

Punishing the Innocent

Artist Statement by Sam Kerson

March 2009

These images are from the Hanukkah assault on Gaza, December 2008 to January 2009.

The images focus on violations of the rules of war, as they are described in the Geneva accords.

Along with much of the rest of the world, we watched the tragedy unfold on Internet.



How sad and bizarre to see the Israeli army act like Nazis. Ghettoization of the Palestinians, reminds us of the ghettos created to “protect” Germany from the Jews. The Israelis, or is it the Zionists, are engaged in a race war, an ethnic cleansing. They have built a wall around the Palestinian populations, imprisoning them and in this war, terrorizing them. It looked like Israel was trying to drive the people of Gaza into the sea.

For me this series started June 5 through 10, 1967, when Israel first took control of the Gaza Strip in a war that is called, *the six-day war*, but has clearly continued for 42 years. At the time I was a parachute rigger with fighter squadron VF 33 on the USS America. When the Israelis attacked the U.S. spy ship, the Liberty, our ship provided the hospital and some of the wounded and the survivors came aboard. We were very impressed by this attack, which left us in the dark for some time - long enough for my squadron to launch atomic weapons, that is, to load atomic bombs and launch the planes into the air. It took a few hours for the Israelis to stop denying that they were behind the attack. That is right: during the first few hours the Israelis said, it was not their planes attacking the US ship, the Liberty, a ship in the U.S. sixth fleet.

Jumping to today I hear the Israelis say, there are Hamas gunmen hiding in that building, therefore we will destroy it.

What surprises me is that Israel's U.S. and Canadian friends say, Yes, of course, you have no choice. But in my world, in my mind, if a gunman goes into a school and holds the kids hostage, no one would think of bombing the school. That is really unthinkable. How can anyone have such a disregard for the sanctity of human life? The crime of the gunman is nothing compared to the crime of his pursuers who bomb the school where he is hiding. Who can deny this: one does not kill the children in an effort to kill the gunman.

We see that the Zionist movement is a religious movement and intends to create a religious state that will be purely Jewish. The Zionists are involved in *ethnic cleansing* to create a purely Jewish state. The wall is Apartheid. The Israelis intend to liberate their country, one wonders how that country is defined or bordered, as it appears to be expanding, they intend to liberate their country by eliminating all other ethnicities, by removing all people who are not Jewish.

Having watched the recent massacre in Gaza we have created this series of images to pinpoint Israel's violations of the rules of war, Israel's genocidal behavior, Israel's inhuman treatment of the Palestinian people and Israel's excesses. The images are specific and point to real events that occurred during the assault on Gaza. Real events that are war crimes under the conventions of war.

We believe this series demonstrates the paradox, expressed by the Palestinians when they say, we lost nearly 1,500 lives, while the Israeli's lost only eleven, none-the-less Hamas won the battle of Gaza.

We join the Palestinians in calling for a return to the pre '67 borders and a negotiated peace. A multi-cultural state is the only solution. There is nothing unusual about a multi-cultural state. All that is required is respect for the other people. Respect for the people you are going to live with.

To quote Benito Juarez, "El respeto al derecho ajeno es la paz".

Which means, Respect for the rights of others is peace.

The images are lino cut, two of them are three color lino cuts.

They were produced by, Dragon Dance Theatre,

Concept by Sam and Katah

Graphics by Sam Kerson

Printing by Katah

at Atelier Presse Papier in TroisRivières, Québec, in early 2009.

There are 11 images, plus a title page and the colophon in the series.

The paper is Stonehenge, size is 33 X 51 cm; the image size is 22 X 30 cm

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