



# VETERANS FOR PEACE NEWS

MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL VETERANS FOR PEACE, CHAPTER 27

Veterans For Peace News is published quarterly by Mpls./St. Paul Veterans For Peace, Chapter 27.

Veterans For Peace works to increase awareness of the costs of war, restrain our government from intervening in the internal affairs of other nations, end the arms race, reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons, seek justice for veterans and victims of war, and abolish war as an instrument of national policy.

We pledge to use democratic and non-violent means to achieve our purpose.

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*"There won't be any trumpets blowing come the Judgement Day — on the bloody morning after, one tin soldier rides away..."*

(Potter & Lambert)

## Genocidal Slaughter in Gaza Reflects U.S. Treatment of North American Indigenous Peoples

by Chris Mato Nunpa, Ph.D.

As a Dakota person, when I observe what the Israeli government has done, and is doing to the Palestinians, I cannot help remembering what the United States did to the Indigenous Peoples of the U.S., and in particular, what was done to the Dakota People of *Mini Sota Makoce Mini Sota* — an area which includes the state of Minnesota.

U.S. perpetuated genocide against Native Peoples, just as Netanyahu is now doing against Palestinians with genocidal policies and broken promises such as the theft of land and resources, forced marches, numerous massacres, group executions, and holding people indefinitely in concentration camps. An obscene number of Gazans (nobody knows how many for sure) have already been separated from families or killed (some deliberately) including women, babies, elders, sick people and the hand-capped. The list of crimes against humanity is long and what happened to Native Americans is now happening to Indigenous Palestinians.

For the sake of brevity, I will mention quotes and brief comments:

- Israel has a Biblical history in the Old Testament. Yahweh, the Jewish God, chose the Israelites, or Jews, to be his “chosen People.” This Genocidal God gave dozens of commands to the Israelites to destroy all the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Jebusites, et. al., whose lands (Canaan, the “Promised Land”) had been given to the Israelites. It appears that now in the 21st century, Netanyahu wishes to obey Yahweh and wipe out Hamas even if that means ruthlessly killing women, babies, chil-



Artist and veteran Eric Garcia is a member of VFP chapter 27.

dren, elders and innocent civilians in the process. This killer God, Yahweh, even commanded the killing of “infants and nursing children.” See I Samuel 15:3, New King James Version (NKJV)

- May 13, 2024 marked the 76th anniversary of the NAKBA (sometimes referred to as Palestine’s “Catastrophe”) when nearly 800,00 Palestinians were forced to flee their homes, businesses and lands. Similar to when the United States Congress enacted the Indian Removal Act of 1830 during the administration of President Andrew Jackson. Israel, as well as Hitler, learned from the U.S. how to treat hated victim-groups. In fact, Hitler said many times how much he admired the “efficiency” of the U.S. pogroms against First Nation Peoples, and viewed them as forerunners for his own pogroms

*Genocidal Slaughter, cont'd on page 4*

# Prez Says . . .

By Dave Logsdon

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“Nobody made a greater mistake then they who did nothing because they could only do a little.”

—Edmund Burke-

In case you haven't noticed, the world is kind of messed up right now. But what can I do you say? Well, nothing if you sit at home self-medicating and watching TV or playing video games. Waging peace is a marathon and as someone who would rather sprint than run 26 miles, I feel your pain. Taking that first step in activism can be daunting, but with a little imagination and determination you can be heard and help us make a difference. After I retired at the start of the illegal invasion of Iraq by our country, I took baby steps and went to a Veterans For Peace meeting. I was a foot soldier at first until leadership finally found a spot for me and I've been leveraging VFP's unique niche in the peace and justice diaspora ever since. Take that first step, get in the streets. As the great basketball/philosopher Anthony Edwards would jokingly say: “Bring ya ass!”

## Peacestock is coming to Minneapolis!

The annual event known as Peacestock began on Paul Shaeffer's farm in western Wisconsin. After that, Bill Habedank was the impresario who kept the event going for years in Red Wing and over the years, he has brought in a lot of seasoned activists from outside Minnesota. Now, it'll be conveniently located in the Twin Cities. Peacestock will kickoff Saturday July 27th in the New City Center (the former Walker Church) at 4 o'clock. The theme this year is “Settler Colonialism – Then and Now.” So far, we have already booked Dakota Elder and genocide scholar Chris Mato Nunpa for the Then part of the program and Palestinian publisher/editor of Mint Press Mnar Adley for the Now part. As always, there will be music and whole foods, so make plans to attend. Visit the Peacestock 2024 website for details.

“I don't want to belong to any club that will accept me as a member.”

—Groucho Marx

Membership issues for VFP has multiple layers and typically ebbs and flows in different directions. As part of our local leadership team, and the entire midwest region of VFP, this can be a vexing and challenging issue. So much of what I do revolves around recruiting, vetting, and integrating new members into our organization. We still believe that one of the best way to get folks to want



to join our group is to become one that others would like to be part of.

So, if you are thinking about getting involved, here are some of the basics. We are a veteran-led outfit that has a lot of associate (non-veteran) members who are also part of our mission. Everyone joins at the national level, but our operating funds are raised separately by local chapters. Becoming a visible player in the community political arena is essential and most of us make concerted efforts to keep informed politically and build relationships with other like-minded groups to increase our chances for affecting global change.

Being an all-volunteer team, we do the best we can with what we have, but burnout seeps in sometimes. Yet, we go on because the world is in dangerous territory these days and those of us who are already up to our eyeballs in actions and organizing, could use your perspectives, skills and voices in our nonviolent struggle for change. Please go to [veteransforpeace.org](http://veteransforpeace.org) if you are thinking about joining us.

“We all do better when we all do better.”

—Paul Wellstone

# VA Loses More Tax Dollars to Private Healthcare Industry

by Arlys Herem

Recently I was out of town and needed emergency room care. The VA triage nurse referred me to a local hospital where I was seen on Thursday afternoon. The following Tuesday I was back home and treated for my problem at the Minneapolis VA ophthalmology clinic. Wednesday, my primary care provider at the VA called me to schedule a follow-up appointment for an ER visit. This is only one example of the holistic care the VA is able to provide, even though I'm just one of nine-million veterans they take care of. The beauty of the VA is that it is patient-centered, not profit-centered.

This comprehensive care though continues to be threatened by increasing referrals to the private sector that began in 2016. The budget for private sector care rose from \$14.8 billion in 2018 to a whopping 28.5 billion in 2023 which is now 33% of the VA's budget. Triwest Healthcare Alliance and Optum (a subsidiary of UnitedHealthcare)

are third-party administrators managing private sector referrals and are seeking an increase of \$103 billion over their original \$86 billion projected budget for the remainder of their 2019–26 contract. Optum already received an additional \$4 billion for one of five regions for the last seven months of 2024.

It is not only VA health care that has been targeted as a source for increasing private profits. Health-care-for-all advocates are also trying to stop tax dollars from flowing into the insurance industry through Medicare Advantage plans which may increase Medicare costs over \$600 billion in the next eight years. Opinions that Medicare Advantage plans offer better outcomes are not borne out.

We need a Congress and a President who will heed a recently released VA-commissioned Red Team report whose findings of a crisis with VA spending support those of the Save Our VA (SOVA) National VFP Project. This report makes many recommendations to avoid “a potential existential threat to the VA Health System” and states that “addressing this matter should be an urgent priority for VA/VHA leadership.”

Work with us to force Congress to stop sending more money to the private sector — the VA does not have data to know if veterans are receiving either the earliest or best care since private care providers are not required to report data to the VA. Google Save Our VA Veterans For Peace to find more information and please, urge your members in Congress to fully fund and fully staff the VA.

*Arlys Herem was in the Army Nurse Corps 1970-75, including a tour of Vietnam. She founded a local NGO in Cambodia doing home health care in villages for 20 years before returning to Minneapolis in 2018. She is a VFP chapter 27 member and has been a SOVA Steering Committee member since 2020.*



*VFP chapter 27 members Arlys Herem and Jeff Roy met with Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN) last month to show support for the VA and Congress heeding the Red Team report.*

**"When we Glorify War,  
we are not honoring the dead, we are  
enticing the living to join them."**

**Smedley Butler  
Four-Star USMC Major General**

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

# Peace From the Center

Let me explain my approach to peacemaking. It upset me to see George W. Bush promoting torture under the flag we swore to defend. Our bloated military budget drives me nuts as well as fueling obscene profits for corporations by stoking our collectivized fear. I want to shout at these betrayals of our national security, but then I wonder: Sure, it might make me feel better to rage, but what good will shouting do?

My approach is called Peace From the Center (PFC). It evolved from some basic principles. First: Democracy is the art of the possible. What can we do? In our democracy we still have elections. Politicians respond to votes. What messages will persuade people and turn out votes? It's a very practical problem. We have real advantages in this struggle. The large majority of voters want peace. Very few want war. Maybe we can leverage these advantages to actually change policies. There could be many peace dividends with a smaller military budget; better and cheaper health care, education, housing, a fairer tax system etc. There is not much argument about this and all these things are very attractive to the average voter. The idea of Peace From the Center is that we harness our powers of persuasion and rational discourse to persuade voters of these basic facts. We might do this from less extreme positions.

Peace From the Center recognizes that the Center is a lot broader, deeper, wider, and massive than the war parties. We are the majority. There may be some voters drawn to extreme slogans, but there are many thousands of voters with more moderate views. These voters want peace and justice and we also want a society that turns away from our bloated military budget so we can better fund health care, education and a more fair society. I believe there are more voters in the center, but how do we persuade them to vote for policies that promote peace? PFC is my idea for accepting and understanding the complexities of a peaceful society. There are multiple sides to urgent questions such as those today of Israel/Palestine and the Ukraine/Russian conflicts. These are not simple issues. Let's promote broad discussions based on real information.

For example discussions of Ukraine could include the history of Ukraine and Russian nationalism. Two historians who educate broadly on those nations are Stephen Kotkin and Timothy Snyder. Their views are available for free on youtube. I don't agree completely with either one, but Kotkin for instance has been calling for negotiation with Russia with very persuasive arguments, firmly supported by a *realpolitik* analysis about the complexities of demographics, geography and national politics. In

Palestine/Israel we could promote peace better by modeling respectful discussions of the rights of Israelis and Palestinians than with simplistic condemnations of either side. I am convinced this is the surest path to energize a progressive direction in our U.S. policy. Peace From the Center!

by Ben Kreilkamp (U.S. Army '69-71)  
kreilkamp@gmail.com

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## Genocidal Slaughter, from page 1

against Poles, Russians (Hitler called them Indians) and Jews or any other group he found loathsome and wanted to place on reservations. Why cannot the white U.S. public see the violence, destruction and death, during the ongoing genocide of the Palestinians that is perpetrated by the Israelis and funded by the U.S. government?

I continue to watch in horror as Israelis block life-saving aid to captive Gazans who are purposely starved. Then too, this was characteristic of the U.S. government when they destroyed food supplies, food storage places, and the fields of Native Americans. Perhaps the best example is when the U.S. and its white citizenry killed bison by the millions and starved my people, and other Indigenous Peoples of the Great Plains.

This old Dakota man of nearly 85 winters, based on his research in the areas of Indigenous Nations Studies, Dakota Studies, Genocide Studies and Biblical Studies, thinks the U.S., because of its experience in murdering Indigenous Peoples, should provide more professors to teach classes and seminars about how hated victim-groups have been treated in the past. The example of Hitler's admiration for *pogroms* against Native Peoples in the U.S. clearly shows that the U.S. was an excellent teacher, and Hitler was an excellent student.

Lastly, this is not the Israeli-Hamas War. It is "uneven combat" to quote Hitler in his description of what the U.S. did to Indigenous Peoples — another genocide, only this time, it is perpetuated by Israelis against Palestinians!

*Chris Mato Nunpa, PhD is a Wahpeton Dakota Elder and retired Associate Professor of Indigenous Nations and Dakota Studies. He taught at Southwest Minnesota State University in Marshall, Minnesota and is the author of The Great Evil (the Bible, and the Native American Genocide). He is a member of VFP chapter 27.*

# Ending the Farce: Imposing a Two-State Solution

*(Enforcing the Rule of Law is the Solution, not Endless Negotiations)*

by Gil Maguire

On October 7, 2023, the over 75-year Israel-Palestine conflict erupted and quickly metastasized from Gaza to the West Bank, to northern Israel and Lebanon, to Syria and Iraq, and to Yemen. Eight months later, some 40,000 Palestinian men, women, and children are dead. The conflict has spread into a region-wide war between Israel and the US against Iran, Yemen, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq, as various military groups from those countries attack US forces, Israel, and international shipping in the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea in retaliation against Israel's savage war against Gaza.

Prior to Hamas' attack on southern Israel on October 7, the seven-decade quest by the international community for a permanent two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict had lost its urgency. A mere week before October 7, Jake Sullivan, President Biden's national security advisor, had boasted that the Middle East was experiencing unprecedented stability, was quieter than it had been in decades, and was on the verge of a permanent rapprochement between Israel, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab states. The plight of the Palestinians and the promised two-state solution seemed distant memories.

Hamas, the last lawfully elected government of Palestine, now governing Gaza, refused to accept this situation and attacked into southern Israel on October 7 to reawaken the world to the plight of the Palestinians and the importance of resolving the conflict. It clearly worked. Today, there is again urgent talk among European and U.S. leaders about finally achieving a two-state solution as a crucial component of bringing a permanent end to a conflict that began in 1947.

Israel's leader, Benjamin Netanyahu has categorically rejected talk of a two-state solution and insists Israel must maintain total control of all occupied territories west of the Jordan river, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza. European Union's head of foreign affairs, Josep Burrell, recently said that the stakes are so high and the need so urgent that the two-state solution may need to be imposed on the parties.

But can a two-state solution be imposed? Normally, when an international dispute is relatively minor and political in nature, the parties resolve the matter through direct negotiations, usually with the aid of a mediator. However, if one party has violated international law and has used force to occupy, settle, and control the land of another, the dispute is no longer political but criminal in nature and should be resolved under international law in which the matter is adjudicated before an international

tribunal which renders a decision and orders compliance by the losing party or sanctions in the event compliance is not forthcoming.

A good example of the application of the Rule of Law or legal approach occurred in August of 1990 when Iraq invaded and conquered Kuwait. Kuwait appealed to the United Nations and the UN Security Council passed



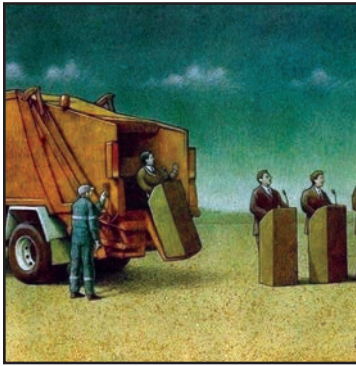
resolutions demanding Iraq immediately withdraw then imposed sanctions and a blockade when it did not. After a final deadline for withdrawal was ignored the UN Security Council authorized the use of force to gain Iraqi compliance. A coalition army, led by the U.S., quickly defeated Iraqi forces and removed them from Kuwait. The conflict ended on February 28, 1991, with Iraq's defeat and capitulation, and with Kuwait's legitimate government restored, its land free of invaders.

This entire UN-led legal process took only seven months despite the size of the armies, the number of nations involved in the coalition, and the military and political complexity of the conflict. Contrast that outcome with the negotiated settlement approach favored by Israel and the U.S. which has gone on for some 75 years and yielded no solution to the conflict. More importantly, this seven-decade negotiated settlement process has deprived the Palestinian people of the legal recourse they are entitled to under international law, deprived them of the lands that are legally theirs while they suffered con-

*Ending the Farce, cont'd on page 12*

# U.S. Arrogance and Hypocrisy

by Mike McDonald



We know what's best for everyone in the world. After all, many of us still see ourselves as a shining city on a hill, and that our democracy must be spread around the world just because we say so. The American arrogance is part and parcel to the mess the world is in today.

Our covert and overt actions have toppled many a country. Noam Chomsky once said "The message has always been that if you get out of line and attempt to control your own resources, the U.S. will murder your people and decimate your land." Starting with the taking of land from Indigenous Peoples here, this has continued for over 300 hundred years. While stealing resources, (usually oil) the U.S. puts sanctions on countries resulting in the deaths of countless innocent civilians.

U.S. arrogance is matched only by its hypocrisy. Instead of acting like a democracy as prescribed in the Constitution, and being an example to the world, our government runs roughshod over countries around the world, but the world is telling us they have had enough of our hegemony.

We talk out of both sides of our mouths concerning the siege of Gaza. Human Rights Watch says it well... "When it comes to applying core American principles and protecting basic human rights, Washington applies an obvious - and hypocritical double standard." And then there's this: After signing the ninety-five billion dollar war package for Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan, the President has the audacity to say "It's a good day for World peace."

With this being an election year expect to see much hand wringing and double talk from all of Washington.

*Mike McDonald is a retired educator and former president of VFP chapter 27.*



*Protesting the visit of Former Israeli Prime Minister Neftali Bennet who came to Minneapolis on June 6 to be the keynote speaker at the American Experiment's annual gala dinner and fundraiser. Photo courtesy of Sami Alawi*

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# War on the Planet: Imperialism, Ecological Destruction, and the Climate Crisis

by Sue Ann Martinson

**“A Just Transition to a ‘Regenerative Economy’ must end wars, military culture, and the violence of militarized forces and police in our communities and across the world.”** [Sha Merirei Ongelungel / Indigenous Peoples’ Network]

If Western powers lose the war in Ukraine will Western hegemony die? As Boris Johnson, the former prime minister of England’s UK, has predicted?<sup>2</sup> In his Geopolitical Economy Report Ben Norton discusses Boris Johnson’s point of view.<sup>3</sup> It is a belief strongly held by Johnson and also by Biden and Company as well as right-wing Republicans, and is driving the U.S. Congress to grant billions and billions of dollars to war.

As Norton states: “It is only the Global North, or the collective West, that has imposed sanctions on Russia.” The continued funding of the wars is clearly about hegemonic domination, also described by a more old-fashioned word, empire.

What complicates things exponentially is the climate crisis and the ‘on the ground’ battles for oil resources and other precious minerals. As long as the West dominates it has access to these resources with the neocolonialism that dominates the relationship of the multinational corporations with the countries of the Global South.

In the antiwar/pro-peace movement we find it difficult to understand the continued funding of wars when our own people are suffering. As Ken Pentel of the Economy Democracy Network<sup>4</sup> explains, the petro dollar is at the root of the economy, driving everything from transportation to food, to plastic, to housing and so much of what we produce. So the whole economy, built on the petro dollar, is threatened and U.S. and Western hegemony is threatened if the U.S. withdraws funding from Ukraine



(next to Russia), Israel (in the Middle East) and Taiwan (next to China).

Nationwide, people address these problems in their communities by challenging the system piecemeal, including the financial system by calling out the banks and the corporations they fund that dominate, while the CEOs and stockholders thrive at the expense of their workers. They are challenged by union movements, and also by addressing poverty, hunger, and homelessness for so many Americans who are not benefiting from an economy that basically makes the rich richer and the poor poorer.

The health of the planet and of the people is connected. The modern ecological movement understands these connections but does not always see the connections to the specter of militarism. The 1000 U.S. military bases create the most fossil fuel (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the world. The military pollutes the commons of the earth, air and water with impunity.<sup>5</sup>

“Justice at the heart of climate activism.” is the title of an article in *Yes! Magazine*<sup>6</sup> that emphasizes intersectionality and connections. To quote Vivian Huang of the Asian Pacific Environmental Network: “The...lives of all people are impacted by many intersecting issues. [They] don’t just care about the air pollution impacting their health; they also care about economic opportunities,



Photo: Yes! Magazine

*War on the Planet, cont’d on page 7*

# Fasting for Peace

by Mike McDonald

VFP chapter 27 member Jeff Berger saw an interview about Airman Larry Herbert's decision to go on a hunger strike to bring global attention to the plight of starving children in Gaza and said to himself, "I can do this."

Thus began his journey to Washington DC this spring to participate in the ongoing Free Palestine movement. He was off within days after contacting Mike Ferner at VFP national headquarters. No stranger to civil disobedience, Berger had already done some fasting at Carlton College over the issue of nuclear testing and felt that the non-violent nature of fasting would still a quick way to convey a disturbing message in a non-threatening way.

In the fourteen-days of going without food, Berger said he was glad for the local support in received in D.C. where the White House area provides a powerful setting for continuous protesting on a variety of issues. As a veteran, he said he felt respected and listened to and believes that most people he came in contact with not only supported him, but his conversations with others helped change their viewpoints sometimes.

He also mentioned that the people he met from around the world were also horrified by the genocidal slaughter in Gaza. Going forward, he'd like to see a D.C. Fast Support Committee formed to deal with future



Marshall Burns is a VFP member from Louisiana, Margaret Stevens is on the VFP Board and Jeffery Berger is a member of VFP chapter 27.

actions — "Our fast has ended for now, I hope it will rise again" said Berger. We at chapter 27 are very proud of his leadership and dedication to this issue.

Mike McDonald is a retired educator and former president of VFP chapter 27.

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## War on the Planet, from page 7

access to livelihoods, and addressing the racial injustice that they see. . . . Not just self-identified environmentalists . . . but anyone who cares about people and the planet: Real safety comes from us having what we need. It comes from our communities having stable housing, good jobs, health care, connection—a cohesion with one another. . . ."

Educator/Scholar/Activist Henry Giroux calls upon us to see the international connections, the intersectionality, and the need for connection and collaboration. He says: "Power is global and politics is local. That must change. We need a new language for understanding new global power formations as well as new international modes of politics to fight them."<sup>7</sup>

Our tech world can isolate and separate us from each other as well as connect us to people in other parts of the world. It does not, and cannot, replace human contact and community. Hope lies in Community: *Cultivate Collaborative Communities, Normalize Resistance*, do not forget to Rest in order to Rise. And, as the indefatigable Molly Ivins recommended, "Don't forget to have some fun."

The future of the planet depends on us all.

## ENDNOTES

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Sue Ann Martinson is a member of Women Against Military Madness (WAMM) and VFP chapter 27, and is the editor and publisher of Rise Up Times.



# The Little Flotilla that Almost Could

by Craig Wood

Two gutsy activists from the Twin Cities flew to Istanbul, Turkey April 17 to join over three-hundred others from about 40 countries on an eleven-hundred mile voyage across the Mediterranean Sea to raise awareness and bring lifesaving aid to Gaza.

Vietnam Vet and a member of Veterans For Peace for thirty-three years, Barry Riesch was nervous about signing on with the Freedom Flotilla Coalition (FFC), but felt he should try to do something for the vast majority of Gazans lacking medical care and being deliberately starved. Apart from the mission's goal of delivering over five-thousand tons of urgently needed food, water and medical supplies (including five ambulances, and an abundance of baby formula), Reisch said he wanted to do this for his grandkids in hopes "they won't have to grow up in a world that would ignore such a tragedy."

Riesch has good reasons to be nervous. Since the Free Gaza Movement began in 2006, only a handful of small ships have been allowed to bring humanitarian aid to Gazans. Retired U.S. Army Colonel and former diplomat Ann Wright is a member of the 2024 FFC Steering

Committee. She was a participant (resistor) on five previous flotillas that never reached Gaza. In 2010 she watched Israeli troops rappelling from helicopters onto the deck of the Mavi Marmara from a nearby boat. Ten resisters were killed and 50 more wounded after some of them allegedly tried to fight back in international waters against the Israeli invaders who were using pressurized water hoses on them. In a video, Wright gave other accounts of Israeli troops harassing and beating resisters before confiscating their belongs and taking them against their will to Israeli jails until they could be deported.

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu contends that Israel has been unfairly targeted by resisters trying to break his country's illegal navel blockade and bring humanitarian aid into Gaza. During a 2015 speech in Tel Aviv he told the Jewish Agency Assembly "They send flotillas to Gaza, they don't send flotillas to Syria. It's amazing, this travesty of justice, this violation of the truth, the rape of truth."

Former FBI agent and whistleblower Coleen Rowley is a member of VFP and Women Against Military Madness (WAMM) couldn't disagree with Netanyahu more. She hopes that he and his cronies will be called to answer for their criminal behavior sooner than later. Rowley has been speaking at academic and other professional venues with an emphasis on ethical decision-making for twenty years. Before flying to Istanbul she talked over the phone with me about the "berserk Israelis" who have "shredded the law" — not only breaking the rules of the high seas for murder and kidnapping, but with their ongoing violations of international humanitarian law and war crimes on land. In a recent television interview she said "I told people I can't help seeing the faces of my own grandchildren (I have five grandchildren now) in the faces of these poor Gazan children who are being orphaned, starved and murdered."

Riesch and Rowley attended intensive nonviolence training shortly after arriving in Istanbul. "The most frightening part of the training was a simulation replete with deafening booms of gunfire and exploding percussion grenades and masked soldiers screaming at us, hitting us with simulated rifles, dragging us across the floor, and arresting us," author/activist Medea Benjamin wrote in a *Counterpunch* article. During an April 19 Zoom meeting in Istanbul, resisters discussed their fears about the trip. One recalled a mock situation where three doctors from New Zealand laid on the floor during a seminar and instructed resisters on what to do if their heads are stepped on in the dark. Lawyers provided legal advice



Coleen Rowley left and Barry Reisch third from left.

Flotilla, cont'd on page 14

# ENCLOSURE (Palestinians Landscapes in a Historical mirror)

by Gary Fields — reviewed by Paul Schaefer

## Two quotes:

“When we built Ariel, (a symbolic name for Jerusalem) we never took one square inch of Palestinian land . . . they don’t plant. They don’t cultivate. We built something here.” —Ron Nahman, mayor of Ariel

“When the Israelis built Ariel, they took twenty dunams of land from me. My land . . . had one-hundred olive trees. That was theft.” —Mohammed A. I., farmer

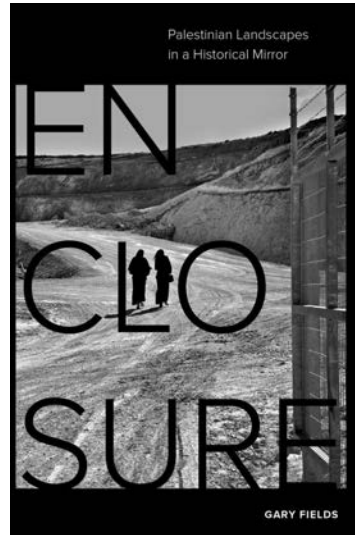
The message of ENCLOSURE is simple though: A powerful group seizes the land of the less powerful and “legally encloses” it. Karl Marx put it best when he said that this action in itself becomes an instrument for the theft of land. “Law fare” then follows warfare in that it only puts a legal sheen on this very old and vicious practice of taking land.

How old? In the West, it dates to the Christian Crusades against Muslims in the Middle East between 1095–1201. Because the Muslims were seen as “infidels,” the various popes during this time urged the taking of their lands by Christian conquerors. Later, in the 15th century, a series of papal proclamations provided the legal justification for colonization and slavery, stating that Christian Europeans had an inherent right to Indigenous land. The actual use of the term *enclosed* began at this time in England when Parliament began to pass laws authorizing the taking of lands held in common for centuries by the peasantry and deeding them to individuals to enclose.

Visiting Great Britain today, you’ll note that rural lands are covered in vast numbers of walls and hedges. These were and remain primary markers of enclosure. Why was this done? While arguments pro and con were plenty, the pro side was victorious in its argument that lands in common were poorly used, while privately-held land could increase in value and provide more more tax revenue to the state.

By the 18th century, when Parliament passed 5,265 enclosure acts, the sleazy operation was nearly complete. Notably, as the British began to colonize much of the rest of the planet, the process, based on the argument that lands used by inferior peoples were Terra Nullius (empty land) was put into place in Ireland, North America, Africa, Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere. And it was considered legal — those who resisted were slaughtered indiscriminately and the remainder placed into designated safekeeping areas for Native Peoples.

This practice of *enclosure* continues most notably in modern Israel. A brief look at Israeli history shows that despite claims by Israelis that Palestinians never truly occupied the territory seized by Zionist Jews, the evidence



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for Palestine and Palestinians goes back to Herodotus — the Greek “Father of History.” In his *The Histories*, written in 440 B.C.E., he described an area from Phoenicia to Egypt on the Mediterranean coast that translates to ‘*all known as Palestine*’ and belonging to ‘*the Syrian people known as Palestinians.*’

Thus, as with Native Peoples in the U.S., these Palestinians are Indigenous to lands ceded to the Zionists under pressures from England and the United States in 1948. Did the Native Americans agree to their dispossession? Have the Palestinians? Of course not. Have they resisted? Of course, but with dismal results.

For a much more thorough and disheartening overview of how Zionists have continued in their brief history to virtually steal (via their laws and courts) land, while getting away with breaking international law, and dumping Indigenous Palestinians on the equivalent of Native American reservations — read Gary Fields’s book: *The blueprint that still means — ‘what was yours is now mine, and if you resist, I’ll slaughter you and yours, because my law says so!’*

*Anti war activist Paul Schaefer, USAF 60-64, lives on a farm in Wisconsin where among many things, he writes an occasional poem and a novel. He spent 14 months on the Micronesian island of Kos Rae to earn his PhD in Anthropology.*

# Listening to the Kids

## (A short commentary on children in war)

by Paula Staff

My library search indicated that there are more than 1700 items related to the concerns of children in war. The sources ranged from diaries kept by young people, novels, graphic novels and other reporting. I chose three war diaries from three different regions: Sarajevo, Afghanistan, and Ukraine.

The stories were heart-rending and thought provoking. It never fails to amaze me that war has not still given way to diplomacy. After all, it seems that most leaders have the experience and intelligence to find a way to talk rather than fight. Nadja Halilbegovich in her diary, *My Childhood Under Fire*, sums it up with this hopeful plea “We are the children of the planet. We want to grow up in freedom and happiness. . . . if only the adults could become children, there would be no wars, no suffering and slaughter. There would be no hatred, lies.”

In *Kids of Kabul: Living Bravely Through a Never-ending War*, Deborah’s Ellis, documents in detail young teens of both sexes expressing their hopes for safety, economic security, and education. She makes it clear that what other children take for granted, these kids can only dream about in terms of having peaceful, free and safe lives.

Yeva Skalietska in her diary, *You Don’t Know What War Is*, wrote “Everyone knows the word war, but very few people understand what it truly means. You might say that it is horrible and frightening, but you don’t know the scale of fear it brings. And so, when you suddenly find you have to face it, you feel totally lost, walled in by fright and despair. All of your plans are suddenly interrupted by destruction. Until you’ve been there, you don’t know what war is.” She concludes, “I want to say this: we are all only children, and we deserve to live a life of peace and happiness.” So many children around the world continue to be killed or crippled in wars along with families who might never be found again. The terror can be heart-wrenching but unfortunately, they are the lucky ones who may become refugees and at least have a chance to establish a new life somewhere else without the fear of death.

We as humans can do better than this.

*Paula Staff is a retired clinical psychologist and lifetime member of Veterans For Peace.*



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## *Ending the Farce, from page 5*

stant oppression by a hostile military occupier, Israel, and watched helplessly as hundreds of thousands of Israeli settlers, enabled by the Israeli government and protected by its army, steal and occupy more and more of the land allocated by the UN for a Palestinian state.

Israel, since 1948, has insisted that its dispute with the Palestinians is political in nature and can only be resolved by direct negotiations. Yet, legally it is in the same position as Iraq in 1990. It has acquired or stolen Palestinian territory through the use of force and has refused to withdraw despite numerous UN resolutions demanding it do so. Like Iraq in 1990, Israel has the legal status of a land thief and occupier yet insists it has the right to negotiate how much of the stolen Palestinian territories it gets to keep.

Clearly the rule of law should apply in this case but, unlike with Iraq, Israel has had the protection of a seemingly automatic veto by the U.S. on the UN Security Council. The U.S. has used its veto some 55 times to protect Israel from censure and sanction by the UN Security Council no matter how unlawful, criminal, or outrageous its conduct. Since October 7, the U.S. has repeatedly vetoed attempts by overwhelming majorities of UN members to achieve a temporary ceasefire in Gaza. This in the face of the near unanimous UN International Court of Justice finding that there is plausible evidence to support a trial of Israel on the charge of committing Genocide in Gaza.

The court has also ordered Israel to cease attacking civilians, cease its destruction of civilian housing, buildings, and infrastructure, and cease preventing the distribution of humanitarian food, water, and medical supplies to the people of Gaza. Israel has ridiculed and ignored the court's orders and any attempt by the UN Security Council to enforce the orders are prevented by the omnipresent U.S. veto. Unlike the UN's successful intervention in Iraq and Kuwait in 1990, the UN, hamstrung by the U.S. veto, is unable to protect the Palestinians by forcing Israel to cease its genocidal conduct in Gaza let alone end its occupation and illegal settlement of Palestinian lands.

Another approach, widespread international embargoes, boycotts and sanctions, was successful in ending the practice of apartheid in South Africa and could be successful in ending the Israel-Palestine conflict and creating the long-sought two-state solution. After the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960, international condemnation of South Africa's apartheid system rose sharply. Arms, trade, and oil embargoes were encouraged by the UN General Assembly, as well as cultural and sports boycotts, movements to divest from business and investments in South Africa, and various sanctions regimes. The increasing political and economic pressure on South Africa and its growing international isolation left it with the status of a pariah among nations. Eventually these pressures forced

the South African government to finally end its apartheid policies in 1990.

The success of this boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement (BDS) became a model for those attempting to end the oppression of the Palestinians by Israel. But Israel and its powerful lobbies and supporters quickly moved to quash the BDS movement by a lawfare campaign that succeeded in getting laws passed prohibiting or limiting the rights of citizens to boycott Israel both in the U.S. and western Europe. While highly successful, this strong reaction also showed what a threat BDS poses for Israel and how it feared the BDS movement could force it to accept a two-state solution and cease its occupation and settlement of Palestinian lands.

Recently, Spain, Ireland, Norway, and Slovenia formally recognized Palestine as a nation state joining 144 out of 193 member states of the United Nations that have done so in the hope of enforcing a two-state solution to the conflict. While the U.S. has vetoed UN attempts to admit Palestine as a member state of the UN, it has been granted enhanced observer state status lacking only the ability to vote on UN resolutions. Unfortunately, recognition alone will not end Israel's occupation and settlement of Palestinian land. The 144 nations that have recognized Palestine as a state need to impose boycotts, sanctions, and divestment actions against Israel to force it to withdraw its military forces and settlers from occupied Palestinian territories to allow Palestine to actually become a sovereign state.

While the U.S. veto prevents strong action against Israel by the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly can act independently to recommend boycotts and sanctions against Israel until it withdraws its military forces and settlers from Palestine. As with South Africa under apartheid, Israel could become so isolated politically, economically, and culturally, that it eventually would be forced to withdraw and allow Palestinians to finally have a state of their own.

Israel's savage destruction of Gaza and its genocide against its civilian population has made it a pariah state with little remaining international support confined mostly to the former colonial powers of western Europe and the U.S. This political isolation and loss of sympathy and support for Israel may have created the seeds for a solution to the conflict, a movement by member countries of international organizations such as the BRICS and other organizations representing the Global South to boycott and sanction Israel to further its international isolation.

The BRICS organization comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the UAE alone represent almost half of the world's population, a third of its landmass, and almost 40 percent of

*Ending the Farce, cont'd on page 13*

## *Ending the Farce, from page 12*

the world's GDP (PPP). Moreover, each BRICS nation has recognized Palestine as an independent state, and each has condemned Israel's actions in Gaza and Palestine in general. A move by the BRICS nations at their next conference in October 2024 to condemn Israel and demand its withdrawal of its occupation forces and settlers from the Palestinian territories of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza would have devastating political and economic effects on Israel, particularly if the demands were enforced by a gradually increasing level of embargoes, sanctions, and boycotts against both Israel and its illegal settlement community and supporters and funders in the U.S. and Europe. Seizure of assets and bank accounts and visa restrictions on the 800,000 illegal settlers and their supporters and funders would create a powerful incentive for the withdrawal of Israeli settlements from the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Strong, decisive action by BRICS nations would also encourage most of the other 135 nations who recognize Palestine as a nation-state to join in the BRICS demands and instigate sanctions against Israel. In the European Union, over half of its members recognize the State of Palestine and could well join in. Such a groundswell of support for Palestine could well bring an early end to Israel's apartheid-like treatment of the Palestinians, its genocide against Gaza, and its illegal occupation and settlement of Palestinian lands.

Failure to resist attempts by the U.S. and Israel to demand a return to the negotiation process between Israel and the Palestinians will only result in endless delay, futility, and disappointment. Israel will continue to oppress the Palestinians, drastically increase the numbers of settlers in illegal settlements, and engage in frequent military incursions into the occupied territories and nearby Arab countries. The UN will continue to devote a major part of

its efforts in dealing with issues related to Israel's actions. The U.S. will largely fund and support Israel's illegal activities, while using its veto power to prevent Israel from the legal consequences of its violations of international humanitarian law. All this will continue to degrade the U.S. moral position in the world and further sully its reputation as the world's leading democracy.

By contrast, recognition of Palestine, as a sovereign nation illegally occupied by Israel would put both nations on an equal legal footing and give Palestine much needed leverage for any negotiations with regard to possible land swaps, admission of displaced Palestinians, land corridors between the West Bank and Gaza, etc. The pressure of escalating sanctions and increasing international political and economic pressure would force Israel to negotiate in good faith while complying with demands that it end its illegal occupation and withdraw its military forces and illegal settlers from Palestine.

It's time for the international community of nations to end the agony of the Palestinian people by forcing Israel to comply with international law, stop its genocidal actions in Gaza, and withdraw its military forces and Israeli settlers from the illegally occupied territories of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza. The BRICS nations, all former victims of colonial oppression, can and should lead the way.

*Gil Maguire is a member of VFO chapter 27 — a U.S. Air Force Vietnam-era vet, retired civil rights lawyer, former school teacher and small business owner. He and his wife Robin moved to St. Paul from Southern California in 2019 to be near their grandchildren. Gil published the historical novel The Exodus Betrayal the same year.*

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## Flotilla, from page 9

about separating “false authority” from “legitimate authority” along with tips for walking away from precarious situations. Despite their fears, resisters believe what they are doing not only has to be done, it is morally and legally justifiable, citing a recent ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) that it is “plausible” Israel has committed acts of genocide: The court further maintains, that it is now incumbent upon citizens and governments of the world to do what they can to stop the genocide.

The location of the launch was kept secret due to Israel’s history of sabotaging boats in port and the departure dates were pushed back repeatedly because of outside pressures — mostly from the Israeli and U.S. governments. Last week the Israelis made an announcement about intercepting the flotilla that prompted Huwaida Arraf, U.S. human rights attorney and FFC Steering Committee member to say “Governments must refuse to collaborate in maintaining Israel’s illegal siege on Gaza by obstructing the flotilla in any way. We call on the governments of the 40 countries represented on the Freedom Flotilla to uphold their obligations under international law and demand that Israel guarantee the flotilla safe passage to Gaza.” Soon after, UN experts reaffirmed Arraf’s demand: “As the Freedom Flotilla approaches Palestinian territorial waters off Gaza, Israel must adhere to international law, including recent orders from the International Court of Justice to insure unimpeded access for humanitarian aid.”

But on April 26, the doubts crept home. During a morning call, Riesch talked about his dwindling hopes that the flotilla would make it to Gaza: “Now there’s a problem with ship flags — this is the fourth delay.” According to Reuters, Guinea-Bissau made a decision to remove its flag from flotilla boats. Istanbul activists answered with this: “The Guinea-Bissau International Ships Registry (GBISR), in a blatantly political move, informed the Freedom Flotilla Coalition that it had withdrawn the Guinea Bissau flag from two of the Freedom Flotilla’s ships, one of which is our cargo ship.”

Riesch mentioned that frustrated resisters were already drifting away and during last night’s FFC meeting, he found out numerous other boats loaded with activists were preparing to join the flotilla in a show of solidarity, even though Israelis planned to stop them with a blockade. So, it was decided the flotilla would meet up with the blockade and wait a few days to see if conditions changed before turning back. The earliest departure time he said would be Sunday April 28 — if they could clear customs. Later that evening he sent a text saying the trip was canceled.

During a follow-up Q&A TikTok post, Wright told Benjamin that Israel always uses delay tactics before flotilla launches and the State Department invariably issues

travel warnings and cautions Americans about challenging the Israeli government — especially now since the U.S. has been so openly complicit with the ongoing ethnic cleansing in Gaza. While support for the flotilla remains high from Turkish nationals, Wright strongly believes the U.S. is using economic pressures including military aid, to derail the project in Turkey.

If nothing else, those who traveled to Istanbul succeeded in bringing much-needed attention to the plight of captive and undernourished Palestinians waiting in refugee camps for the next bombing campaign. About 45% of the people living in Gaza are children under the age of 15. So far, well over one hundred fifteen thousand Palestinians have been killed or wounded — most were women and children. It may take decades to rebuild the parts of Gaza already destroyed but for now, resisters are packing their bags — some hope to return this summer.

*Versions of this article appeared in Southside Pride, Peace & Planet News and Dissident Voice.*

*Craig Wood joined the National Guard to avoid Vietnam and so did the other 59 guys in his platoon. He is the newsletter editor.*

## EVENTS CALENDAR

### ONGOING EVENTS

**4-5 pm Mondays.** Stop Line Three Vigil. In front of Governor’s Mansion on Summit Ave., St. Paul.

**3-4 pm Mondays.** White Bear Lake Peace Vigil, Hwy. 61. and 4th Ave.

**4-5 pm Wednesdays.** Lake Street/Marshall Ave. Peace Bridge Vigil.

**4:45 pm Wednesdays.** 50th and Halifax, Mpls., Grandmothers for Peace Vigil. (FFI call 612-827-5364)

**Monthly VFP chapter meeting,** 2nd Sunday., 6 pm. 4200 Cedar Ave. S. They are now hybrid meetings (subject to change because of future pandemic situations). Contact VFP at 612-821-9141 for information on how to connect.

Chapter 27 on the job again!



VFP and other activists recently attended the DFL State Convention in Duluth: May 31 - June 2  
Photo courtesy of Barry Riesch.



Twin Cities activists downtown Minneapolis advocating for the release of Julian Assange  
Photo courtesy of Tom Dickinson



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Artist and veteran Eric Garcia is a member of VFP chapter 27.