



Features

**How the Jewish state is breaking the law**

**Halim Rane**

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**Halim Rane** says the wrong questions are being asked about the Middle East

Israel is repeating atrocities

PROTECTION of a nation's citizens is more than a right, it is an obligation.

The problem is that the policies and practices of the Israeli government, not just over the past few weeks but over the past several decades, have achieved exactly the opposite.

Israelis are the least safe Jews on the planet. Why? Because of Hamas? Because of Hizbollah?

These resistance movements exist because the international community has failed -- unable to enforce Israel's compliance with international law and unable to prevent Israel's violations of UN Resolutions.

Israel has again invaded Lebanon and is repeating the atrocities it committed there throughout the 1980s and 1990s, including the bombing of homes, shops, offices, roads and bridges, as well as electricity stations and a convoy of ambulances.

Over the two decades that Israel maintained its illegal occupation of Lebanon and committed what cannot be described as other than war crimes, the UN Security Council passed 85 resolutions but failed to achieve Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon or stop the atrocities.

On three occasions the Security Council attempted to end the occupation by passing these resolutions under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which would have authorised the use of force in order to implement its decisions.

Each time these resolutions were vetoed by none other than the US. With the failure of the UN to protect and secure the rights of the people of Lebanon and Palestine, these people resorted to self-help and formed Hizbollah and Hamas respectively.

We have failed to find the answers to this current crisis because we fail to ask the right questions. The question the world should be asking is why Israel has been able to maintain its illegal occupation of Palestine for all these decades.

Why are there 10,000 Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails, over half of whom have not even been charged, let alone tried?

Why are there women and children among them, the release of whom could have led to the release of the captured Israeli soldier in Gaza?

Why are there still thousands of Lebanese citizens in Israeli prisons?

Given the systematic use of torture by Israel against its Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners, which is well documented by Israeli human rights group, B'Tselem, as well as Amnesty International and the UN, the urgency for their release is understandable.

No matter which way you look at it, these Palestinian and Lebanese men, women and children are in Israeli prisons, many for decades, because they refused to be humiliated, oppressed and occupied, and they did what all human beings do under such circumstances -- they resisted. The inaction of the international community has left the Palestinians, Lebanese, Iraqis and the other victims of this "war of

terror" with no choice but either to accept a brutal and oppressive occupation force or to resist it.

A critical starting point in addressing the roots of the conflict is the double-standards the US applies in the Middle East, where the terms "law" and "peace" more closely reflect power than justice.

Take a good hard look at the collective punishment Israel is inflicting right now on Palestine and Lebanon. Take note of the support and encouragement many Western nations have shown Israel while it commits acts that if committed by other than the US or Israel would be rightly described as terrorism.

Recall that the US has already vetoed a UN Security Council Resolution calling for an end to the Israeli attack on Gaza and Palestinian rocket attacks on Israel, and the release of the captured Israeli soldiers and kidnapped Palestinian parliamentarians.

Also recall that the US has not only rejected pleas for a ceasefire but has restocked Israel's supply of bombs.

Keep all this in your memory because when the people of Palestine and Lebanon again resort to self-help and take actions to secure some measure of justice, you won't be among those shaking their heads and wondering why.

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