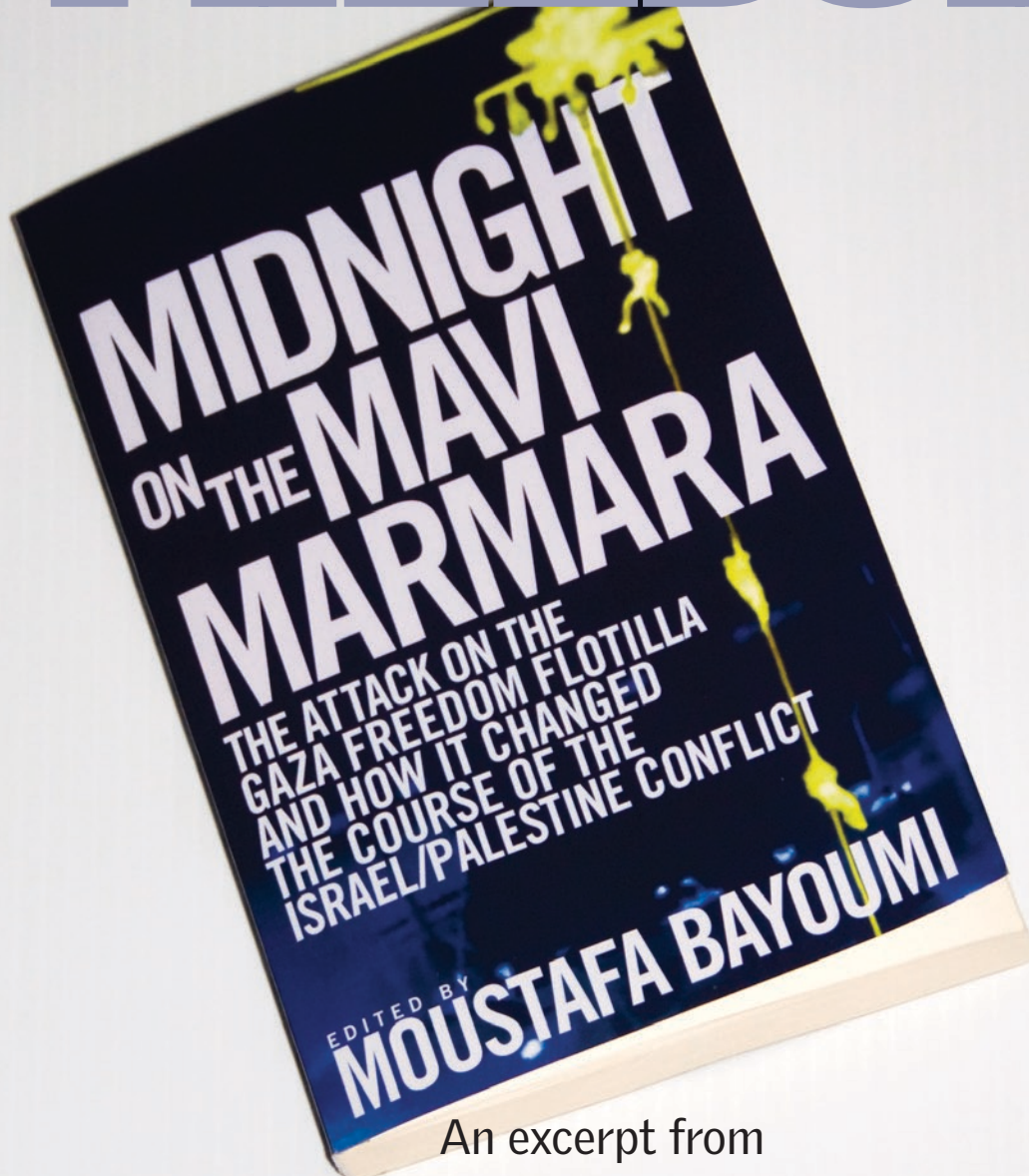


HIJACKING FREEDOM

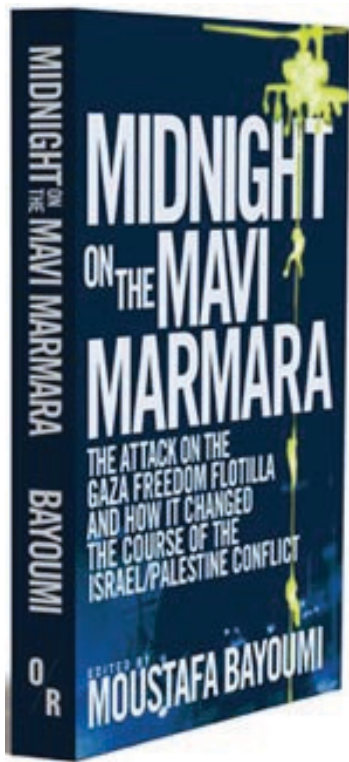


An excerpt from

MIDNIGHT ON THE MAVI MARMARA

THE ATTACK ON THE GAZA FREEDOM FLOTILLA AND HOW IT CHANGED
THE COURSE OF THE ARAB/PALESTINE CONFLICT

Edited by **Moustafa Bayoumi**



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THERE were 581 passengers on the *Mavi Marmara*. The Turkish vessel named for the blue waters of the Sea of Marmara was by far the largest ship in the Freedom Flotilla, a convoy of ships full of volunteer humanitarian workers and aid for the beleaguered people of Gaza. Although this was not the first attempt to break the siege of Gaza by the sea, it was easily the biggest. In fact, there had already been eight voyages before. The first endeavor was in August 2008, and it had been successful, as were the four following it. The sixth mission was launched at the end of December 2008, during Israel's punishing war on Gaza, and the small boat carrying medical supplies and three volunteer surgeons was in the high seas when it was rammed by the Israeli Navy. Taking on water, the boat crawled to the coast of Lebanon and, after a second attempt, eventually reached Gaza. The seventh mission was menaced by Israel. The eighth was boarded by the Israeli Navy. Neither reached Gaza.

All of these previous missions, however, were dwarfed in size by this, the ninth attempt. The Freedom Flotilla consisted of the *Mavi Marmara*, along with two other vessels from Turkey, two from Greece, and individual ships from Ireland and Algeria. (Some of the ships flew different nations' flags. The Irish Ship was the *Rachel Corrie*, which sailed to Gaza later, and an eighth Greek ship, which was American-flagged, failed to launch due either to technical difficulties or possibly Israeli sabotage.) On board the flotilla was 10,000 tons of humanitarian aid, all of it desperately needed and cruelly disallowed by Israel's blockade (with the Egyptian government's collusion) of the Strip. A sense of what the aid entailed can be grasped from what was loaded on the *Defne Y*, a smaller Turkish vessel: 150 tons of iron for reconstruction, ninety-eight power units of all kinds, fifty precast homes, sixteen children's playgrounds including seesaws and slides, medical equipments such as ultrasound scanners, X-ray machines, electric patient beds, dentistry units, Doppler echocardiography devices, wheelchairs, electric mobility scooters for the disabled, stretchers, mammography equipment, microscopes, dialysis machines, radiology monitors, crutches, ENT Units, operating beds, and gynecological couches.

The ships had been carefully inspected at all points of departure for any weapons, and none were ever found. The participants on the flotilla included artists and academics, doctors and lawyers, activists and journalists, and lawmakers from dozens of countries, including parliamentarians from Israel, Egypt, and Sweden, and two members of the German Bundestag. Volunteers had come from over forty countries, united by the simplicity of their mission: to publicly deliver



Immediately following the morning prayer, the Zodiacs moved quickly alongside the Mavi Marmara. They shot at the ship with paintball rifles and attempted to board

aid to Gaza in order to challenge Israel's illegal blockade on that small, densely populated strip of land on the Eastern Mediterranean. These were not thugs, brutes, or terrorists. A terrorist, after all, is one who kills innocent civilians to advance a political cause. (Just as George Orwell observed with the word *fascism* long ago, the word *terrorism* today has virtually no real meaning except to signify the complete inhumanity of your opponents, especially if they are Muslims.) Rather, these were ordinary people trying to help other ordinary people.

What happened next is now well known and, especially after reading the testimonies in this book, should also be in little dispute, even if the Israelis confiscated all recordings of the event in a desperate attempt to control the narrative. (Importantly, some people did smuggle out recordings. More importantly, you can't confiscate people's memories.) At around 4:25 a.m. on May 31, 2010, Israeli commandos attacked the *Mavi Marmara* while the boat was in international waters. They had been trailing the convoy for hours and harassing them for about ninety minutes prior to this by circling the ship with Zodiac dinghies full of Israeli commandos. Immediately following the morning prayer, the Zodiacs moved quickly alongside the *Mavi Marmara*. They shot at the ship with paintball rifles and attempted to board. The ship then turned, heading away from Gaza at full speed. Israeli helicopters descended minutes later, and the commandos began firing smoke and percussion grenades on the ship, followed almost immediately by rubber bullets and live ammunition. Meanwhile, those on the ship were not about to be boarded in international waters, and they resisted the attack with slingshots, bare hands, water hoses, and

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various objects from the ship. Two Israeli commandos who had dropped from helicopters were overpowered, their weapons disabled, and were taken below the fifth deck, where they were searched and then provided with basic first aid. The other commandos continued to fire live ammunition rounds, shooting dozens of unarmed civilians, including an Indonesian doctor.

By the time the attack was over, nine people—eight Turkish citizens and a dual American-Turkish citizen—were dead. Autopsy results later revealed that those killed in the attack were shot a total of thirty times. *The Guardian* reported that sixty-one years old Ibrahim Bilgen, “was shot four times in the temple, chest, hip and back,” and that nineteen-year-old Fulkan Dogan, “was shot five times from less than 45cm, in the face, in the back of the head, twice in the leg and once in the back. Two other men were shot four times, and five of the victims were shot either in the back of the head or in the back.” Footage shot by Iara Lee and analyzed by Ali Abunmiah shows that the Israelis fired indiscriminately into a crowd of unarmed people huddled behind a cabin door, disproving the claim that the commandos were merely defending themselves against an onslaught. According to Kevin Ovenden, an organizer of the Viva Palestina solidarity group and a volunteer aboard the ship, the attack lasted for twenty-eight minutes. Jamal Elshayyal, a reporter for Al Jazeera and also a survivor of the raid, writes that after the initial attack concluded and the ship’s passengers had surrendered, the Israelis refused the passengers’ increasingly desperate pleas for medical assistance to the wounded, leading to three more men bleeding to death. Both Elshayyal’s and Ovenden’s testimonies, along with seven others, are



The attack on the *Mavi Marmara* was not only brutal. It was criminal. Not only did the Israelis have no legal right to forcibly board the boat in international waters, they also had no justification for their use of lethal force

included in this book.

One of the dead was the tae kwon do coach of the Turkish national team, himself a former European champion of the sport. Another was a sixty-one-year-old electrical engineer. Also killed were a Kurdish telephone repair shop owner, a former newspaper journalist who traded in that job to work for the Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH), a firefighter with four sons, a thirty-two-year-old aid worker with a young daughter, two family men, and the nineteen-year-old American-born high school student from inner Anatolia. Their ages ranged from nineteen to sixty-one, and their names are Çetin Topçuoğlu, Ibrahim Bilgen, Ali Haydar Bengi, Cevdet Kiliçlar, Fahri Yıldız, Necdet Yildirim, Cengiz Songür, Cengiz Akyüz, and Furkan Doğan. It’s important to remember their names. The dead are easily maligned and even more easily forgotten. What we need to recall most is that these were ordinary men, shot to death in a middle of a humanitarian mission.

The attack on the *Mavi Marmara* was not only brutal. It was criminal. Not only did the Israelis have no legal right to forcibly board the boat in international waters, as legal scholars George Bisharat and Ben Saul explain in this volume, they also had no justification for their use of lethal force. As Saul writes in another essay, “one cannot illegally attack a ship and then claim self-defense if those on board resist your attack. The right of self-defense instead rests with the passengers.” The degree of unarmed resistance the Israelis met is also immaterial. Leon Wieseltier, a stalwart supporter of Israel, explains that the civilians on board “were ‘armed’ with metal bars and a knife, but still they were civilians, and soldiers are trained to respond un lethally to the

recklessness of a mob.”

By the viciousness of the raid, the Israeli government seemed to be delivering a deliberate and deadly message to future humanitarian missions: Fear not for the lives of others but for your own. The American media largely reported the attack with evident sympathy for the attackers, not for those who had been attacked, but this is perverse. Imagine for a moment that the *Mavi Marmara* had been sailing to Iran in support of the Green movement, and Iranian commandos raided the ship in international waters, killing nine along the way. Those offering resistance would immediately be lionized as heroes, the dead remembered as martyrs to the cause of freedom.

Unsurprisingly, the US government responded (in yet another display of a double standard) by shielding Israel from condemnation in the United Nations Security Council at roughly the same time it sought to cajole China into isolating North Korea over the sinking of a South Korean military vessel. Israel established a dubious panel of inquiry (see Yusef Manayyer’s essay in this volume). But the reaction of the Obama administration notwithstanding, international outrage was swift, and spontaneous. Demonstrations quickly broke out in Istanbul, several Arab and European capitals, major American and Canadian cities, the Gaza Strip, Israel (10,000 demonstrated in Tel Aviv), the West Bank, and elsewhere. Egypt finally opened the Rafah border crossing, and Greece ended military exercises with Israel. Turkey’s long relationship with Israel was damaged, perhaps beyond repair. Belgium, Norway, Denmark, Spain, Greece, and Sweden summoned their Israeli ambassadors; Turkey, Ecuador, and South Africa recalled theirs; and Nicaragua suspended its diplomatic



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ties with Israel. Dockworkers in Oakland, California, Sweden, South Africa, and Norway refused to unload Israeli ships for a time in protest of Israel’s actions. The Pixies cancelled a scheduled concert in Tel Aviv.

Israel’s self-inflicted isolation, in other words, was—and is—on the rise. By killing nine unarmed civilian humanitarian aid workers, Israel’s actions have pricked the conscience of many around the globe. The result is a growing global movement ready to stand up to Israel’s brutal rule of its Palestinians, which has, in recent years especially, been marked by a series of “strategic blunders,” in the understated words of Anthony Cordesman, a chief analyst for Center for Strategic and International Studies (and hardly a friend to the Palestinians). Together, these “blunders” have a cumulative force if only because of their grotesqueness.

Before the attack on the *Mavi Marmara*, there was the siege on Gaza, which is described in harrowing and tragic detail here in an essay by Sara Roy, and which, despite an announced relaxing of its lines of strangulation (still far less than what is needed), continues to decimate the economy, livelihoods, and health of more than 1.5 million people. (Without freedom of movement and open borders for exporting—not importing—goods, the Strip cannot develop economically and is doomed to a deliberate and cynical present of aid dependency, corruption, and pauperization.) The siege is connected to the war on Gaza in January 2009, dubbed “Operation Cast Lead” by Israel, where the territory was sealed shut and bombed ruthlessly, killing, according to the Israeli human rights organization B’tselem, at least 1,390 Palestinians, mostly civilians, including 344 children, 110 women, and 117 men over the

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age of fifty, as well as 248 police officers who were inside police stations. Thirteen Israelis were killed during Operation Cast Lead, three of them civilians and four soldiers killed by friendly fire. Palestinian casualties, in other words, were on a scale of 100 to 1 in this war. “The Biblical injunction of an eye for an eye is savage enough,” wrote Oxford University’s Avi Shlaim at the time of the war, “but Israel’s insane offensive against Gaza seems to follow the logic of an eye for an eyelash.”

The war in Gaza was launched two and a half years ago after the 2006 war in Lebanon, which killed over 1,000 Lebanese, many if not most of them civilians, compared with about 160 Israeli dead, including forty-three civilians. In the final three days of that war, the Israelis carpet bombed southern Lebanon, dropping more than four million cluster bombs (equivalent to more than one for each Lebanese). Since this ordnance often does not explode upon impact, the south of Lebanon was effectively mined. To date, at least 46 civilians have been killed and more than 300 people (mostly children and farmers) have been maimed since the end of that war. Large swaths of valuable Lebanese farmland are now uninhabitable.

Hamas and Hezbollah are also guilty of targeting civilians, albeit to a lesser degree, and they are accordingly and correctly ostracized by much of the international community for it. Israel, on the other hand, has repeatedly violated the principles of international law, including the laws of war, with extraordinary impunity, until now at least. But maybe that is beginning to change.

Even those at the epicenter of the American and Israeli political establishments are recognizing the unsustain-



Average citizens around the world increasingly view Israel’s actions as indefensible; and with greater frequency and in larger numbers, these ordinary people are becoming motivated to put an end to such violence themselves

ability of Israeli policy. Commenting on precisely these wars and the Gaza flotilla attack, Anthony Cordesman writes that the US’s commitment to Israel “does not justify or excuse actions by an Israeli government that unnecessarily make Israel a strategic liability when it should remain an asset.” General David Petraeus, Commander of Central Command, testified in March 2010 to the Senate that the Israel/Palestine conflict jeopardizes US foreign policy interests (and, in another report, that Israel’s intransigence in peacemaking endangers American lives). And the head of the Israeli Mossad, Meir Dagan, told the Knesset in June 2010 that “Israel is gradually turning from an asset to the United States to a burden.”

And as the Gaza Freedom Flotilla and its subsequent fallout makes clear, average citizens around the world increasingly view Israel’s actions as indefensible; and with greater frequency and in larger numbers, these ordinary people are becoming motivated to put an end to such violence themselves.

For more than sixty years, the Israel/Palestine conflict has dragged on seemingly without end, and as if change is rarer than peace. Yet, in terms of global public action at least, the Israel/Palestine conflict may be heading into a new phase.

Midnight on the “Mavi Marmara” is the first book about the attack on the *Mavi Marmara*, but it will likely not be the last. As Philip Weiss and Adam Horowitz write in their contribution here, the attack on the *Mavi Marmara* will probably be understood as this generation’s “anti-1967” moment for Israel. Immediately following that war more than forty

years ago, Israel was seen by many in the Western world as the “scrappy underdog beating the odds.” Today, according to Weiss and Horowitz, that image “is gone forever, and the ongoing siege of Gaza has caused many to consider what Zionism has built in the Middle East.”

In these pages, you will find testimony, analysis, history, and poetry from activists, novelists, academics, analysts, journalists, and poets, all of which tackle the events of that night and their meaning: for the struggle for Palestinian rights, for the state of Israeli society, for American Zionism, for the history of the conflict, for the role of resistance strategies in today’s world, and more. The attack on the *Mavi Marmara* is particularly significant because its impact will be felt along three significant and related lines, the understanding of which is necessary if we are to see where the Israel/Palestine conflict is headed and possibly find a way out of our current impasse.

The first line concerns the internationalization of the struggle for equal rights in Israel/Palestine. There was a time not too long ago when most college students interested in the Israel/Palestine conflict were either Jewish or Arab, but this is no longer the case. The Palestinian cause for equal rights is increasingly recognized as today’s moral question in a similar manner to the way campus activists approached the struggle to end South African apartheid in the 1980s. In fact, the two struggles are frequently compared, and for obvious reasons Israel’s supporters are made nervous when the apartheid label is applied to Israel. Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, for example, was excoriated for his book, *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*, mostly because of the last word in its title.

Often left out of this discussion is how



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the Israeli political establishment already speaks in these terms. Both former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and former Prime Minister (and current Defense Minister) Ehud Barak have warned that Israel is headed toward apartheid. (The difference between them and many campus activists is that many activists would say Israel is already there.) Barak told a national security conference in the Israeli city of Herzliya in March 2010 that “as long as in this territory west of the Jordan River there is only one political entity called Israel, it is going to be either non-Jewish, or non-democratic.” He continued: “If this bloc of millions of Palestinians cannot vote, that will be an apartheid state.” Olmert, for his part, warned in 2007 that the collapse of a two-state solution will mean Israel will “face a South African–style struggle for equal voting rights.”

Palestinian civil society groups and international campaigners have known this for some time. In 2001, a group of Palestinian, Israeli, and American activists organized the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), an organization “committed to resisting the Israeli apartheid in Palestine by using nonviolent, direct-action methods and principles.” (Adam Shapiro details the organization and its strategies in his chapter in this book.) The ISM’s methods are powerfully simple. They involve witnessing and documenting Israeli military occupation. Their volunteers come from all over the world and participate in civil disobedience against Israeli military rule. They also frequently come under Israeli fire, and several have been wounded, including Kate Edwards (Australia), Caoimhe Butterly (Ireland), Brian Avery (USA), Tristan Andersen (USA), and Emily Henochowicz (USA). The American student Rachel Corrie and

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the British student Tom Hurndall were killed by the Israeli military (One ISM member, Akram Ibrahim Abu Sba', was killed by members of the Islamic Jihad.)

Similarly, in 2005, hundreds of Palestinian civil society groups came together to issue a call to the international community that it boycott, divest, and sanction (BDS) Israel until it fulfills its obligations under international law. In these pages, Omar Barghouti, a BDS leader, details the success of the movement and its growing imperative in the wake of the attack on the Freedom Flotilla. Several major performing artists have cancelled their concerts (Elvis Costello being the latest before the Pixies), large institutions such as the Norwegian State Pension Fund have divested themselves of companies that do business in the West Bank, and campus groups (including at Hampshire and Evergreen Colleges—the University of California at Berkeley came close) are increasingly seeking to divest their university portfolios from businesses that profit from the occupation.

The BDS movement is also significant for being able to unite disparate Palestinian groups along three basic principles toward reaching a just solution to the conflict: an end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem; recognition of the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and respecting, protecting, and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in U.N. resolution 194. The road to liberation here is not armed struggle but non-violent resistance. The respected independent Palestinian lawmaker Mustafa Barghouti explained BDS in the *New York Times* in December 2009: “A new generation of Palestinian leaders is attempting



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to speak to the world in the language of a nonviolent campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions, precisely as Martin Luther King Jr. and thousands of African-Americans did with the Montgomery bus boycott in the mid-1950s. We are equally right to use the tactic to advance our rights. The same world that rejects all use of Palestinian violence, even clear self-defense, surely ought not begrudge us the nonviolence employed by men such as King and Gandhi.”

BDS and ISM are not alone in their efforts. They often work closely with Israeli organizations like Anarchists Against the Wall or other international groups like Code Pink. Solidarity also comes in the form of guerilla art, as when the British street artist Banksy beautifully transformed Israel's inhuman and illegal (according to the International Court of Justice) separation wall into a canvas of subversive graffiti. What all of this points to is that, as with the Freedom Flotilla volunteers, there is an ever-expanding chorus of ordinary people from all over the world who are motivated by the principles of unarmed resistance and their honest desire to see long-delayed justice for the Palestinians finally fulfilled. And they are willing to act on their convictions.

Alongside the internationalization of the conflict comes a debate about Zionism in the United States that Norman Finkelstein has explored for years and that was put into sharp focus by a recent article by Peter Beinart in the *New York Review of Books*. Titled “The Failure of the American Jewish Establishment,” Beinart's article describes why American Jewish college students have a diminishing attachment to Israel and to what he terms the American Jewish establishment. (In this book, Dan Luban writes

as “a member of the ‘younger generation’ whose attitudes have become the subject of so much discussion.”) Beinart describes most young Jewish Americans as liberals “who were alienated by the prevailing “group think” required around Israel. These young Jewish Americans “had imbibed some of the defining values of American Jewish political culture: a belief in open debate, a skepticism about military force, a commitment to human rights. And in their innocence, they did not realize that they were supposed to shed those values when it came to Israel.” The result of this alienation has been that “for several decades, the Jewish establishment has asked American Jews to check their liberalism at Zionism’s door,” Beinart explains, “and now, to their horror, they are finding that many young Jews have checked their Zionism instead.”

Why would this be so? According to Beinart, “Morally, American Zionism is in a downward spiral.” He points out the increasingly extreme, land hungry, and racist turn in Israeli politics, describing Netanyahu’s coalition government as “the product of frightening, long-term trends in Israeli society.” Beinart’s point is that because the mainstream American Jewish organizations “defend virtually anything any Israeli government does, they make themselves intellectual bodyguards for Israeli leaders who threaten the very liberal values they profess to admire.”

Beinart ends his article by telling of “a different Zionist calling” that “has its roots in Israel’s Independence Proclamation, which promised that the Jewish state ‘will be based on the precepts of liberty, justice and peace taught by the Hebrew prophets.’” Using the example of solidarity work among Israeli student activists with Palestinians thrown out of their homes in Sheikh Jarrah by Israel



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to make room for settlers, Beinart asks, “What if American Jewish organizations brought these young people to speak at Hillel? What if this was the face of Zionism shown to America’s Jewish young?”

Beinart’s article is hardly alone in questioning the orthodoxy about Israel among the Jewish American mainstream organizations. Norman Finkelstein’s essay in this book (“Ever Fewer Hosannas”) describes other examples, including an influential essay by Tony Judt, the book by John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt titled *The Israel Lobby*, and more. The rise of J Street, an alternative lobby group to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), likewise points to the shifting sands underneath the old establishment. Without overstating the case, the significance in all of this change is that Israel’s core supporters, who have enabled that country’s impunity for decades, may be withering away. If ordinary people, here young Jewish Americans, raise enough of a challenge to their political leaders, they too could help bring about a change that could have major repercussions for finally and justly resolving the Israel/Palestine conflict.

The Freedom Flotilla was also organized not in the name of any Palestinian political faction but simply for the people of Gaza, and in that fact, too, one discovers a third important point about the current state of affairs: There is an ongoing crisis among the Palestinians regarding their own political leaders. In fact, all the established parties are so far away from fulfilling the needs and aspirations of their constituents that they have become a major hindrance rather than a vehicle for a just resolution of the conflict. Even after the Flotilla attack, which some pundits described as a win for Hamas, polling data revealed support in

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Gaza for the group to be only at 32 percent, barely different than before the attack. The Israeli siege of Gaza has indeed entrenched Hamas's rule in the Strip, but the group is not more popular than before they were elected.

Neither, however, is Fatah, the largest and most established faction in Palestinian politics. In mid-June, Fatah brazenly cancelled municipal elections to be held in the West Bank in July. Why? Because they knew they would lose, not to Hamas, but to lesser-known independents. In Nablus, the second largest city in the West Bank, Mayor Ghassan Shakaa broke with Fatah to organize his own slate of independents, knowing that a Fatah-dominated list was doomed to failure. (Fatah is often seen by Palestinians as Israel's enforcer, and, if more proof were needed, recently leaked documents illustrate how Fatah sought to undermine Turkey's push for a U.N. probe of the flotilla attack.)

Meanwhile, much of the substantive political work going on the West Bank today has little to do with the factionalism of Palestinian politics. Instead, it has a lot to do with the weekly demonstrations against the wall. Based in villages like Bil'in, Nil'in, and Ma'asara these demonstrations are organized by "popular committees" against the wall and the settlements (so called because they are committees made up of all factions where factionalism also means nothing). The Popular Committees are recovering the spirit of the first intifada of 1987, which was largely a grassroots, community-based nonviolent organizing effort on the part of the Palestinians. They also take another page from the South African struggle by echoing the strategy of the African National Congress around "ungovernability," in order to "encourage



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the emergence of new committees and initiatives and support them, regardless of their affiliation." Bil'in has staged weekly protests against the wall since March 2005, making them "longest continuous nonviolent popular mobilization in Palestinian history," according to noted Middle East historian Joel Beinin. Another village, Budrus, successfully forced the Israeli government to reroute the wall away from the village, and the vast majority of its land has not been confiscated. (This struggle is the subject of a new documentary by Julia Bacha called *Budrus*.) Since these actions began, the Israeli Army, which sometimes meets resistance in the form of stones being thrown at soldiers, has injured over 1,800 demonstrators and killed nineteen of them. Popular committee leaders, such as Abdallah Abu Rahmah, are usually arrested, following a long-established pattern (as Lamis Andoni explains in this book) of arresting, exiling, or killing Palestinian leaders who advocate nonviolent resistance.

The era of armed struggle has not come to an end. This conflict has been bloody for a long time, and there is every reason to believe that violence will continue to be a part of it. The daily violence of the occupation persists, more warfare is certainly possible, and bad leadership is a given. As the Israeli government feels more threatened by growing popular resistance, it will in all likelihood respond with even greater aggression. But the contours of the struggle are shifting. It's important to understand that the West Bank demonstrations alone will not herald the end of the occupation. But taken together with the Gaza Freedom Flotilla, campus activism, international solidarity work, tireless blogging and creative myth-debunking from people like Ali Abunimah, Mondoweiss, and Max Blu-

mental, and new questions around the politics of Israel, a different future now seems possible in ways it hadn't before. In short, what unites all of these examples is the resolve of ordinary people to determine the shape and destiny of the struggle for human rights for Palestinians and Israelis by inserting themselves directly into the struggle and more and more through creative paths of nonviolent resistance.

There are so many good reasons to end the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and not a single good reason to keep it going. The conflict, for example, continues to feed both a pernicious anti-Semitism and a frightening Islamophobia globally where there is far too much noxious hatred already. Resolving the conflict between these two peoples with justice and equity will advance more than the interests of Israelis and Palestinians. It will have substantial and positive repercussions around the world in a way that solving no other conflict in today would. The question is how that solution is to be found and implemented.

While difficult, it is not impossible. What is clear now, just as it was clear a generation ago, is that, from either the Palestinian or the Israeli side, there can be no military solution to this problem.



The so-called peace process initiated by the 1993 Oslo agreements, which never guaranteed the Palestinians recognition of their rights to self-determination, are merely exercises in dissimulation, obfuscation, and futility

The solution must instead be one that is forged through dialogue, mutual recognition, and holding true to the principles of coexistence.

What is equally clear is the future will not be made by endless negotiations. The so-called peace process initiated by the 1993 Oslo agreements, which never guaranteed the Palestinians recognition of their rights to self-determination, are merely exercises in dissimulation, obfuscation, and futility. They cannot bring about an end to the conflict.

Instead, the actions of ordinary people from around the world are forcing the parameters of coexistence to emerge with ever more clarity. They involve an end to military occupation, an abandonment of terrorism, an embrace of full equality for Arabs and Jews alike, protection of minority and communal rights, and a just resolution to the question of refugees. There is nothing extraordinary in this list, just as there is nothing out of the ordinary in desiring peace with justice or working toward the end of oppression. What the Gaza Freedom Flotilla and actions like it show is that ordinary people may be the ones who are finally going to push the conflict to a resolution, one that guarantees justice for everyone. And the extraordinary power of ordinary individuals working together may very well be the lasting legacy of the attack on the *Mavi Marmara*.

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