

Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb wrote the following re her participation in the Gaza Freedom March - She is a long time friend and ally - and has committed her life to peacemaking.....

Why I went to Cairo

Submitted by [Lynn Gottlieb](#) on January 11, 2010 - 9:49am

Operation Cast Lead was a massacre filled with thousands of heartbreaking stories. Each of the 1,400 persons killed represents an entire world. Yes, it is also a war crime to fire kassam rockets into Israel with the intention to kill civilians. Over 2,000 rockets and 1,600 mortar shells were fired into Israel in 2008 alone. Some among the Palestinian population use armed force to resist Israeli's military occupation and blockade of Gaza and the West Bank. According to



international law, armed resistance against illegal occupation can be considered a just cause, as long as the rules of war are observed. However, as a person committed to nonviolence, I view the use of militarism by states or non-state actors to ensure security or resist occupation as a self-defeating strategy that promotes more violence and suffering and does not, in the end, result in well-being or peace for beleaguered populations. However, for those who believe in the use of military force as a viable option, Israel's response to kassam attacks went far beyond legal and ethical boundaries. The much maligned Goldstone Report proved beyond reasonable doubt that Israel intentionally targeted civilians and civilian institutions with deadly weapons. This is nothing new.

Operation Cast Lead made clear that the 60-year Israeli military siege of the people of Palestine has increased in brutality and ferocity. Sixty years of evidence that includes eye-witness reports, analysis of video, satellite and photographic images, medical reports, forensic analysis of weapons and ammunition remnants, and the written observations and testimony of thousands of witnesses from Palestine, Israel, and the international community, reveal a continual pattern of continuous assault that has very little to do with Israel's claim of "security." Rather, the end game is creating "facts on the ground" that establish a Jewish state from the Jordan river to the Mediterranean sea which limits Palestinians to 20% of the national population. Israel employs forced displacement, blockade, air strike, land mines, rubber bullets, white phosphorous, dime bombs, torture, beating and sexual humiliation, arbitrary arrest and administrative detention of minors and adults, water and land theft, Jewish-only roads, hundreds of military checkpoints, security fences, nightly incursions, human shields, collaborators, deportation, permit systems, denial of

access to economic opportunity, health care, culture and education, targeting of sewage and electricity plants and water installations, uprooting of thousands of trees and the destruction of thousands of homes to force the remaining Palestinian population into small enclosed areas that can only be described as open-air prisons. Ariel Sharon described these enclaves designated as the future Palestinian state as "bantustans."

In short, all these tactics amount to what is considered the crime of apartheid for the sake of creating a state that awards national and civil privileges based on Jewish identity while confining the excess non-Jewish population to their own "homeland." This is the ugly truth that is so hard for Jewish people and millions of so-called Christian Zionists to face. Anyone who spends a day in Palestinian territories sees this truth immediately. The so-called two-state solution which is based on this vision of reality is hardly viable or legal. People will not and cannot endure oppression forever. Our own history should teach us this lesson. The question is, how does an oppressed people change the situation on the ground and open history to new possibilities.

Those who both decry Palestinian armed resistance and the option of boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) can't have it both ways. If one describes the behavior of Israel as falling into the category of the crime of apartheid, BDS is the logical and ethical nonviolent response. Forty years of dialogue and negotiation with Israelis and Jews clearly has not worked to advance the cause of self-determination for Palestinians. The situation on the ground is far worse than ever before. The two-state solution and all the peace plans and road maps have been undermined by the systematic effort to enclose Palestinians in bantustans and deny them civil and national rights. In this context, further efforts at dialogue only benefit those with privilege, unless they are accompanied by strategies of resistance to the systematic inequality Palestinians face on a daily basis.



While [J Street](#) and associated partners are a much appreciated alternative voice within the Jewish community to the [AIPAC](#) machine, they have thus far failed to address the concerns nor partner with Palestinians in their own struggle for human and equal rights. As Jews, we have to recognize that we are not going to be the ones who determine the direction of the Palestinian nonviolent struggle for freedom. What we can and should do is find ways of acting in solidarity

with that struggle by joining the Palestinian-initiated international effort to use boycott, divestment, and sanctions to force Israel to comply with international law and end the siege of Gaza and the illegal occupation of Palestine. We can also support those within Israel who are resisting the oppressive actions of their own state.

We cannot truly work on this issue without understanding the meaning of resistance in our lives. For Jews, I believe resistance requires serious study and practice of the [Torah of Nonviolence](#). Nonviolence is the only way forward. Violence will destroy our beautiful tradition. By struggling in solidarity with those who oppose militarism

and support boycott, divestment, and sanctions we are also renewing the most sacred elements of our tradition that require us to protest in the street, pursue justice and peace, and avoid violence. It is not an easy road.

Boycott is a strategy capable of being used for good and for bad. In this case, I believe that BDS is the only viable nonviolent method that can impact "facts on the ground." All of us who love freedom, justice, and peace -- all of us who love the people of Israel and the people of Palestine -- have a profound responsibility to act in alignment with the people who are the actual victims in this situation. That is why I went to Cairo and created the Interfaith Gaza Satyagraha as an affinity group within the [Gaza Freedom March](#). The call to break the siege has been joined with the call for boycott.

As the only liberal rabbi present, I was honored to stand with hundreds of other activists who spoke to me of their commitment to oppose anti-Semitism wherever it emerged. I spent ten days planning actions, protesting in the streets, talking about next steps, networking and envisioning. At one point, American Jews organized a protest in front of the Israeli embassy, which is fifteen stories above the street



and visible only by the familiar blue and white flag. I was asked to lead a Sabbath service. Jews, Muslims, Christians; Egyptians and internationals of all persuasions stood round a simple kiddish cup, Egyptian flat bread, and candles. I invited participants to envision a world where everyone could find a seat at the table and eat, unafraid. We sang and prayed in Hebrew in public and I saw tears flow. Standing among the crowd was a man with a Palestinian father and a Sephardic Israeli mother. He wept in joy because, for one instant, the worlds of conflict stretching across the borders of his soul could dissolve in a single vision of unification and peace. So may it be for all of us, Palestinian and Jew, living together on the same land in recognition of our common love for place and each other.

Only a "solution" which ensures "the right to exist" and universal human rights of all people living on the historic land of Israel/Palestine will suffice. The children of the future will see the world very differently than those of us living now. They will face new challenges and inherit a new sense of globalism which hopefully strengthens the religious, cultural, and national heritage of both Palestinians and Israelis in a renewed culture of peace. It is up to us to prepare the way.

- [Lynn Gottlieb's blog](#)