 20,000 Syrians killed by the authorities in the city of Hama in 1982 in the suppression of a riot**; witness the wholesale slaughter of members of the PLO by the Jordanian army in that famous civil war***; witness the deaths of over 100,000 in Lebanon among competing Arab factions in the last decade. Compared to this kind of slaughter of brother against brother, the Israelis have shown remarkable restraint against an avowed enemy.

The immediate problem is this - what do you do when those in the occupied zone start throwing ^Sstones to injure your police? What would we do in America?

* "The Seige", Conor Cruise O'Brien, P. 629

** "The Seige", P. 619

*** 1970-1

13. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE DEMONSTRATION OF THOUSANDS OF ISRAELIS IN TEL AVIV AGAINST THE OCCUPATION?

Israel is a democracy. The super-nationalists do not want to surrender the West Bank, for example, under any conditions. The demonstrators were making a point against the super-nationalists. The demonstrators believe that the West Bank and Gaza should be returned to the Arabs. Of course, the demonstrators do not favor arming these areas, so even these Israelis could not be said to be in favor of establishing a new nation in the West Bank and Gaza. What the demonstrators favor is autonomy for these areas. This is similar to the Labor position as expressed by Peres.

14. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE DEMONSTRATIONS BY THE ISRAELI ARABS AT THE "TEMPLE MOUNT"?

The Arabs consider the Temple Mount one of their holiest sites after Mecca. They have a beautiful mosque on this site. A demonstration on this site is engineered to attract the greatest media coverage. At the first of recent demonstrations, the Israelis countered with smoke bombs. The Arabs were able to show these films throughout the Arab world and arouse Arab animosity, which has been flagging, against the Israelis. During the second of the recent demonstrations, the Israelis stood back and let the Arabs do what they would. The Arab actions included definite anti-Israeli acts, yet the Israelis did not intervene. The Israelis were determined not to give the Arab world additional propaganda for a holy war against Israel. On the other hand, demonstrations that are not restrained can get out of hand and lead to violence on both sides. We will have to see how the Arabs take advantage of Israeli restraint on the Temple Mount.

15. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF ARAB DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE ISRAELI CITY OF NAZARETH?

A demonstration in Nazareth has an entirely different meaning than a demonstration in Gaza. Nazareth is an Israeli city, and the Arabs there have been given full Israeli citizenship. This was then a demonstration by Israeli citizens against their own government, as an expression of sympathy with the Arabs in the conquered territories. The demonstration in Nazareth has a complex meaning. First of all, it is a reminder to the Israelis that some of the Arabs living within Israel are bound to the Arab cause first of all, and the suspicions that Jewish Israelis had had about the loyalty of the Israeli Arabs have been increased.

Secondly, it must be noted the Arabs in Nazareth did not attack the Israelis police. They did not throw rocks and endanger the body and life of the police. On the contrary, the Nazareth Arabs played up to the media and simply danced and made declarations. Accordingly, the police did not respond with violence of any kind.

Thirdly, it should be noted that the Arab local government in Nazareth is Communist. Nazareth has the largest bloc of Communist party members and voters in Israel, and its officials have for many years been members of the Communist party (which is legal in Israel). The Communist party in Israel, like the Communist party in most countries, has ties to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union has armed Syria and Iraq and has sided with the Arab governments throughout the history of Arab-Jewish conflict.

It is not unusual, then, that the first Arab demonstration within Israel in favor of the Arabs in the territories should come from a Communist oriented city.

16. DO THE ARABS REALLY WANT PEACE?

Because of the media publicity given to the riots in Gaza and the demonstrations in Israel itself, the Arab nations have been encouraged to hold joint meetings re-asserting their loyalty to one another and to the Arabs in the territories. Arafat, who had been substantially eclipsed, is now back in the limelight.

The Arab nations, who so often have attacked Israel, are now claiming that they have wanted peace all along and that the Israelis are the warmongers. What is the peace that the Arab nations want? The PLO Charter says that peace means that the Israelis must be driven into the sea. Other Arab leaders say that peace means independence for the West Bank and Gaza, plus the division of Jerusalem and an Israeli pull-back to the pre 1967 lines (which the Arabs had violated by their attack on Israel at that time). In other words, the "moderate" Arabs are saying that, even though we attacked Israel, and even though we lost the war, and even though we have demonstrated a hatred and animosity towards Israel in a menacing way all these years, we want to be restored to our pre-war positions.

The present furor would make it seem that Israel is the bully and the bad fellow, while the poor Arabs are innocent victims. The true

situation is that the attacker, having been vanquished, is now screaming "Look what his terrible fellow has done to me. He has knocked me to the ground"!

If you came upon a scene where one fellow is holding another fellow on the ground, you might think that the fellow on top is a scoundrel. It is important to know, however, who started the fight, and it is very important to know what the fellow on the ground intends to do when you let him up. Is not what he has done in the past, the best indication of what he is going to do in the future? Would you put a gun in the hands of the person who has already attacked you several times?

17. WHY HAVE THE ARABS RESISTED PEACE INITIATIVES IN THE PAST, AND WHY ARE THEY SUDDENLY TALKING ABOUT "PEACE"?

Israel has made numerous peace initiatives in the past, the most celebrated of which is the gift of the entire Sinai to Egypt in return for promises of non-belligerence. For his dealing with Israel, Sadat, Egypt's leader, was murdered in cold blood by his Arab friends. Other moderate leaders in the territories have been murdered. "The New Republic" reminds us that the PLO killed 76 Gazans in 1969 and 1970 for daring to cooperate with the Israelis and 1,122 were wounded. Those killed were hung up on meat hooks in Gaza markets. (February 1st issue, 1987). Similar techniques have been used to discourage cooperation on the West Bank.

With peace seemingly unavailable, many Israelis have moved into the West Bank area and some have even moved into the Gaza area. Noting that their prolonged silence has finally produced a response by the Israelis, the Arabs have been moved to action, not to suggest a way to peace, but a way to violence. Jeanne Kirkpatrick, writing in the January 18th Washington Post, has said, "It is a classic late-20th-century confrontation between not-so-civil disobedience and a not-so-iron fist....The media makes the difference, and the media knows it."

Rocks, boards with nails, and molotov cocktails are the new weapons in Gaza, but the older weapon is fully described by Azzam Pasha, then Secretary General of the Arab League. Azzam Pasha has said: "We have a secret weapon which we can use better than guns and machine guns, and this is time. As long as we do not make peace with the Zionists, the war is not over, and as long as the war is not over, there is neither victor nor vanquished. As soon as we recognize the

existence of the State of Israel, we recognize by this act that we are conquered."*

In viewing the problems Israel faces as the military governor of Gaza and the West Bank, we must remember the long term objectives of the Arabs. The peace that Israel seeks is freedom from war and attack. In the light of past experiences should not Israel be on her guard?

18. WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF ISRAEL WITHDRAWS FROM GAZA?

The answer to this question should really determine how Israel should act in Gaza and the West Bank. Who will take over Gaza? The PLO? The Moslem Brotherhood (dedicated to holy war)? There are hundreds of small factions in Gaza eager for power. Will we have another Beirut with wholesale murder of Gazans by other Gazans? The likelihood of this seems clear.

Egypt, when it controlled Gaza, did not permit the Gazans to enter into Egypt. What will happen if the Israelis do not permit Gazans to enter into Israel? And if they enter into Israel, what will be their purpose now that they have successfully attacked Israeli soldiers?

Will a free Gaza import arms with which to attack Israel? Will Israel have to fight the Arab wars all over again? These are questions which must be faced in a realistic appraisal of the current situation.

Military occupation is not a pretty story and it is indeed degrading to both parties, to the ruler and to the vanquished, but the victor had best be very careful as to how to make peace with his former enemy. He must be careful that he does not lose the next round.

(see p. 12.)

* see "The Siege", p. 362, and the notes there

POSTSCRIPT :

P.12

The questions and answers above were written just a few days after the Gaza incidents began. Since then the rebellion has been extended to the West Bank and in a much smaller way to Jerusalem. American Jews, like many other Americans, could not quite understand some of the expressions of reprisal by Israeli soldiers. Some American Jewish leaders have sent telegrams to Prime Minister Shamir citing Judaism's ethical teachings. Shamir and Rabin have responded that any weakness on the part of the Israelis will only prompt more rebellion.

It cannot be doubted that some Israeli soldiers, finding themselves in a new situation, have overreacted. The Miami Herald of February 29th carries a report (p. 6 A) that Gen. Amram Mitzna, military chief of the West Bank ordered his senior troop commanders to watch the TV news tapes showing some soldiers beating Palestinians. The General said he " would not let the Israeli army become a mob force".

At the same time, the army announced that three soldiers will be court-martialed on charges of burying alive four young Arabs near Kafr Salim (the Arabs were later rescued). It is clear that the army does not intend to let these young Israeli soldiers violate their responsibilities in the future.

On the other hand, one must have some sympathy for soldiers attacked by mobs throwing large stones and wielding clubs spiked with nails. Even responsible soldiers must defend themselves against molotov cocktails.

Also following upon the heels of the initial success of the rioters, who always notified the media before they began an incident, heretofore quiet Arab leaders throughout the region have suddenly come to life. Calls for an " international" peace conference have increased from the Arab side, but how this contrasts with Arab behavior once Secretary of State Shultz rushed to Jerusalem in an effort to be helpful. Yasir Arafat, the PLO leader forbade Palestinians to meet with Shultz under penalty of death. PLO radio blared...we warn those who seek to meet with Shultz...Our people will have no mercy on anyone who deviates...." Foreign Arab radio stations egged on the rioters. What perhaps started as a local event has become part of the total Arab agenda. Arafat told Radio Monte Carlo, " The uprising will continue, wave after wave, until the occupation ends and the Palestinian flag is hoisted over Jerusalem. " What some see as the desire of an oppressed people for freedom, other see as another form of warfare against Israel.

One of the many TV scenes beamed back to us in America showed Gen. Rabin asking some of the Palestinians in Gaza, " What is it that you want?". The problem is that different group of Palestinians in the territories and elsewhere cannot agree on what they want. Recent surveys show that three-quarters of Palestinian Arabs, including Israeli Arabs, want an end to the Israeli state. Israel obviously cannot negotiate on such terms. The existence of the state of Israel must be accepted. Then, other matters can be worked out, perhaps not completely as either side wishes, but in a compromise that can be enforceable and liveable without violence.