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Israeli state

# Zionist Left support for the bloody assaults on Gaza signifies its erasure from Israel's political map

- IV Online magazine - 2014 - IV477 - October 2014 -  
Publication date: Wednesday 15 October 2014

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**The aim of this article is to pinpoint the explicit and implicit support of the Zionist Left intellectuals usually identified with Labor or Meretz for the brutal attacks on Gaza since 2006. This support is a new stage in the Left intellectuals' loyalty to the state and its oppressive policies against the Palestinian people. The viciousness of mass murder and horrid devastation of Gaza, chiefly in the recent Operation Protective Edge, have reached unprecedented levels. Their support by the "most enlightened" public figures in Israeli society amounts to total disregard for basic human rights and international laws and erases any meaningful difference between them and the Right.**

The silence of the Zionist Left majority in response to the massacres in Gaza—including the discourse of evasion and emotional detachment by the very few who did react—indicates a complete absence of basic humanitarian values and concepts of justice. The meaning of state security, stretched to include repression of Palestinian resistance by any bloody means, unites the Zionist Left with the Right in a joint war against the Palestinian people. The Left which has been recognized as the offspring of the mythological Zionist labor movement has been wiped off the political map.

One would perhaps expect opposition to such an operation from, for example, Meretz MP Haim Oron, the past general secretary of Mapam and a member of Kibbutz Lahav, affiliated to the Hashomer Hatzair stream of the Kibbutz movement. However, on Friday, 24 July, 2014, when 150 children had already been killed in Gaza, Oron declared that his party, Meretz, would not participate in the big demonstration against the operation planned for Saturday night. The daily Maariv noted:

Thousands of Jews and Arabs are expected to participate in the demonstration. They would waive the Palestinian Authority flag (sic) and raise placards condemning the military operation [in Gaza], calling for the removal of the siege of the Strip, and ending the occupation of the West Bank.

The demonstration was organized by a coalition of what's called "Left factions" including Palestinian-Arab (Balad and Raam Taal), Palestinian-Jewish (Hadash, the front headed by the Communist Party), and Daam, the Workers Party. Jewish protest movements like Bat Shalom and Anarchists Against the Wall, as well as NGO's like The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICHAD) and the Alternative Information Center (AIC), declared their participation in the demonstration. All in all these are very small groups which could not mobilize many participants for the few demonstrations there were against the war on Gaza. Oron explained the Meretz position, which opposed the risking of Israeli lives by landing troops inside Gaza, but not the operation itself:

Our position is essentially different from the common denominator of those groups which organized the demonstration: Meretz supports the operation in Gaza. These groups don't accept the basic right of the State of Israel to self defense, whereas we support it. A massive majority of the Party's board voted for the justification of the operation while voting for a resolution to oppose the landing act. [\[1\]](#)

One would assume that facing the mass murder and displacement which had already taken place by this time (24 July), those self-proclaimed fighters for universal human values would take to the streets and join whoever opposed the massacre in Gaza.

But they didn't. Moreover, Oron and his party members knew well from past onslaughts on Gaza what horrific massacre and devastation were about to occur. However they did not join this demonstration or others organized by

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independent groups (or the Communist Party) which were violently confronted by right wing gangs with the help of the police.

The Zionist Left/Liberal intellectuals and academics did not adopt an explicit condemnation of the Israeli "combat" in Gaza, or even make public any alarm at the genocide committed there. I refer here to those intellectuals and academics who since the establishment of the State (and prior to it) have supplied the moral and "scientific" legitimacy for Israel's colonialist policies which continue the ethnic cleansing begun in 1948. [2]

Many of those Left/Liberal intellectuals and academics participated in articulating the guiding ideology of the State of Israel under the rule of the Zionist Labor movement in the first decades of the state. Others among them have accepted their predecessors' teaching and elaborated on its premises.

They support the principal idea of Israel's established political culture: "security of the state" is sanctified as a sacred value to which human rights, class interests and ethnic identity are subservient.

Thus this fascist ideology first wrapped in socialist universal values, and later within a "human rights" discourse, has actually led Zionist Left intellectuals to justify the most horrible crimes against humanity, committed in the name of the state's security.

## The Ongoing War on Gaza

The continued assaults against the Gaza Strip, since the Hamas victory in the 2006 general elections, constitute a new stage in the persistent efforts to crush the Palestinian national movement and its attempts at resistance, aided all along by the US.

With the complicity of Abu Mazen's Palestinian Authority (PA), the ongoing repression in the West Bank leaves Hamas and those confined to Gaza as the stronghold of the Palestinian struggle. The refusal of Gaza residents to surrender to Israel's opposition to the democratic election victory of Hamas, and to Israel's ongoing domination of Gaza, had to be prevented from growing and igniting the dormant flames of uprising in the West Bank. Hence, the first Israeli step following the Hamas victory was to disconnect the West Bank from the Strip and impose a siege on Gaza which has been continually tightened such that by 2014 it was nearing human disaster.

The systematic and ongoing fragmentation of the Palestinian people has been the cornerstone of Israel's colonial strategy after 1948, in 1967, and with the isolation of Gaza. Crushing the Palestinian People as a unified political body has become a vital objective. Israel and the US share these interests, which are then also part and parcel of US imperialist strategy in the region as evidenced in the crumbling of Iraq, Libya, and even Syria.

Israel has changed the form and extent of oppression towards the residents of Gaza. Says Max Ajl:

As the challenge from Hamas mounted, Israeli policy shifted from containment to counterinsurgency, operating through both direct coercion and indirect infrastructural violence. Its techniques ranged from infrequent full-scale attacks, to far more frequent targeted assassinations, to the nearly daily destruction of Palestinian agricultural and fishery capacity, and on to hamstringing the banking system [...] In response to the blockade Palestinians launched rocket attacks. Those attacks have continually provoked upset from Israelis eager for a return to the desolate silence of defeat that they identify as "normality." [3]

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Indeed the bloody attacks against Gaza have been launched precisely against the residents' courageous resistance to Israel's oppression which thwarts the aspired status quo. [4]

In addition to the dire impact of the blockade and frequent incursions and drone strikes, there have been two main military operations in Gaza prior to Operation Protective Edge in July 2014: "Cast Lead" From 27 December 2008 to 18 January 2009 and "Pillar of Defense," an eight-day massacre which began on 14 November 2012 with the murder of Ahmed Jabari, leader of the Gaza Hamas military wing. As said, their aim was to return the "quiet," not to achieve totally military victory by crushing the Gaza regime.

By reviewing the position of Left intellectuals during these operations, we can see the irrelevance of a "Zionist Left" as a political force which opposes the right wing war policy. I'll begin with the 2009 war and move to the current Protective Edge Operation (which ended on 26 July with a very shaky agreement already violated by Israel as I am writing these lines).

These periodic onslaughts are euphemized in military doctrine as "mowing the lawn." As explained by Aji:

"Mowing" refers to the impossibility of pulling out the grass in surrounding territories—chiefly Lebanon and the Gaza Strip—by the root. The inevitable growth of armed resistance forces the Israeli counter-insurgency apparatus to cut down any movement which arises to fight for Palestinian self-determination. [5]

The Zionist Left calls for "peace negotiations" after each mass blood-letting in Gaza which they support; not only are they "false prophets of peace," [6] but also vigorous supporters of the cruel assaults on Gaza which – in the absence of the prospect of eliminating them completely – are intended to deter any agreement with Hamas beyond a temporary ceasefire.

Two well-known representatives of the Left's so called desire for peace, in accord with their assumed universal humanist values, are author David Grossman and political scientist Zeev Sternhell. [7]

## **2008-2009 Cast Lead Massacre in Gaza**

Ehud Barak, Labor Minister of Defense in Ehud Olmert's Kadima government, led the carnage in Gaza from December 2008 to January 2009. At this time as well, the determined resistance of Hamas, supported by the population, had to be repressed.

The barbaric attack on Gaza was planned well in advance. Chomsky's analysis points to (among other things) the fact that "Israel violated the ceasefire in July 2008, which was observed by Hamas." (Israel concedes that Hamas did not fire a single rocket.) Also:

Israel continued its criminal activities in Gaza and the West Bank, including the continued heavy siege imposed on Gaza since January 2006, which brought it to the brink of almost complete strangulation. Later Israel refused to accept a ceasefire proposed by Hamas shortly before the invasion. [8]

As confirmed by Haaretz senior political commentator:

The enormous power was sent to Gaza not only or even mainly in order to hit the military infrastructure of Hamas.

The main mission that the political level assigned to the army was to dismantle the civil infrastructure (emphasis added) of the regime. [9]

Rockets fired onto southern Israeli towns were accepted by Meretz as a justifiable pretext for the attack. Says the poet Yitzhak Laor: "Meretz justified the 'first stage' of the war but not the afterward." In the face of these apologetics, Laor asks, "How many children should die for 'not afterward' and for understanding that it is forbidden for a Left movement to take part in Israel's military games?" Laor concludes, "Let's admit it: all Zionist parties were intoxicated at the time of the 'war.' Now it seems as if they were hit by blindness. Just a hangover." [10]

And indeed, author David Grossman was apparently satisfied with the number of children murdered during the first three days of the massacre in Gaza. At that point, he believed it was the right time for a "generous" call for 48 hours of unilateral ceasefire in order to re-establish the truce that Israel itself had violated.

## David Grossman praises the army's restraint

On 30 December, 2008, David Grossman's "Fight Fire with a Cease-Fire," was published in the New York Times Opinion section.

Despite the widely known facts outlined above, David Grossman repeated the official Israeli narrative: Hamas was the aggressor, violating the ceasefire which lasted since early 2008. Grossman thus justified the first three days of the brutal attack on Gaza, depicting it as an act of retaliation rather than as aggression initiated by Israel.

In his article, there is no blame whatsoever concerning the Israeli army's brutality inflicted on citizens. On the contrary, Grossman depicts it as "restraint" and further praises Israel for acting "with impressive level-headedness."

This "restraint," argues Grossman, has consistently characterized Israel's policy toward Hamas. Israel had not used all its potential power despite Hamas' actions that "made life excruciating for the Israelis who live on Gaza's perimeter." Also, Hamas leaders "have rebuffed every Israeli and Egyptian endeavor to achieve a compromise and prevent a conflagration."

According to Grossman, the justification for the "heavy blow" inflicted on Gaza is thus just retaliation for the rockets Hamas fired at the South of Israel while Israel restrained itself. Grossman asked only one thing of Israel: To declare a unilateral ceasefire for 48 hours as an attempt to reinstate the status quo. Not the end of the suffocating siege on Gaza, nor the opening of the Erez passage that unites Gaza with the West Bank. Both demands, needless to say, would have been categorically rejected by Israel. A return to the status quo was all that Grossman, Israel's "peace champion," proposed to the world.

The "generous" proposal for a 48-hour ceasefire is attainable, said Grossman, precisely because Israel's power is almost limitless compared to that of Hamas.

From this powerful position, the patronizing Grossman suggests the resumption of the shaky treaty with an alarming warning:

Now after the heavy blow that Israel has dealt to the Gaza Strip, we would do best to ourselves to turn to the leaders of Hamas and tell them: Now you know how severe the retaliation can be.

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The one utterance of concern David Grossman expresses is that "our duty to protect the lives of Gaza's innocent inhabitants must remain our commitment today." These false words were written after he, like many others, had adopted Israel's defensive reasoning that Hamas' activities and those of citizens are inseparable, due to Hamas' utilization of citizens as human shields. This misleading claim provided the excuse for the mass killing of "noncombatant" citizens.

This notorious allegation would be explicitly repeated by Political Scientist Zeev Sternhell.

Professor Zeev Sternhell defends the army for following orders

Like David Grossman and many Zionist Left intellectuals, Sternhell refrained from explicitly accepting the UN Goldstone Report, which disclosed Israel's war crimes committed during the Cast Lead Gaza massacre. [11]

The great majority of Israelis criticized the report for being politically biased against Israel. Zeev Sternhell joined this criticism and white-washed the crimes of the army. He argued that there was no reason to investigate the army's responsibility for the mass killings because it had received its orders from the political leadership. However, Sternhell also did not condemn those who gave the orders. Likewise, he refrained from criticizing the goals of destroying the civilian infrastructure and devastating Gaza, including the mass killing of the civilian population. Instead, he indirectly credited the political leadership for empowering the army and giving them a means to wage war while preventing injuries and deaths to Israeli soldiers:

The case is clear like the sun at noon time. [Namely,] that since Hamas operates from within a crowded population in one of the most densely populated regions in the world, any attempt to reach them [Hamas] without hurting civilians "is impossible. Thus, in order to launch a war with zero losses to our forces, the political and military leadership decided to employ massive fire, without the capability of differentiating between a fighter who was preparing a rocket for firing and a child playing in the yard.

Indeed, all the decision-makers knew in advance that a heavy disaster was imminent in Gaza, says Sternhell:

The army committed precisely the directives it received from their moral leaders, commanders and the government. They [the army] did not seek intentionally to kill civilians. They only bombed, eliminated and leveled everything which seemed necessary for observation, maneuver and advance, since every building could be a combat position for Hamas. [12]

Sternhell's emphases on the practical implications of the means employed in Operation Cast Lead lacks any moral basis. He largely focuses on the damage to Israel's image and not on the immorality of the Gaza massacre.

## **A new combat doctrine which violates international law**

Sternhell was right in mentioning that after the second Lebanon War of 2006, the political and military authorities decided to launch future wars with zero losses to Israeli combat forces. Hence, they determined that the army should employ massive fire without differentiating between fighters and citizens which allows for mass killings.

However, Sternhell ignores the fact that this decision violates international law. Nor did he express opposition to it or

warn the Israeli public of the dreadful consequences of following it in future operations in Gaza. The decision to “spare the lives of Israeli soldiers” is justified by the intentional misinterpretation of international laws on armed conflict by The International Law Department (ILD) for the IDF. The ILD developed a new combat doctrine which among other things gave a free hand to mass killings of civilians and to destruction of civic infrastructure and not only “classic” military sites. This now includes facilities and structures like schools, centers for the disabled, governmental offices, rehabilitation centers, etc. [\[13\]](#)

## July 2014: Operation Protective Edge

The mass murder of Gaza's residents and the devastation of its infrastructure scaled new heights in Operation Protective Edge. The operation was inspired and justified by the growing demonization of Hamas to the extent that most Israelis, including the Left, shared in the government's incitement against it.

The incitement focused on the 1988 Hamas Charter which called for Israel's destruction. However, this charter is “essentially meaningless” says Noam Chomsky, “because all along Hamas has accepted the international consensus of a two-state settlement which has been blocked by the U.S. and Israel.” In an interview [\[14\]](#), Chomsky paraphrases the Hamas position by saying, “Yes, let's have a two-state settlement on the international border and a very long truce, maybe 50 years. And then we'll see what happens.” “Well,” adds Chomsky, “that proposal is far more forthcoming than any proposal in Israel.” Moreover, this knowledge was widely publicized: “By now, it's quite overt. Takes effort to fail to see it. You can read it in The Washington Post.”

Indeed, over the past six years, in various forums Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh stated that he would allow for negotiations in which Israel was entitled to maintain the pre-1967 borders. Also, the daily Haaretz quoted the Wall Street Journal on Khaled Meshal's interview where he declared: “We will accept a Palestinian state within 1967 lines in the framework of any international initiative.” [\[15\]](#)

The principles on the basis of which Hamas was elected in 2006 don't include any call for the destruction of Israel. [\[16\]](#)

By the same token the platform on which Hamas joined the unity agreement formed with Fatah in April 2014, just two months before the July carnage in Gaza, lacks the Charter's infamous position.

As mentioned, Israel was furious at the attempt to reunify Gaza and the West Bank. When it eventually failed to prevent the unification, it hurried to use the kidnapping of the three Israelis in Hebron as a pretext to attack Gaza. A month before, two Palestinian boys were shot dead in the West Bank city of Ramallah. However, that elicited little attention from Israel's media and public opinion.

Hamas had observed the terms of the previous ceasefire for 19 months. The ceasefire terms were that Hamas would not fire rockets and Israel would move to end the blockade and stop attacking so-called militants in Gaza. It was Israel who violated the ceasefire terms using, as usual, a negligible event to open a bloody war.

Anyone who genuinely aspired to peace could not overlook the evolution of Hamas' position. And still the Zionist Left repeated the Israeli narrative on Hamas' intention to destroy Israel, exactly as they did in 2009. They have thus become active partners in raising the fears of the public and preparing them to support the bloody attacks on Gaza. Being aware of Hamas' actual position and yet still accepting the official narrative clearly demonstrates that the Zionist Left shares the motivation for the periodic onslaughts on Gaza: to do away with any bud of Palestinian

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resistance led at present by Hamas, to “mow the lawn,” and to regain the “status quo.”

The terrifying result of Israel's “legalized” barbarism was the erasure of entire neighborhoods, the mass murder of 2030 residents, including children and civilians, as well as the destruction of hospitals, health clinics, UN schools and shelters. The sole power plant, as well as the water and sewage systems, was demolished, driving Gaza to the brink of a human disaster.

But the majority of the Zionist Left intellectuals remained deaf to the outcries of the victims and disregarded the demands of Hamas leadership to lift the siege on the Strip. Indeed, “No one is as deaf as the one who does not want to hear, as blind as the one who does not want to see.” [17]

David Grossman does not see, does not hear, does not speak

In the midst of the ongoing calamity in Gaza, David Grossman used the platform of the New York Times to express abstractions, evasions and empty words which amount to clearing Israel of culpability for the devastation of Gaza. In the tradition of the Zionist Left, he further substantiated illusions which discouraged Israelis from challenging their government's policy. [18]

Aimed at minimizing Israel's responsibility for the prolonged oppression and ethnic cleansing policies against the Palestinians, Grossman introduces the image of a “hermetically sealed bubble” in which “hallucinatory wrestling” takes place between Israelis and Palestinians. The sealed bubble image permits Grossman to disregard the nature of the “wrestling,” namely the colonial oppression by Israel and the resistance of the colonized who fight for their liberation. Thus the blame can be allocated equally to both sides:

Inside the bubble, who can fault Israelis for expecting their government to do everything it can to save children on the Nahal Oz kibbutz, or any of the other communities adjacent to the Gaza Strip, from a Hamas unit that might emerge from a hole in the ground? And what is the response to Gazans who say that the tunnels and rockets are their only remaining weapons against a powerful Israel? In this cruel and desperate bubble, both sides are right. They both obey the law of the bubble – the law of violence and war, revenge and hatred.

Grossman does not take the opportunity to awaken the international community and Israeli society from their sleepy indifference to the horrors in Gaza; strong empathy with the victims might have raised anger and critiques against Israeli authorities. Hence on 26 July when hundreds of thousands people had already been uprooted from their bombed homes and massacre had continued uninterrupted, he dared to refrain explicitly from elaborating on the continued slaughter:

But the big question, as war rages on, is not about horrors occurring every day inside the bubble, but rather it is this: How on earth can it be that we have been suffocating together inside this bubble for over a century? This question, for me, is the crux (emphasis added) of the latest bloody cycle.

Grossman avoids asking questions that would contradict his commitment to official policy. Instead, he turns to his own leaders – Netanyahu and his predecessors – to clarify the issue which preoccupies him more than the horrors in Gaza. He feigns ignorance of the deliberate policy of retaining the status quo throughout entire historic Palestine and addresses Benjamin Netanyahu with but cynical questions:

Why is it that Israeli governments have been incapable, for decades, of thinking outside the bubble? How could you have wasted the years since the last conflict without initiating dialogue, without even making the slightest gesture

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toward dialogue with Hamas, without attempting to change our explosive reality?

The very "innocent" questions deflect the reader from the true answer which Grossman knows well. Israel has not "wasted" time; on the contrary, the building of settlements continued unabashedly and Israel's reign over all of historic Palestine strengthened.

Grossman wrote the introduction to the "Geneva Understanding" which supports a Palestinian "state" composed of isolated Bantustan-like enclaves. Despite this Understanding not having been mentioned, its spirit of Palestinian surrender has remained in Grossman's discourse on solutions to the "cycle of violence."

In the tradition of the Zionist Left, Grossman does not include the aspirations of the Palestinian national movement for liberation in his assumptions regarding the prospects for "peace." In the tradition of the Zionist Left, he continues to sell the illusions about the "realistic" vision for achieving a peace agreement: he determines that the great majority of Palestinians support Abu Mazen's illegitimate rule and the "peace agreements" signed by his predecessors. As a faithful son to a master nation, he overlooks any political forces that persistently resist the occupation and might in the future struggle even more fiercely for their liberation. Nor does he listen to their strong voices—some even published repeatedly in the daily Haaretz (mainly by Amira Hass) which accuse Abu Maazen and the PA of cooperating with Israeli intelligence and thus helping in the nightly arrests of political activists. It is not only the collaborative PA which is considered a fit partner to the submissive peace plan supported by Grossman, but other US allies in the region, the Arab autocratic regimes, are also partners to the sham peace plan initiated by the US and its allies:

Why, for these past few years, has Israel avoided judicious negotiations with the moderate and more conversable sectors of the Palestinian people? Why have you ignored, for 12 years, the Arab League initiative that could have enlisted moderate Arab states with the power to impose, perhaps, a compromise on Hamas?

Grossman's misleading optimism for this "peace plan" repeats with regard to Jewish society. Despite the ever-increasing militarism, racism and pretense of security concerns, Grossman continues to sell the illusion of a "change of consciousness" that took place in the aftermath of Operation Protective Edge:

[...]Something about this war is managing, I think, to direct many Israelis' attention toward the mechanism that lies at the foundation of the vain and deadly repetitive "situation." Many Israelis who have refused to acknowledge the state of affairs are now looking into the futile cycle of violence, revenge and counter-revenge, and they are seeing our reflection: a clear, unadorned image of Israel as a brilliantly creative, inventive, audacious state that for over a century has been circling the grindstone of a conflict that could have been resolved years ago.

However in order to keep this supposed change of consciousness within the boundaries of the official Israeli narrative, Grossman reminds the potentially "converted" of the durable threat to Israeli security:

Now the Left recognizes the deep-rooted hate to Israel which is not due only to the occupation. [The Left] is increasingly aware of the potent hatred against Israel and of the Islamic fundamentalist volcano that threatens the country. It also recognizes the fragility of any agreement that might be reached here. More people on the left understand now that the right wing's fears are not mere paranoia, that they address a real and crucial threat.

Indeed a right wing warmonger hides behind the façade of a prophet for peace—"all for the security of the Zionist settler state.

## Zeev Sternhell's lack of empathy and moral judgment

Sternhell's article was published ten days after Israel launched Operation Protective Edge in the Gaza Strip (8 July) and one day after the ground invasion on 17 July. [19] The heavy airstrikes had already resulted in enormous devastation of the Strip. The massacre already numbered 240 killed and 1770 wounded—almost a third of them children, many from the same families. Even official Israeli news admitted that the great majority of the murdered residents were civilians. The heart-breaking picture of the four kids who were struck by the Israeli Air Force while playing at the seashore spread throughout the entire world. Waffa hospital was bombed as had been other public institutions. Two days earlier, the army had called 100,000 residents of Gaza telling them to leave their homes (front page of Haaretz, 16 July). Hundreds of thousands in the Strip had lost access to water due to the Israeli air attacks on infrastructure facilities, and medics deplored the shortage of medicines and anesthetics.

As said, these terrifying atrocities were already well underway when Sternhell's article was published. They and previous mass killings, as well as the “decision” to target civilian residents, point to even greater calamities yet to come.

Sternhell begins his article with a kind of cognitive-psychological view on Israel's part in the “conflict” which prevailed in the pre-state period and continued thereafter: “Since the beginning of Zionism, Israeli society has found it difficult to see the other nation (emphases added) that lives in this land.”

It turns out however that Sternhell himself is blind. He refrains from mentioning the very colonization of the land or calling “the other nation” by its name – Palestine. This assumed “difficulty in seeing” allows him to avoid identifying Zionism as a colonial project and Palestinian resistance as a struggle for national liberation.

However, he states that prior to independence this blindness was “a source of strength.” Sternhell is definitely right in evaluating the importance to the Zionist colonization project of being blind to the Palestinian nation; it helped in mobilizing participation in building the infrastructure for the settler colonial state and cleansing it of about 800,000 of its indigenous population in the '48 Nakba. The “'48 youth generation” which committed the mass expulsion had been well prepared to heartlessly commit the Nakba: to expel the majority of the Palestinian people and wipe out almost 500 villages and towns, including evacuating the then most advanced and progressive cities of Jaffa, Acre and Haifa among others. Years of indoctrination to enshrine the exclusive Jewish-state-to-come as an absolute notion created the dehumanization of Palestinians and themselves as well.

However Sternhell contends that “The blessing of being blind to the ‘other’ lasted only till 1949.” But after 1949, and especially after 1967, the inability—or unwillingness—to understand the other (emphasis added) has been the cause of disastrous moral and political paralysis.

Why 1949? To remind the reader: during this year the Armistice Agreements were signed between Israel and its neighboring states. They established demarcation lines which “temporarily” recognized the territorial expansion of Israel far beyond the area that had been allocated to it in the UN partition decision.

The “disastrous moral and political paralysis” which characterized Israeli policies after 1949, including the last assault on Gaza, is but “punitive measures” against the “violence” on the part of the Palestinians. Sternhell, however, does not condemn these measures on a moral basis. His main opposition to them is based on pragmatic argument:

It is unlikely that the punitive measures taken by Israel, from the retaliations of the 1950s to the tactics in the first Lebanon war and to the present, have ever brought any real benefit but the official Israel refusal to understand that.

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Critiquing Israel's deliberately bloody policies solely for their futility demonstrates utter moral bankruptcy and inevitably leads to a meaningless message to the Israel political establishment and the wide strata of Israeli society: "We have been doing the same thing for years. [...] Doesn't common sense demand that we try a different method?"

Eleven days later when the bloodbath in Gaza reached hair-raising levels, and a substantial part of public opinion abroad began showing solidarity with the Palestinians, Zeev Sternhell came out with a more specific message regarding the solution to the conflict. [20] Like David Grossman, he appreciates the restraint of the Israeli army for not employing all its combat capability. And like Grossman, who addresses his message of peace precisely from this position of overwhelming military superiority, Sternhell calls "all Palestinians" to create a framework for a comprehensive solution establishing a Palestinian independent state." The capitulatory nature of this "independence" is soon disclosed: preventing a full unification with the West Bank and eliminating its resistance. The strip would be founded as "a demilitarized province of the [Palestinian] state which would be limited in terms of arming but opened to the world and from Israeli colonialism." [21] As we said about David Grossman – the very partnership with Abu Mazen aims to confer legality to Israel's already-realized control of the entirety of Palestine.

The reaction of Zionist Left intellectuals to the periodic bloody wars on Gaza and especially to the recent Operation Protective Edge signifies the end of their past role as even false prophets of peace – the distinction I bestow upon them in the title of my book of the same name (Haymarket Books, 2011). Now they explicitly support Israel's policy of suppressing Palestinian resistance led by Hamas and highly supported by Gaza residents. Since they have accepted the definition of Hamas as a terror organization which threatens the existence of Israel, they can easily justify the pretext of assaults against Hamas in Gaza, ignoring the fact that they amount to war on the Palestinian people.

In the West Bank, the war continues daily with the collaboration of Abu Mazen's Palestinian Authority. Zionist Left intellectuals have not come out against the recent nightly kidnappings of hundreds of Palestinian political activists and Left thinkers and academics like Palestinian professor and writer Ahmad Qatamesh who was recently detained from his home in Ramallah. The fact that he spent a total of almost nine years in Israeli prison was published in Haaretz, yet not a word of solidarity, not even on collegial academic terms, was uttered by Left intellectuals. Reading their retort to the waves of massacres in Gaza since 2006 exposes a final stage in the long betrayal by Zionist Left intellectuals.

The intolerable ease by which they accept and repeat the terms in which the political establishment frames the "conflict" with Hamas is startling. It has been accurately described by Noam Chomsky as "a mixture of half-truths, outright lies, deliberate deception, and mind-boggling daub." Left intellectual discourse adopts the official narratives about the war on Gaza and the oppressive measures implemented in the West Bank as well as the ideology of "state security" which underlies these narratives.

Netanyahu's recent declarations which identify Hamas with the Daash organization encourages Israel to join the US imperialist "holy war" against "Islamic terrorism" in Palestine as well. Those known as the "Zionist Left" continue to supply fake moral justification to the diminishing number of Jews who still seek it.

The Left, which has been recognized as guarding the misleading legend of the mythological Zionist labor movement, no longer exists as a distinct political and cultural entity. The Left intellectuals have finally openly adopted the quasi-fascist dimensions of this movement which played a leading role in creating the hegemonic ideology of the Zionist brand of colonialism.

According to Sternhell's analysis in the '90s, from the beginning, the Zionist labor movement sharply diverged from European liberal democracy and its enshrinement of individual liberties. Their ideology of constructive socialism was a local version of National Socialism that retained the main tenets of organic nationalism within a socialist framework. [22]

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However, this version of National Socialism and the world view and principles embedded within it have served as the main tenets of the official ideology and identity of the state of Israel for decades. It later developed Israeli political culture by emphasizing the supremacy of the state and its "security" over the principles of individual human and civil rights, as well as class interests. Up to the very present, it serves as the ideological basis which unifies the Left and Right political wings within Israel behind the principal political policies adopted by all Israeli governments—both regarding the Palestinians and the Arab world, and the social economy within Israel.

What distinguishes this new stage of commitment to the colonial state of Israel by Left intellectuals is their departure from what remains of their weak commitment to universalistic values. They are now fully integral to the chauvinist, racist state of Israel which is the tool for the embodiment and expansion of Zionist colonial project.

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[1] Maariv, July 24, 2014.

[2] See Tikva Honig-Parnass, *False Prophets of Peace, Liberal Zionism and the Struggle for Palestine*, Haymarket Books, 2011.

[3] Max Ajl, "From Containment to Counterinsurgency in the Gaza Strip," [www.jadaliyya.com](http://www.jadaliyya.com), 30 August 2014.

[4] See Amira Hass "Just is not an Interesting Issue," Haaretz, 10 August 2014.

[5] Max Ajl, *Ibid.*

[6] My book, *False Prophets of Peace, Liberal Zionism and the Struggle for Palestine*, (Haymarket, 2011), focuses on the positions and ideologies of Left parties and intellectuals on different premises of the "Jewish-Democratic" state and the Oslo and other peace plans which disregard Palestinian national rights.

[7] David Grossman is considered the most left among the two other authors Amos Oz and Yehoshea who together are believed to be the "consciousness of the nation." Zeev Sternhell is a Hebrew University emeritus professor of Political Science, and one of the world's leading experts on fascism. For his telling analysis of the Zionist Labor movement ideology of which he is a long time supporter, see Zeev Sternhell, *The founding Myths of Israel: Nationalism, Socialism, and the Making of the Jewish State*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1998.] However, their responses to the dreadful atrocities which took place in the 2009 and 2014 assaults show otherwise.

[8] Noam Chomsky, "Undermining Gaza," *Foreign Policy in Focus*, (January 2009). See also the illuminating article by Toufic Haddad, "The Road to Gaza's Killing Fields," *International Socialist Review* 64, March–April, 2009.

[9] Akiva Eldar, "How Much More Killing Till the Tahadiye [cease fire]," Haaretz, 5 January, 2009.

[10] Yitzhak Laor, "Ma lemeretz ve lesanhedrin," Haaretz, 28 October, 2009.

[11] The report, published in September 2009 by the United Nations Fact Finding Mission and headed by Judge Goldstone, was established in April 2009 to investigate the events of Operation Cast Lead ("The Goldstone Mission"). The report was adopted by the UN Human Rights Council and was further endorsed at the General Assembly

[12] Zeev Sternhell, "There Is Nothing [That Needs] Investigation," Haaretz, 25 September, 2009.

[13] Michael Sfard, "A 'targeted assassination' of international law," Haaretz, 2 August 2014. Also, The Public Committee Against Torture in

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Israel published research on this new combat doctrine in November 2009. See Special Report November 2009, "No Second Thoughts: The Changes in the Israeli Defense Forces' Combat Doctrine in Light of "Operation Cast Lead", researched and written by Graeme Goodman, Dr. Ishai Menuchin, Dr. Assaf Oron, November 2009.

[14] See Noam Chomsky interview by Amy Goodman on Democracy Now, 8 August, 2014.

[15] By Haaretz Service and Natasha Mozgovaya, 31 July, 2009. See also Noam Chomsky, "Nightmare in Gaza," Truthout, 3 August, 2014.

[16] Ran Greenstein posted these principles on his Facebook Time Table and for extended discussion he recommended Khaled Hroub, "A "New Hamas' through its New Document," Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. 35, No. 4, Summer, 2006. <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.15...>

[17] Henry Lowy's response to David Grossman's article posted on Facebook.

[18] David Grossman, "Stop the Grindstone of Israeli-Palestinian Violence," New York Times, 27 July, 2014.

[19] Zeev Strenhell, "In midst of Gaza strife, now's the time for Israel to seek a treaty with the Palestinians," Haaretz, 8 July, 2014.

[20] Zeev Sterhell, "Legalot Nedivut Klapai Haoyev," ("To show generosity towards the enemy"), my translation, Haaretz, 27 July 2004 "Legalot Nedivut shel Amitzim," Haaretz, 29 June, 2014.

[21] Ibid Legalot..

[22] Zeev Sternhell, Nation Building or a New Society?: The Zionist Labor Movement (1914–1940) and the Origins of Israel, Tel Aviv, Am Oved Publishers, 1995.

[23] The author wishes to offer many thanks to Mich Levy for her wise comments which helped bringing the article to its present form and for her excellent language editing.