

ISRAEL-PALESTINE

After the 2014 war in Gaza

GUE/NGL Delegation visit to Palestine 4-7 September 2014

European United Left • Nordic Green Left



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

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In summer 2014, Israel conducted a bloody 50-day military attack on the Gaza Strip which resulted in 2145 fatalities, including 581 children.

Appalled and outraged, we immediately started planning a delegation to Palestine to show our solidarity with Palestinians in their on-going struggle against Israeli occupation.

As part of our visit, we planned to enter Gaza to assess the situation on the ground first hand. This would have enabled us to relay information back to the European Parliament, giving greater weight to our demands for greater provision of EU humanitarian aid to Gaza and an end to the blockade and occupation.

Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, our plans to visit Gaza were thwarted by the Israeli government's refusal to grant us access; the justification given was that our visit to the region was 'not directly concerned with the provision of humanitarian assistance'. This is beyond irony considering that the horrific and harrowing humanitarian situation in Gaza is a direct result of Israel's bloody military attack on Gaza, and indeed Israel's eight-year blockade of the region.

Nevertheless, we, 13 MEPs from 6 countries and 8 political delegations, travelled to East Jerusalem, Ramallah, Hebron, Bethlehem, and Tel Aviv where we met members of the Palestinian Legislative Council and the Knesset, as well as activists from both Palestinian and Israeli human rights and peace organisations.

For some of us this was our first visit to Palestine; for others it was one of many.

But all of us left more determined than ever to keep up the fight for a free Palestine, to tell the world what is happening there, and campaign for a change in narrative, and above all a change in EU policy towards Israel.

We owe it to all those who have lost their lives throughout this bloody conflict.

This is a diary of our visit and an account of how we relayed what we heard back to the European Parliament.

In solidarity,

Martina Anderson - Sinn Féin, Ireland

Lynn Boylan – Sinn Féin, Ireland

Matt Carthy – Sinn Féin, Ireland

Takis Hadjigeorgiou -AKEL, Cyprus

Pablo Iglesias – PODEMOS, Spain

Josu Juaristi – Bildu, Basque Country

Marisa Matias – Bloco, Portugal

Younous Omarjee- Front de Gauche, France

Teresa Rodríguez – PODEMOS, Spain

Lola Sánchez – PODEMOS, Spain

Neoklis Sylikiotis – AKEL, Cyprus

Ángela Vallina – Izquierda Plural, Spain

Miguel Viegas – Portuguese Communist Party

Day One
4th September 2014
EAST JERUSALEM



Peace organisations share their experiences

On our first morning in Palestine we held a really encouraging meeting with representatives from Rabbis for Human Rights, Other Voice, the Public Committee against Torture, Refuseniks, Families Forum, Combatants for Peace, as well as the Communist Party of Israel.

These organisations of both former Israeli soldiers and Palestinian prisoners who are now coming together to work towards peace were inspiring. These are the types of organisations that the EU should be supporting. The general consensus was a call for a radical shift in how the international community acts when it comes to the plight of the Palestinian people.

We also met with renowned Haaretz journalist Amira Hass; it's hugely important for her expertise and insight into the reality of life under occupation to be felt in Israeli society.



In the afternoon we saw at first hand the impact of Israeli settlements in and around the Old City in Jerusalem, as well as the separation wall.



“From our meetings with peace organisations what we heard was a clear call for the international community to realise that the negotiations are over. Israel enters into the negotiations but then carries out deadly military attacks and land grabs - a direct contradiction with the peace it claims to want to work towards. Rather than continuing their support for talks, world leaders should be loudly denouncing the Israeli occupation of Palestine for what it is, the deliberate and systematic extermination of Palestinians from their land, nothing short of social genocide.”

Martina Anderson

“On our first day in Palestine we saw first-hand how Israel attempts to keep polarizing society along religious lines. They use settlers to change the demography of the town and turn it into a city only for Jews. But Jerusalem is a shared space, as was agreed in 2003 – it should be a city for people of all and no faith. The EU and the international community should act in such a way to stop these settlements.”

Neoklis Sylikiotis

Day Two
5th September 2014
EAST JERUSALEM

UNRWA: frustrations with delays and amounts of EU aid to Gaza



As we were not able to see the situation in Gaza for ourselves as Israeli authorities denied us entry, our meeting with UNRWA representatives in Jerusalem was invaluable. They described Israel's latest deadly military bombardment on Gaza as "unparalleled" in terms of the level of destruction of human life and infrastructure. We also heard how Israeli rules on imports are affecting the ability to begin reconstruction.

We were told that nothing could prepare you for seeing the devastation first hand as it is beyond your imagination. Such a statement is particularly poignant given that those working for UNRWA have been at the coalface of destruction and conflicts for decades.

UNRWA Director Salvatore Lombardo outlined that the people of Gaza need more money now to help rebuild and support the local economy, and tackle huge challenges, such as providing psycho-social support for children. He emphasised how important international solidarity is; with the mass global protests denouncing Israel's actions proving that people are miles ahead of most politicians in this respect.

We also discussed the main political challenges surrounding the blockade as well as the accountability challenge: the crimes committed in this conflict can't be forgotten.

UNRWA representatives drew attention to the low levels of EU aid money available and the delays in money being allocated due to stalemates in approval of the EU budget.

"We put forward several amendments in the Budget committee to reinforce the money for Gaza. But the problem is the main forces in the European Parliament who are unsympathetic to Palestine who block these calls, not to mention the role of EU governments, as they always reduce further what little money Parliament does propose. When I came to the Gaza Strip in 2011, I saw that much had been rebuilt after the 2008 war. And now all UNRWA's work and effort to rebuild has been once again destroyed."

Marisa Matias

EAST JERUSALEM

Showing solidarity with Khdeir family

We expressed our condolences and solidarity to the family of the murdered Palestinian 17-year-old Mohamed Khdeir in a visit with them at their home in East Jerusalem.



Mohamed was kidnapped by Israelis and set on fire after having been forced to swallow petrol.

The Khdeir family are taking the police to court as they failed to immediately locate the perpetrators despite having been presented with video evidence of the kidnap. We pledged to offer support to the family in bringing the case to the attention of the ECHR.

"When crimes are not effectively and properly investigated it is a breach of international human rights law. The family believe that the police colluded in giving safe passage to those that committed this barbaric act."

Martina Anderson

EAST JERUSALEM

Makassed Islamic Charitable Hospital



We visited the Makassed Islamic Charitable Hospital in East Jerusalem where we met victims of Israel's latest attack on Gaza, including a father and his 3-year-old son who have both lost limbs.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) must investigate these war crimes. Israel's direct targeting of civilians and its reckless cause of civilian deaths is a clear breach of international human rights law. Given that Article 2 of the EU-Israeli association agreement states that the agreement would end if there is evidence of human rights abuses, we also call for an immediate end to the association agreement.

It was touching to hear about the work of the medical staff at the hospital who deal daily with the horrors of the occupation.



HEBRON AND BETHLEHEM

Life under occupation in the West Bank

We then hit the road again and travelled to Hebron and Bethlehem to witness the reality of the occupation of the West Bank first hand.

We were welcomed by the Mayors and Governors of both cities. The Palestinian welcome is certainly a warm one!

In Hebron, we spoke to traders, children, and parents about their daily lives. Hebron is a Palestinian city which is effectively under siege by 400 illegal Israeli settlers (and the 6000 troops that accompany them). Many parts of the old city are lying vacant as Israel has forcibly removed the occupants and left the area to go derelict.

We saw how partition is in place in the old city, with Palestinians having to contend with over 100 checkpoints and daily settler aggression. Many Palestinians no longer have direct access to their homes, with some having to clamber over rooftops to gain access.

In Bethlehem we discussed the stark contradictions between Israel's actions and their stated aim of peace; last week Israel announced it would seize over 1000 acres of Palestinian land near Bethlehem, a clear divide and conquer strategy.

We held a detailed discussion session with workers at the Alternative Information Centre (AIC) a grassroots organisation made up of Palestinians and progressive Israelis.

We held a working dinner hosted by the deputy Mayor of Bethlehem - in a restaurant right beside the wall. On our way back we were held up for half an hour with traffic leading up to an Israeli check-point (even though we were going from one part of the West Bank to another) and we watched as we could see the scale of the illegal settlements as they lit up in every direction.



MEPs see for themselves the impact of Israeli settlers on life for Palestinians in Hebron



Apartheid wall in Bethlehem

“The international community can’t stand by and say nothing, and in the EU, the only actor that could realistically bring about a new approach, many negative forces are blocking any form of progress. This is where citizen mobilisation comes in. Widespread indignation can effect change and put pressure on governments to stop ignoring this occupation.”

Younous Omarjee

Day Three
6th September 2014

RAMALLAH

This morning began bright and early with a visit to the tomb of Yasser Arafat. It was an honour for us to pay our respects.



Next up it was back on the bus to meet the Palestinian Prisoners Society, an organisation that fights for justice, sovereignty, and rights for Palestinian prisoners detained in Israeli jails.

They told us about the increased number of people in administrative detention (interment) since Israel's latest attack on Gaza. The Palestinian prison population now stands at 7000. Many Palestinians have been in jail for over 30 years.

"Israel does not respect international law, the government acts with impunity. The conditions in Israeli prisons are appalling. Many prisoners have serious health problems and are awaiting operations. Despite the fact that prisoners come from the West Bank some are being released to Gaza, an open-air prison that they cannot leave. Others are deported to Turkey or Syria. Families of prisoners are often intimidated too."

Josu Juaristi



“Before the onslaught on Gaza there were 11 PLC parliamentarians in jail, now there are 35, with 33 under administrative detention. There is no rhyme nor reason as to why Parliamentarians are being detained, the rationale falls under the vague umbrella of ‘national security’. For those who do get a trial there is little justice to be found in the Israeli judicial system.”

Pablo Iglesias

Meetings with senior Palestinian officials

Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh from the Palestinian Liberation Council (PLC) called on the international community to condemn apartheid in Palestine - just as it did in South Africa.

He said: “Israel continues to act in bad faith, using the peace negotiations as a smokescreen for their strategy of building more settlements beyond the green line and occupying ever more Palestinian territory, fragmenting the West Bank. It’s this bad faith that has rendered 21 years of negotiations a failure.

“Despite the fact the EU does not recognise any post-1967 Israeli territory as the thousands of settlements built on this land contravene the 4th Geneva Convention, Israel continues to enjoy global impunity to continue its occupation of Palestine, breaching international law with an apartheid wall, apartheid roads and apartheid buses.”

It is the impunity surrounding the occupation that is the root cause of the Gaza conflict.



Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh from the Palestinian Liberation Council



Meeting Nabil Shaath from FATAH Central Committee



“The PLC told us that the negotiations are over and that Israel is killing the two-state solution to achieve a ‘South Africanisation’ of Palestine. Israel is attempting to frame the conflict as a religious one, but the Palestinian’s struggle is not an Islamic one, it is a struggle for a free, equal, just, and secular Palestine.”

Martina Anderson

Solidarity with Khalida Jarrar!

It seems that Israeli authorities are now deepening control of Palestinian areas as Khalida Jarrar, a Palestinian parliamentarian, has been issued with an Israeli expulsion order to leave her home in Palestinian-controlled Ramallah. The Israeli authorities told her she has to move to Jericho.

This is the first time the Israeli authorities have tried to deport someone from one part of a Palestinian-controlled area to another.



Ms. Jarrar refused and is carrying out an ongoing protest at the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) headquarters, where she is currently residing.

“This incident is worrying and we hope it is not a taste of things to come. We are asking all parliamentarians to stand up and show their support for Ms. Jarrar. We, as GUE/NGL MEPs, are privileged to have been able to show our support in person today. As an occupier there seems to be no limits to what the Israeli government will do in their campaign of injustice.”

Ángela Vallina

Visiting Palestinian Red Crescent and relief operations control centre

The final stop of the day was the most harrowing. We visited the Palestinian Red Crescent Headquarters and saw crates of urgent supplies set for Gaza, everything from medical equipment to mattresses to schoolbags. The PRC also send equipment for providing psycho-social support to children. Much of these supplies are funded by donations from Palestinians in the West Bank and Jerusalem.

While Israeli authorities refused our GUE/NGL delegation entry to Gaza on the grounds that our delegation was not delivering immediate humanitarian support, we have learnt that the Palestinian Red Crescent (PRC) faces huge difficulties getting urgent humanitarian support past Israeli checkpoints and into Gaza.

“On our visit to the PRC centre in Ramallah we were moved by the impressive generosity of Palestinians in the West Bank and from humanitarian organisations worldwide. At the same time it was harrowing to view video footage of Gazans being evacuated from a hospital of distressed elderly and disabled people before it was completely destroyed by Israeli shelling and to see severely injured children receiving medical attention. The world must see these heart-wrenching images and we have pledged to spread the truth as far as possible about what really happened in Gaza.”

Lynn Boylan

We can't applaud enough the work of the very brave Red Crescent workers and express our condolences to the families of the two Red Crescent workers who were killed by Israelis as they tried to help Gazans.

On the drive back to East Jerusalem we suddenly noticed a strange smell and there was a lot of smoke around. We realised that Israeli soldiers were firing tear gas at some young Palestinians close to a checkpoint (an illegal Israeli checkpoint it should be noted). The fact that canisters were landing indiscriminately in the middle of rush-hour traffic didn't even seem to surprise anyone.

Just a small snapshot of the chaos of life in the West Bank.



Day Four
7th September 2014

RAMALLAH

Meeting with Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Al Hamdallah



The Prime Minister, who praised the efforts of John Kerry during the peace negotiations, said that international diplomatic efforts were in vain when Israel disrupts the negotiations. Israel claimed that divisions between Palestinians mean Israel has no partner to negotiate with, yet once Fatah and Hamas united to form a consensus government the Israelis walked away from the table, accusing Fatah of working with ‘terrorists’.

Once again this demonstrates that Israel was never serious about negotiations or establishing a Palestinian state. UN resolutions are applied all over the globe but not here: there have been 10 UN resolutions all supporting the 1967 borders yet they are not applied.

The Prime Minister called on the international community, particularly the United States, to agree on a timeframe within which Israel must end the occupation, dismantle the apartheid wall, move settlers back to their own territory as defined by the green line and afford the Palestinians the dignity and respect to govern themselves as international law decrees.

“We GUE/NGL MEPs will double our efforts to get the 4th Geneva convention and international law implemented for Palestinians and will work with other MEPs to push for a suspension of the EU-Israel association agreement; article 2 of this agreement can be invoked when there are clear breaches of human rights.”

Martina Anderson

Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions!

One of the highlights of our visit was a hugely constructive meeting with representatives from the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement in Palestine.

The Palestinian BDS movement is a wide consensus human rights coalition of the largest Palestinian organisations, trade unions, networks and NGOs. It stands for ending apartheid and discrimination against all Palestinians, ending the occupation, and defending the right of return for Palestinian refugees, who represent 69% of all Palestinians.

“We want the EU to put pressure on the corporations who, through their assets, interests, or activities, profit from occupation. The Norwegian pension fund has recently divested from several companies involved in the occupation, and a Dutch pension fund divested from a top Israeli bank. Security firm G4S announced it would not be renewing its contract with the Israeli prison system due to the contracts it lost as a result of this involvement.”



“All of this is encouraging and proves that putting pressure on the corporate world to divest is working. The aim of the divestment is to get to the Achilles’ heel of the occupation and it is clear that Israel sees BDS as a strategic threat as it is destroying ‘brand Israel’. What we need now is our South Africa moment, for full isolation in all fields, including an end to the EU-Israel association agreement, what does it take for EU leaders to see that Israel’s actions are human rights violations and in breach of the Geneva Convention?”

BDS Director Omar Barghouti

Barghouti also highlighted to us that labelling did not go far enough as it was like having a contraband product, labelling it illegal, and then selling it anyway.

“During the negotiations on Horizon 2020 one of the proposals I made on behalf of GUE/NGL was to forbid EU funding for Israeli projects and bodies located in occupied Palestinian territory; it was the major sticking point in the negotiations. Despite the huge pressure from the Council to resist this, the European Commission announced that products from settlements would be banned in the EU, and I thought this was a huge victory. But unfortunately now I’m hearing that the goods are still getting through. This means Israel is cheating and the EU knowingly accepts this.”

Marisa Matias

We pledged to contact European delegates in Jerusalem and call on them to help assess Israel’s compliance. We will also put pressure on the European Commission to take a stronger position regarding the ban and to reach out to MEPs from other political groups and appeal for them to join in signing a letter calling for a suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement.

Omar Barghouti also added the need to call for an arms embargo: *“The first lesson in peacemaking is that you don’t sell arms to conflict zones.”*

Being briefed on the scale of the damage

We then met Shawki Al Ayassa, Head of the Ministerial committee for the relief of the Gaza Strip, and Health Minister Jawwad Awwad who briefed us on the scale of the damage to infrastructure. Again, we were shown devastating images and videos from during and after the Israeli bombardment.



Meeting Minister Shawki Al Ayassa, Head of Ministerial Committee for the relief of the Gaza Strip

On our way out of Ramallah we were pulled up by Israeli armed forces and had our passports checked by Israeli armed forces. This while we were travelling within the West Bank; of course this is the daily routine for many local people.

In conversation with members of the Knesset (Israeli Parliament)

Our final stop of the trip was to meet three Left Knesset parliamentarians in Tel Aviv, (Merav Michaeli, Labour; Nitzan Horowitz, Meretz; and Dov Khenin, Haddash) to discuss how the global indignation with Israel’s actions over Gaza was perceived in Israel. We also discussed the strength of the peace movement in Israel. We heard about the huge shift to the right in Israeli society, and there was general agreement that just like in any country there are many voices of resistance against the dominant ideology and government policies.

We expressed our solidarity with those Knesset members who are brave enough to publicly voice their indignation with the attacks on Gaza.

We were particularly heartened by the Knesset MP Dov Khenin of the progressive Haddash party, his willingness to work with us was encouraging.

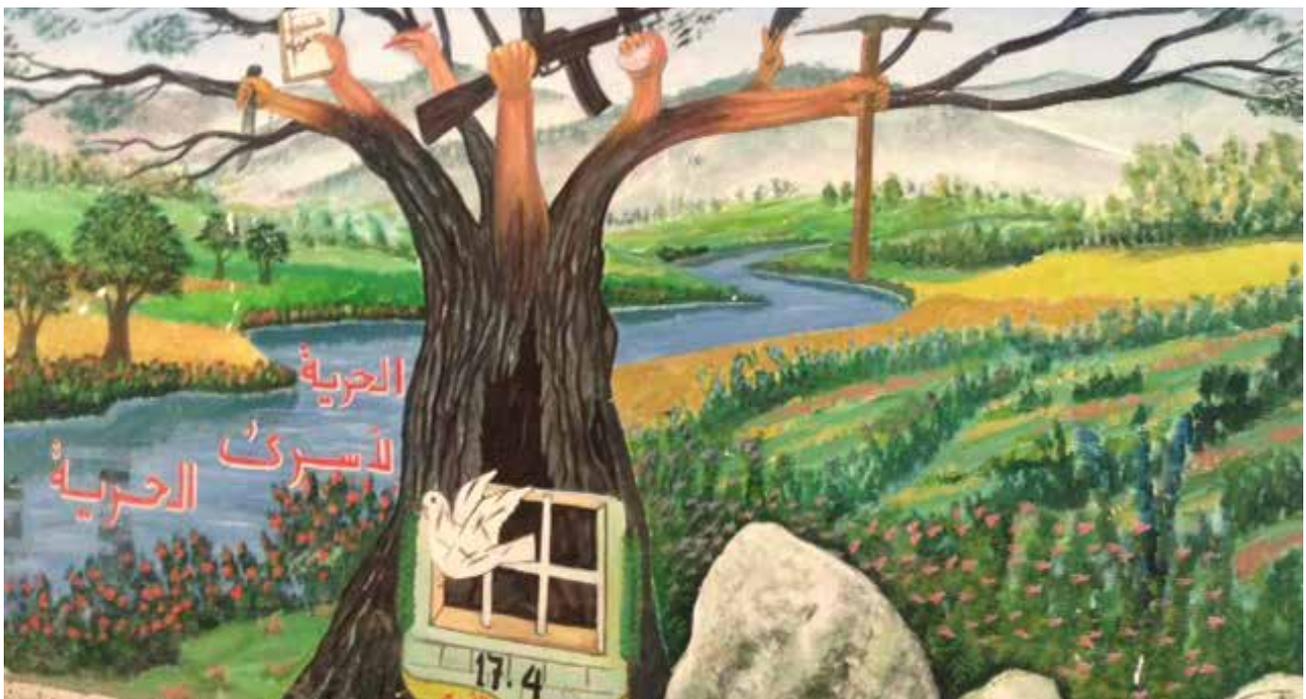
“No peace process has existed without international input and pressure. We appeal to progressive forces in Israel to work with those of us around the world who also want to see an end to this apartheid and occupation.”

Matt Carthy



To the airport

Luckily, we made it through the famously intense Israeli airport security and into the departure lounge. What a world away the shine of the airport is from the deprivation and checkpoints in Ramallah just a short drive away.



A wall painting at the entrance to the office of the Palestinian Prisoners Association in Ramallah

European Parliament resolution on Israel-Palestine after the Gaza war and the role of the EU.

At Parliament's plenary session in September, the role of the EU in light of the Gaza war was discussed and a Joint Motion for a Resolution was passed. The GUE/NGL strongly opposed this Joint Motion for a Resolution as it failed to strongly criticise the occupation and Israel's military aggression.

This is the text of the GUE/NGL Resolution that was disappointingly not adopted.

(2014/2845(RSP))

Martina Anderson, Neoklis Sylikiotis, Patrick Le Hyaric, Ángela Vallina, Teresa Rodríguez-Rubio, Younous Omarjee, Miguel Viegas, Marisa Matias, Pablo Iglesias, Lola Sánchez Caldentey, Malin Björk, Merja Kyllönen, Marie-Christine Vergiat, João Ferreira, Inês Cristina Zuber, Dimitrios Papadimoulis, Sofia Sakorafa, Lynn Boylan, Matt Carthy, Liadh Ní Riada, Kostadinka Kuneva, Josu Juaristi Abaunz, Javier Couso Permy, Marina Albiol Guzmán, Paloma López, Kostas Chrysogonos, Takis Hadjigeorgiou, Kateřina Konečná, Lidia Senra Rodríguez, Emmanouil Glezos, Eleonora Forenza

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Charter of the United Nations,
- having regard to the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 1949,
- having regard to the daily UNRWA situation reports,
- having regard to UN General Assembly resolution 194 (1948), and UN Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 252 (1968), 338 (1972), 476 (1980), 478 (1980), and 1860 (2009),
- having regard to the EU-Israel Association Agreement, signed on 20 November 1995, and which entered into force on 1 June 2000, and more particularly Article 2 thereof,
- having regard to the 'Guidelines on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards',
- having regard to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice entitled 'Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territories' of 9 July 2004,
- having regard to the Council conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process of 30 August 2014, 16 December 2013, 14 May 2012, 18 July and 23 May 2011, and 8 December 2009,
- having regard to the EU Heads of Mission reports on East Jerusalem of January 2012 and on 'Area C and Palestinian State Building' of July 2011, and the EU Heads of Mission report on settler violence of April 2011 and the accompanying EU Heads of Mission note on settler violence of February 2012,
- having regard to its resolution of 5 July 2012 on EU policy on the West Bank and East Jerusalem¹,
- having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas on 7 July 2014 Israel launched a military aggression against Gaza called 'Protective Edge', which lasted 50 days and stopped when a ceasefire agreement was implemented on 26 August;

B. whereas as a result of the Israeli aggression, at least 2 150 Palestinians were killed, among them 503 children (27 %), 260 women, 95 elderly people and 14 journalists, and more than 12 500 injured; whereas a very large number of the injured suffered amputations and extensive injuries, suspected to have been caused by prohibited weapons, including DIMEs (Dense Inert Metal Explosive); whereas 450 000 people were internally

displaced, with 65 700 still taking refuge in UNRWA schools; whereas the population requires psycho-social treatment and support as a matter of urgency, in addition to humanitarian and medical aid; whereas 1 400 children have lost both their parents;

C. whereas according to UNRWA and organisations on the ground, the level of destruction is only comparable to the destruction of cities in the Second World War; whereas over 1 700 homes have been completely or partially destroyed and 40 000 others damaged, 17 hospitals and health care clinics destroyed and 136 UNRWA schools damaged, 60 mosques and 13 cemeteries (12 Muslim and 1 Christian) destroyed as a result of the relentless attacks with missiles and bombs launched from both the air and the sea by the Israeli army; whereas water and electricity supply, sewage-water treatment plants, roads, and the whole infrastructure are badly affected to the degree that the shortages are having a detrimental effect on the health and life of the people in Gaza; whereas UNRWA estimates that it may take 20 years to restore Gaza to its former state prior to the latest aggression; whereas many EU-funded projects were destroyed during this aggression, as well as during previous Israeli aggressions on Gaza; whereas drones have been used in these military operations;

D. whereas according to the UN's Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), about 42 000 acres of cropland have sustained substantial direct damage and half of Gaza's poultry stock has been lost due to direct hits or lack of care due to the reduced access to farmlands in border areas; whereas Gaza's fishermen have seen their annual catch reduced by almost 10 %; whereas at least 360 factories and workshops have been damaged, including 126 that were completely wrecked, amounting to USD 47 million in damages; whereas the Palestinian Federation of Industries estimates a USD 70 million loss due to the halting of production during the aggression;

E. whereas this was the third similar military aggression on Gaza following the 2008-2009 'Cast Lead' and the November 2012 'Pillar of Defence', that left around 3 000 Palestinians dead and hundreds injured, and caused extensive material destruction, leaving behind a humanitarian catastrophe;

F. whereas Israel has applied a total land-air-sea blockade on Gaza since 2007, which has turned this 365 km² area into an open-air prison where 1.7 million people, 1.2 million of them refugees, live in extreme humanitarian conditions which were greatly exacerbated by the 50-day onslaught;

G. whereas Israel has refused entrance to Gaza to 13 Members of the European Parliament, who were on the ground to assess the dimensions of the destruction and the humanitarian situation so as to inform and press for the increase in EU aid to UNRWA and to the Palestinian Authorities, which is badly needed to meet the urgent requirements;

H. whereas over the same period, Israeli forces carried out over 1 500 military raids in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, detained over 1 700 Palestinians, among them Members of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), demolished at least 50 Palestinian-owned structures, 8 of them in occupied East Jerusalem, displacing 112 Palestinians, and at least 250 settler attacks were reported; whereas during the first two weeks in September, i.e. after a ceasefire was agreed, Israel detained 300 Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem; whereas the Israeli Government is mounting religious tensions in East Jerusalem, for example by adopting a law permitting Jews access to the Al Aqsa Mosque;

I. whereas construction has continued in most of the illegal Israeli settlements in occupied Palestine, and since June 2014, 1 472 more settlement units have been approved, making room for almost 6 000 new Israeli settlers, and more land has been confiscated, the latest incident involving 170 hectares of agricultural land south of Bethlehem for the construction of 2 500 housing units for settlers;

J. whereas 34 PLC members are imprisoned, 32 of them in administrative detention; whereas PLC Mem-

ber Khalida Jarrar is threatened with deportation from Ramallah, which is her constituency, to Jericho; whereas this is the first case of threatened deportation from Area A to Area A, i.e. from and to an area under the control of the Palestinian Authority according to the Oslo Agreements;

K. whereas these events followed the announcement of the agreement between Palestinian parties to form a consensus government overcoming the division existing since 2007; whereas this was one of the conditions set in the peace talks led by the US in the past year; whereas this announcement was met by vehement statements of the Israeli Prime Minister, denouncing it; whereas the consensus government recognised the UN resolutions, the Oslo Agreement and the Quartet decisions; whereas its creation was welcomed by the UN, the US, the EU and the Quartet;

L. whereas 20 years after the Oslo Agreements and the non-implementation of these by Israel, the Palestinians no longer have any trust in negotiations;

M. whereas the EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting of 16 December 2013 stated among other things that: ‘The EU warns against actions that undermine the negotiations. In this regard, it deplores Israel’s continuous expansion of settlements, which are illegal under international law and constitute an obstacle to peace. The Council also expresses its grave concern regarding incitement, incidents of violence in the occupied territory, house demolitions and the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza. The EU expresses its serious concern about actions that undermine the status quo of the holy sites, including in Jerusalem. The European Union will continue to closely monitor the situation and its broader implications and act accordingly’;

N. whereas the European Council of 30 August 2014 noted that ‘only a final agreement based on the two-State solution will bring durable peace and stability. The European Council therefore encourages both parties to re-engage in negotiations to this end. The Gaza Strip shall be part of a future State of Palestine.’;

O. whereas on 19 July 2013, the EU issued ‘Guidelines on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards’ (2013/C 203/05);

P. whereas Israel continues to ignore the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice entitled ‘Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territories’ of 9 July 2004;

1. Strongly denounces the Israeli military aggression on Gaza, the violations of international and humanitarian law, the use of banned and new weapons, and of drones, and of weapons the use of which is banned in densely populated areas;

2. Expresses its condolences to the families of the Palestinian victims, who number over 2 100;

3. Expresses its recognition of the immense importance of the work carried out by UNRWA and all its staff during and after the 50-day aggression; expresses its condolences to UNRWA and the families of the 12 staff members killed during the aggression; calls on the EU and international donors to significantly increase their support to cover the increased immediate needs of the affected population, which UNRWA has to meet;

4. Supports efforts to reach an agreement on a lasting and fully respected ceasefire that should be guaranteed by a mechanism to be set up by the international community, including a peacekeeping mission under the UN and the end of the siege; believes that this should put an end to the killing and suffering of the Palestinian people enclaved in the Gaza Strip since 2007; demands an immediate end to the siege of Gaza, and immediate and unobstructed access to humanitarian aid, particularly to cover urgent medical needs, and to construction material urgently needed for reconstruction; considers that the provision of electricity from any sought source should not be obstructed by Israel, which would also allow the supply of water;

5. Demands the release of the 34 legally elected PLC members, as well as of all 7 000 Palestinian political prisoners; demands the revocation of the deportation order against PLC member Khalida Jarrar;
6. Deplores the denial of entry to Gaza to Members of the European Parliament;
7. Resolves to send a fact-finding mission to Gaza to witness first-hand the dimensions of the destruction, the needs of the population as regards humanitarian aid, water and electricity, and the situation of the hospitals, schools and infrastructure; considers that Parliament should convey to the Israeli Authorities that it considers another refusal of entry to Gaza to MEPs unacceptable;
8. Calls for an international committee to be constituted to investigate the war crimes committed during the Israeli aggression;
9. Extends its support to the Israeli political parties, movements and people standing up against the Israeli aggression and calling for a peaceful solution; is particularly concerned about the deterioration of freedom of speech and the rise of extreme-right-wing forces in Israel; raises the alarm regarding increased discrimination against the Palestinian population who are Israeli citizens;
10. Calls on the EU to:
 - a. Demand the end of Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem;
 - b. Reiterate its support to the recognition of a viable, independent, contiguous Palestinian state, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the 1967 borders, living in peace alongside Israel;
 - c. Condemn the policy of collective punishment pursued against the Palestinian people and call for an end to Israel's impunity over the continuous gross violations of international and humanitarian law, the Charter of the UN and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
 - d. Call on the governments of all EU Member States to implement the 19 July 2013 Guidelines; call for a ban on import to the EU of all Israeli products produced in the illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories;
 - e. Implement Article 2 of the EU-Israel Association Agreement by freezing the Agreement as long as Israel continues violating human rights;
 - f. Impose a ban on arms exports from the EU to Israel; prohibit all arms imports from Israel into the EU; immediately end all cooperation with Israel in the framework of the European Defence Agency (EDA);
 - g. Grant no funds to Israeli entities through Horizon 2020;
 - h. Disclose the results of the Commission fact-finding mission to Gaza to evaluate the damages caused to EU-funded projects there during the recent Israeli aggression;
 - i. Convey to Israel the demand for MEPs to have access to the Gaza Strip;
 - j. Demand that Israel reverse all decisions of land confiscations, first and foremost the land south of Bethlehem, and of settlement expansions and activities;
 - k. Increase substantially the amount allocated to UNRWA and to the Palestinian Authority in view of the immense humanitarian disaster and material catastrophe in Gaza;
 - l. Allocate substantial funds for the recuperation of the agricultural and fisheries sectors vital for the daily life of the population;
 - m. Demand reparations from Israel for the EU-funded projects destroyed during repeated aggressions both in Gaza and the West Bank;
 - n. Support the request made by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to place Palestine under international protection;
 - o. Support the Palestinian efforts to achieve unity;
11. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the parliaments and governments of the Member States, the UN Secretary-General, the President and Government of the Palestinian Authority, the Palestinian Legislative Council, the Israeli Government, the Knesset.

Israel-Palestine after the Gaza war and the role of the EU (debate)
Wednesday, 17 September 2014, Strasbourg
Martina Anderson



Martina ANDERSON
SINN FÉIN
Ireland

Mr President, Israel's attack on Gaza resulted in the killing of 2147 people, 503 of them little children. These were crimes against humanity under international criminal law and international humanitarian law.

Recently, 13 MEPs were refused access to Gaza because Israel did not want us to see destruction there that is comparable to World War II. On fact-finding in the West Bank, we MEPs witnessed the South-Africanisation of Palestine with its apartheid roads, walls and buses. Israel's violations of international law have been well documented – on six occasions, in fact – by the UN Security Council plus the International Court of Justice. The clearest violations are the illegal transfer of 600 000 Israelis to live in illegal settlements in occupied Palestine, where 170 000 acres of Palestinian land have been confiscated since the Oslo Accord – 1000 acres

last week alone.

International law imposes a duty on all members of the international community, including the EU, not to recognise as lawful or render aid or assistance in maintaining a situation created by a serious breach of international law. Allowing economic relations with Israeli illegal settlements and importing their products into the EU contributes to the prosperity of those settlements and assists in their development, all of which is contrary to obligations under international law.

Those who make the law must uphold it. The EU must not simply discourage business relations with firms established in illegal settlements and only insist on correct labelling of settlement goods, but must also halt all relations with Israel and prohibit imports of its goods. After all, what happened in Gaza over 51 days makes us look at Article 2 of the EU-Israel Association Agreement, which must be implemented. If it is implemented, that means that the Association Agreement must be suspended.



The Delegation with Health Minister Jawwad Awwad

Israel-Palestine after the Gaza war and the role of the EU (debate)
Wednesday, 17 September 2014, Strasbourg
Teresa Rodríguez-Rubio



Teresa RODRÍGUEZ-RUBIO
PODEMOS
Spain

Señor Presidente, Señorías, se han puesto muchos datos sobre la mesa pero falta uno. ¿Saben ustedes cuántas víctimas civiles israelíes ha habido en estas siete semanas de supuesta guerra? Cuatro. ¡Cuatro!

Lo que ha pasado en Gaza no es una guerra. Lo que ha pasado en Gaza es el bombardeo sistemático de un territorio aislado por tierra, por mar y por aire. Un informador israelí, en nuestra última visita, decía que un precedente similar era el gueto de Varsovia. Un bombardeo en una zona sin retaguardia, en una zona donde no había un lugar seguro. Este conflicto es un conflicto colonial. Lo vimos en Cisjordania. Una limpieza étnica ya relatada por historiadores israelíes, como Ilan Pappé. Un régimen colonial nunca abandona sus territorios si no se le obliga. Lo vimos en Sudáfrica.

Por eso, pedimos una investigación internacional rigurosa sobre lo ocurrido en Gaza; la suspensión del Acuerdo con Israel —¿qué tiene que pasar para que cuestionemos este Acuerdo y el incumplimiento de la cláusula referida a los derechos humanos?—; el embargo militar —¿cómo podemos ser tan hipócritas de llorar por las víctimas y seguir vendiendo armas al Estado de Israel?—; la prohibición de los productos procedentes de los asentamientos ilegales —¿cómo vamos a etiquetar productos ilegales? Los productos ilegales se prohíben—.

Señoría, ha dicho usted que Hamás no avisa a los habitantes de Gaza antes de los bombardeos y que por eso se han causado tantas víctimas civiles.

¿Sabe usted que recientemente se han publicado en el diario israelí Haaretz las comunicaciones telefónicas que el propio ejército israelí tenía con los ciudadanos de Gaza, avisándoles con cinco minutos de antelación de que tenían que salir de sus casas?

¿Saben que eran ellos mismos quienes vigilaban a los ciudadanos de Gaza cuando entraban y salían de sus casas y les daban cinco minutos para desalojar edificios enteros?



MEPs Lola Sánchez, Teresa Rodríguez, and Marisa Matias seeing impact of Israeli settlements in and around Jerusalem's Old City

Israel-Palestine after the Gaza war and the role of the EU (debate)

Wednesday, 17 September 2014, Strasbourg

Miguel Viegas



Miguel VIEGAS

PCP

Portugal

Senhor Presidente, importa lembrar, já agora, que o conflito palestino dura desde 1947 e, portanto, colocar o Hamas na raiz do problema é omitir a própria História. Estivemos, juntamente com vários camaradas, na Palestina, no início do mês, e pudemos testemunhar a opressão de um povo por parte das autoridades israelitas. Pudemos observar a completa desproporção de meios que deita por terra qualquer teoria de uma suposta guerra entre duas partes que se agridem mutuamente.

O povo palestino, e nós mesmos, e todos aqueles que acreditam neste processo de paz estão firmemente convencidos de que esta solução só poderá sair do impasse com o fim do apoio político, militar e financeiro dos Estados Unidos e da União Europeia a Israel. Apelamos à União Europeia para que respeite os compromissos assinados relativamente ao processo de paz e aplique as cláusulas do acordo de associação com Israel que obrigam ambas as partes a respeitar os direitos humanos.

Os palestinianos esperam há tempo de mais. Reconheçamos de uma vez por todas e trabalhemos para que seja reconhecido o Estado da Palestina de acordo com as fronteiras de 66 e com capital em Jerusalém-Leste.

Estou plenamente de acordo. O direito do regresso das populações palestinianas aos territórios ocupados é uma das questões que tem que estar no centro da negociação, e isso aliás foi referido por diversas vezes nos encontros que tivemos com as organizações.

Agora, não vamos misturar tudo, não vamos complicar, para depois ficar tudo na mesma. Vamos apenas reconhecer o que está escrito, aplicar aquilo que está nos Tratados, e fazer com que a União Europeia condene Israel, porque temos um Tratado de Associação que não está a ser respeitado, porque o artigo 2.º não está a ser respeitado em virtude das violações de Israel em relação aos direitos humanos.

São coisas concretas, são boicotes, deixar de vender armas a Israel... São coisas muito simples. Armas que foram usadas para matar crianças... Nós temos que reconhecer isso e adotar medidas concretas, sem deixar de considerar a complexidade do problema, mas sem paralisar a nossa ação.





Sofia SAKORAF
SYRIZA
Greece

Israel-Palestine after the Gaza war and the role of the EU (debate)

Wednesday, 17 September 2014, Strasbourg

Sofia Sakorafa

Κύριε Πρόεδρε, το τελευταίο έγκλημα του Ισραήλ ανάγκασε τη διεθνή κοινότητα να ψελίσει τη μοναδική βιώσιμη λύση, δηλαδή: ανεξάρτητο Παλαιστινιακό κράτος στα σύνορα του 1967, πρωτεύουσα η Ανατολική Ιερουσαλήμ, επαναπατρισμός των προσφύγων. Σε αυτή τη συγκυρία όμως, η πλειοψηφία προτείνει ένα ψήφισμα άτολμο, λειψό και ανιστόρητο. Καμιά αναφορά σε εποικισμούς, σε πρόσφυγες, σε κατοχή και σε αντίσταση. Αλλά και διαστρέβλωση της πραγματικότητας. Δεν υπάρχει εμπλοκή δύο πλευρών, υπάρχει κατακτητής και αντιστεκόμενος. Δεν υπάρχει επιχείρηση “protective ends”, αλλά πολεμικές εκκαθαρίσεις κατοχικού στρατού. Δεν υπάρχουν εχθροπραξίες στη Γάζα, υπάρχει σκληρό απαρτχάιντ. Ας προστατεύσουμε τουλάχιστον την αλήθεια. Μόνο έτσι προστατεύουμε τον

ισραηλινό λαό από τη νομιμοποίηση των εγκλημάτων της κυβέρνησής του.

Κυρίες και κύριοι συνάδελφοι, η εξιλέωση του γερμανικού λαού για τα εγκλήματα των ναζιστών ήρθε όταν κοίταξαν κατάματα τη μαύρη σελίδα της ιστορίας τους. Μην επιτρέψουμε η ιστορία να μνημονεύει τις φρικαλεότητες του Ισραήλ με όρους και λέξεις που επωάζουν την επανάληψή τους. Το αυγό του φιδιού βρίσκεται ήδη ανάμεσά μας.



Younous OMARJEE
L'UNION POUR
LES OUTREMERS
France

Israel-Palestine after the Gaza war and the role of the EU (debate)

Wednesday, 17 September 2014, Strasbourg

Younous Omarjee

Monsieur le Président, face à la violence des faits, des crimes de guerre commis à Gaza, de ce qu'endure le peuple palestinien occupé, colonisé, nié dans ses droits les plus élémentaires, il n'y a pas lieu – je crois d'en rajouter ici par la violence des mots. Mais notre responsabilité oblige tout de même à dire que la communauté internationale et l'Europe n'ont aucune excuse. Voyez-vous, en d'autres temps, il était possible de dire “nous ne savions pas”, mais ici nous savions et nous avons laissé faire. Nous savons ce qui se produit actuellement à Gaza et nous continuons de fermer les yeux.

Pour autant, au cours de notre déplacement à Jérusalem et Ramallah, nous avons constaté chez les Palestiniens qu'il y a toujours une attente d'Europe, car, il est vrai, c'est de l'Europe que peut venir aujourd'hui une nouvelle impulsion à condition de croire en notre diplomatie. Et j'en terminerai par un mot: à condition aussi que l'on cesse enfin de faire des Palestiniens les otages d'une mauvaise conscience européenne sur lesquels s'expie l'histoire barbare de l'Europe.



Anne-Marie MINEUR
SP
The Netherlands

Israel-Palestine after the Gaza war and the role of the EU (debate)

Wednesday, 17 September 2014, Strasbourg

Anne-Marie Mineur

Vandaag kreeg ik antwoord op mijn vraag over Gaza van 27 juli jongstleden. U gaat niets doen aan de permanent voortdurende vernietiging van Gaza, behalve dan door het kenbaar maken van uw betrokkenheid bij de mensenrechten. Tjongejonge, dat zal helpen. Wat gaat u doen? T-shirtjes dragen met “I love human rights”?

De laatste oorlog heeft volgens Reuters een schade opgeleverd van 6 miljard euro, tweeënehalf keer het bruto binnenlands product van Gaza. Het land ligt in puin, één op de tien inwoners is gedood, gewond of op de vlucht. Iedereen wacht op de volgende oorlog. Dat is onacceptabel en het vraagt om veel meer dan alleen zalvende woorden. Israël moet het internationaal recht toepassen, in het bijzonder de vierde Conventie van

Genève, die betrekking heeft op de rechten van de mens in bezette gebieden. Het toepassen van het internationaal recht is een plicht, geen politieke keuze. Wij moeten de druk opvoeren. De associatieovereenkomst opschorten is het sterkste middel.



Marisa MATIAS
BLOCO DE ESQUERDA
Portugal

Israel-Palestine after the Gaza war and the role of the EU (debate)
Wednesday, 17 September 2014, Strasbourg
Marisa Matias

Senhor Presidente, mais de 2000 pessoas morreram pelo facto de serem palestinianas, mais de 10 000 ficaram feridas pelo simples facto de serem palestinianas, porque há uma ocupação, uma ocupação onde se têm cometido crimes contra a Humanidade. Os crimes contra a Humanidade têm que ser julgados, aqui e em qualquer parte do mundo.

Houve um colega que disse na sala que iriam ser investigados pelo Governo de Israel. A sério? Israel é o réu! Israel tem que sentar-se no banco dos réus!

Nenhum tribunal funciona tendo como juiz o réu! Isso é impensável.

Mas este debate, este debate é sobre o papel da União Europeia. Há muito que a União Europeia pode fazer. A União Europeia tem de deixar de ser cúmplice.

Não pode escrever no papel que não reconhece os territórios ocupados e não suspender o acordo de associação e não fazer nada para contrariar isso e manter Israel no estado de exceção.

A União Europeia não pode ser cínica. Todos os meses neste plenário fazemos debates sobre urgências de crimes contra direitos humanos e contra a Humanidade. Todos os meses neste plenário choramos lágrimas por crimes contra os direitos humanos. Este é o mais visível de todos, a maior vergonha da comunidade internacional. Deixemos de ser cínicos, deixemos de ser parte do problema.



Ángela VALLINA
IZQUIERDA PLURAL
Spain

Israel-Palestine after the Gaza war and the role of the EU (debate)
Wednesday, 17 September 2014, Strasbourg
Ángela Vallina

Señor Presidente, ayer, durante el debate del Acuerdo con Ucrania, escuchamos en esta Cámara palabras, la verdad, muy rimbombantes por parte tanto de los Comisarios como de sus Señorías o del propio Presidente Schulz, tales como, por ejemplo: «Estamos sentando las bases de la ley» o «¿Nos hubiéramos podido imaginar que el derecho del más fuerte fuese supremacía sobre el del más débil?» Bien, pues esto es lo que está ocurriendo.

Y esta tarde, en relación con la situación en Irak y Siria, volvimos a escuchar más o menos lo mismo. Yo me hago una pregunta, Señorías: ¿Por qué practica la Unión Europea esta doble moral, esta hipocresía, con Israel? El Gobierno

de este país no respeta en lo más mínimo el Derecho internacional, ni las sentencias del Tribunal de La Haya, ni los derechos humanos, ni los tratados o acuerdos que firma, ni siquiera las fronteras. Comete crímenes contra la humanidad, roba sus tierras y sus casas a los palestinos. Mata, detiene y encarcela con total impunidad.

Mientras, la Unión Europea mira hacia otro lado o a otros intereses no tan legítimos y más bien espurios. En Gaza, ahora, ha habido un genocidio, y es una prisión al aire libre. Nadie puede entrar ni salir, según la propia Agencia de las Naciones Unidas. No permiten ni siquiera la ayuda humanitaria. Hay treinta y tres diputados detenidos administrativamente. Ustedes saben lo que significa eso.

25th September 2014

GUE/NGL backs the Russell Tribunal conclusion that the EU must act on Palestine

The Russell Tribunal on Palestine (RToP), a people's tribunal set up in 2009 to examine the role and complicity of third parties (governments, institutions and corporations) in violations of international law committed by Israel against the Palestinian people, held a special session in Brussels to investigate Israel's crimes in Gaza during 'Operation Protective Edge'.

GUE/NGL MEPs Marisa Matias and Martina Anderson then chaired a special hearing in the European Parliament to present the Tribunal's findings.

The jury and the witnesses of the RToP called on the EU to adopt restrictive measures against Israel, specifically a suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement, a comprehensive arms embargo, and to advocate and act for the implementation of the International Court of Justice recommendations in its 2004 Advisory Opinion on the legality of the Wall.

Jury members including Director Ken Loach, Indian activist Vandana Shiva, and human rights lawyer Michael Mansfield addressed the European Parliament session, as did witnesses such as Israeli journalist David Sheen, American journalist Max Blumenthal, and Palestinian journalist Mohamed Omer. Musician Roger Waters closed the hearing.

"This important Tribunal is about getting the law and the facts out there for the world to hear. It is giving a voice to those who have not been heard. The Tribunal has shown that war crimes are being committed, and it is nothing short of the extermination of Palestinian people. This is genocide, as defined by international law."

Marisa Matias

"What we've heard at the Tribunal was heartfelt and insightful. It was shocking to hear about the IDF Hannibal Directive and other inhumane tactics used by Israelis in Gaza this summer. Not to mention the impunity of Israeli cultural, political, academic and religious leaders in inciting hatred of Palestinians."

Martina Anderson



END

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