

been diminished even further. No one was doing anything about the violence they were having to endure – the nightly raids, the beatings inflicted on their menfolk, the sudden arrests, the children “accidentally” shot, whole families blown up. Thousands of Palestinians have been killed and tens of thousands more have been permanently wounded, scarred and traumatised with many dying unaccounted for in the statistics because of the injuries inflicted on them by the Israeli military. Last year alone, Israel fired 6,000 artillery shells into Gaza – an area not much bigger than Melbourne’s City of Casey – except that there are 1.4 million people squeezed into that space with no freedom to leave when the bombings begin. And the bombings over Gaza have begun again, almost a year to the day.

Israel’s seizure and occupation of Palestinian land after the 1967 war, drove thousands of Palestinians of all backgrounds, professions and beliefs to resist that occupation. The list includes doctors, lawyers, academics, tradespeople, business people, politicians, journalists, students - ordinary men, women and children who want to be free from Israel’s occupation. Free to come and go as they please and free to live their life without violence. Some took up armed resistance with the meagre and often home-made armaments available to them, but many more resisted non-violently through strikes, demonstrations, petitions, and other protests. So intense was the desire for freedom that even children began throwing stones at the tanks and military machines invading their towns and villages. This became known as the First Intifada of 1987. But as useless peace deals were struck and Israel increased the level of provocations against the Palestinian population, the feeling of hopelessness grew. A new generation of children was growing up in an environment that was continually violent and oppressive and there was no relief from the constant feeling of being besieged with nowhere to flee.

The Second Intifada began in 2000 - now much more violent and desperate. Whole families were seeing not only their menfolk killed, tortured and imprisoned, but also the women and children. There would hardly be a Palestinian family that has not suffered the loss of a member of their own immediate family or extended one.

With so much antagonism against the Palestinians for resisting the occupation, one has to ask if anyone of

us would do things differently if we found ourselves so emasculated by circumstances beyond our control. When talks fail, when law fails, when people fail, when peace fails, resistance is the last resort permissible under the United Nations Charter’s Article 51 in order for people and nations to free themselves from colonial oppression and occupation. And the world has continuously failed to protect the Palestinians as required by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In effect, the international community has driven the Palestinians to resist their occupiers and oppressors.

### Go Straight To Jail

For the Palestinians though, it makes no difference whether their resistance is armed or non-violent: Israel’s punishment is the same. Almost 11,000 Palestinians are currently in Israeli jails from the 700,000 men, women and children who were imprisoned at one time or another since 1967. That is about one-fifth of the Palestinian population – an incredible figure for any civil society and one that says more about the occupier than those who were or are in jail. Belonging to a political organization means ten years in prison, and any military action carries a life sentence. The figures on torture are also horrendous with some 85 per cent of prisoners having been tortured and having no recourse to a fair trial. Children as young as 12 are held in jails with adult Israeli criminals and it does not take too much imagination to know what they must endure in such conditions.

A term in jail is practically unavoidable for many Palestinians because even words are seen as undermining the Israeli state. Interrogations happen frequently and families live in a constant state of fear wondering when it will be their turn for an unwelcome visit by Israeli soldiers or intelligence officers. With so many new military regulations being introduced without notice, Palestinians do not know which act will be considered punishable, and therefore, anything and everything could be a jail-able offence. Already there are some 1,500 military regulations governing the West Bank and another 1,400 governing the Gaza Strip. Every moment of their lives comes under suspicion and they are contained and checked at every turn.



Reuters - Evelyn Hock

### The Final Solution – Ethnic Cleansing

The diabolical endgame is closing in. Left on the board are apartheid, enslavement, transfer, ethnic cleansing and genocide. Unpalatable as these terms are, more and more people are beginning to see just where Israel’s policies and practices are heading.

The first person to coin the term “genocide” was a Polish-Jewish legal scholar Raphael Lemkin whose idea was widely accepted by the international community and it became one of the legal bases of the Nuremberg Trials. It is interesting to see the parallel between his definition and what is happening to the Palestinians today:

“Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be the disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups.” *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe (Wash DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944), p79.*