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Israel's Role in Hamas' Creation and its Retaliatory Genocide in Gaza

By: Nazia Nazar From: CounterPunch

Hamas's recent attacks on Israel, in the presence of one of the best intelligence outfits in the world, has once again brought to mind the statements made by certain Israeli officials regarding Israel's covert role in the formation of Hamas, which is an Arabic acronym for "Islamic Resistance Movement." Brig. Gen. Yitzhak Segev, who served as an Israeli military governor in Gaza in the early 1980s, had disclosed in an interview to the New York Times that he had contributed to financing the Palestinian Islamist movement as a "counterweight" to Palestine Liberation Organization and the Fatah party. He further confessed that the Israeli government had provided him with a budget. A retired Israeli official Avner Cohen had also given a similar statement during his interview to the Wall Street Journal on Jan 24, 2009. "Hamas, to my great regret, is Israel's creation," he confessed and further explained that "Israel cooperated with a crippled, half-blind cleric named Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, even as he was laying the foundations for what would become Hamas." Furthermore, Cohen disclosed that he had warned his officers against pursuing a divide-and-rule policy in the Occupied Territories and vehemently opposed Israel's support for Palestinian Islamists over Palestinian secularists. Former Republican Congressman Ron Paul also stated that "Hamas was actually encouraged and initiated by Israel to counteract Yasser Arafat." Furthermore, Col. David Hacham, an expert in Arab Affairs in the Israeli military, has described Israel's support as the 'original sin.'

Despite playing a role in the formation of Hamas, the Israeli military takes punitive actions against the unarmed Palestinian people including children and women. In the aftermath of recent Hamas attacks, the Israeli army has launched non-stop airstrikes and bombings over Gaza, indiscriminately demolishing homes, hospitals, schools, and places of worship. According to the Gaza Health Ministry, the number of Palestinians killed in the aftermath of a large-scale Israeli air assault on the Gaza Strip has surpassed 4,000 since October 7, 2023. The actual number of casualties is likely much higher, as thousands remain trapped under the rubble. Unfortunately, the death toll is anticipated to rise until the international community takes action to stop the bloodshed.

It appears that Israel is not at war with Hamas but with the Palestinian population. Hamas serves as nothing more than a convenient excuse for Israel to maintain its illegal occupation of Palestinian territories and aggressive policies. The loss of Israeli lives resulting from Hamas attacks is undeniably condemnable and cannot be supported in any way. However, under the guise of retaliation, the Israeli army has tended to cause casualties 20 times higher than their own losses. According to the United Nations (OCHA), between 2008 and September 2023, approximately 6,407 Palestinians and 308 Israelis have been killed. Based on these statistics, the aggression of the Israeli army could be characterized as 'retaliatory genocide.'

Israel has imposed a land, sea, and air blockade on Gaza since 2007, leading to a severe shortage of essential resources like food, water, gas, and electricity. A UN report has termed Israel's approach as a 'collective punishment policy,' resulting in a 'fully collapsed economy, devastated infrastructure, and a social service system that barely functions.' As a result, over 80% of Gaza's residents depend on humanitarian aid.

Around half of Gaza's population is comprised of children under the age of 18, highlighting that the Israeli military's actions predominantly affect children. According to research by Farajallah, 95% of children from the Gaza Strip displayed symptoms of anxiety, depression, and trauma. She recounted one heart-wrenching story with these words, "I met a nine-year-old boy who told me that when he hears a bomb, he rushes to his home and hides under the bedcovers. He does this hoping that he can't be seen and therefore won't be bombed."

It is wrong to assume that Israel's atrocities are in retaliation to Hamas's attacks. This is not the first time the Israeli military has exerted its power over unarmed civilians and appeared to be moving towards committing acts of genocide and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. The history is evident that the Israeli military has been engaged in ethnic cleansing of Palestinian people before the formation of Hamas. The

events of the 1948 Nakba, and the 1967 Naksa have been some examples. A UN human rights expert Francesca Albanese aptly said, "Israel has already carried out mass ethnic cleansing of Palestinians under the fog of war.....Again, in the name of self-defense, Israel is seeking to justify what would amount to ethnic cleansing." Hence, it is not an exaggeration to say that Israel played a role in the creation of Hamas, subsequently declared it as an enemy, and has been seeking retribution from the Palestinian people.

Some of the Western countries have already designated Hamas as a terrorist organization. Considering Israel's history of committing atrocities and violence against the Palestinian people, along with its consistent violation of UN resolutions and international law over several decades, there is a strong case for convicting Israel of state terrorism. Regrettably, the UN's statements regarding this issue appear to be no more than rhetoric. Sanctions have never been imposed on Israel, nor has its membership in the UN been suspended. According to a report by the Congressional Research Service, the United States, being Israel's largest supporter, has provided around \$158 billion in military and financial aid to Israel and pledged to send more in the coming days. A report by the Research and Action for Peace and Disarmament highlighted that the EU countries have licensed around €2 billion of military contracts to Israel during the last 10 years. Antony Loewenstein, the author of *The Palestine Laboratory*, has aptly said, "The entire Western world is backing Israel and will want to support the Jewish state by purchasing its weapons and endorsing its brutal decimation of Gaza".

All these developments have disheartened and disillusioned the Palestinians, who have lost their faith in the international community. From their perspective, decades of peaceful resistance have only resulted in further hardships and an uninterrupted expansion of Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian territories. Israel's 75-year-long illegal occupation of Palestine and the associated atrocities, along with the 17-year siege imposed on Gaza, have failed to evoke a significant response from the international community. Nevertheless, the recent attacks by Hamas on Israel have drawn the world's attention to the gravity of the issue. In this context, one can find an explanation for the increasing popularity of Hamas among Palestinian people.

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