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What Are Your Friends Marching For?: Popular Slogans Vs Common Sense

Seven weeks later, as Israel enters into a negotiated ceasefire for the release of hostages, I strongly suspect that you reading this have forgotten most of what happened to the citizens of southern Israel and their friends and communities. Some of you maybe never learned the disturbing particulars beyond the already gut wrenching fact that “hundreds were killed in their homes”. Well without hyperbole: Hamas and bands of Gazan civilians unleashed a Holocaust-esque massacre. People burned alive. Children and parents murdered in front of each others’ eyes. Worse things even.

Those hostages being released were seized and hidden across underground tunnels and terrorist dens in Gaza and they include large numbers of babies, children, women, and the elderly.

How could these atrocities be so quickly forgotten? Answer: Because too many of your friends and colleagues have joined a furious wave of protest which has hijacked the conversation away from looking at Hamas's boundless barbarism. This is because looking at Hamas’s evil - gleeful rape and the torturing of families - would lead every conscionable person to the same conclusion that such heinous acts must be met with unequivocal condemnation and absolute deterrence. No; instead, these hijackers want us to hear the noise of their fury, not about the deliberate assault on a democratic peoples in their homes, but about the efforts to uproot the terrorists responsible.

Let us consider their rallying cries. To do so, I'd like to appeal to you, reader, on a wavelength of common sense thinking. Because if you haven’t taken to the streets or your socials, then most likely you feel perplexed about this noise around us. You have undoubtedly heard that the history and politics are “complex”, so complex that it’s really hard to say who is right or wrong, or who even started this. You may be intimidated by the idea of trying to learn the particulars of what seems like an ancient and twisting-and-turning conflict. You have likely stayed silent - perhaps even privately between your friends - because it's scary to even explore the different sides when emotions are so high and the facts seem so hard to discern. And it probably feels scary to consider that bombing anything is ever good or just.

Well your friends in the marches are either willfully lying to you, or passively regurgitating lies out of ignorance. Let's think plainly about the three most egregious fallacies being paraded.

The colonization lie
Israel is a colonizer, they have no claim to the lands of Israel, and they have displaced a native population.

Take a moment to think about the most emblematic examples of *colonization* that you know. What comes to mind? What images do you picture? What is your mental model of a *colonizer*?

Here are some aids: Macedonia's Alexander the Great overcoming foreign militaries far beyond the outskirts of his native Europe. Spain's Cortez and fellow conquistadors lying to and decimating a flourishing Aztec civilization. Italy's Columbus deceiving American Natives; generations of Europeans migrating to North America spreading disease and war. Armed battleships and battalions of Dutch East India Company mercenaries brutalizing Asian peoples through slavery and extorting them for their most treasured goods.

Now tell me if this jives. A people settling land that is home to ancient artifacts in their language, and that describe their folklore and ancient cities. What's more, in Israel's case these artifacts predate Christianity, the Roman and Ottoman Empires, and Islam by hundreds or thousands of years.

Have you ever heard of a colonizer who claims land that is richly packed with physical proof of their direct ancestors' civilization from over a millennium ago?

The more modern colonizer lie
The modern State of Israel is a colonial endeavor

Let's put ancient history aside. Maybe it doesn't seem fair to go back so far as a time before nation states if, after all, we are mostly living on lands that were seized within the past several hundred years. So if we're not talking about ancient claims, what do marchers and community leaders mean when they say *This is what Decolonization looks like?* Which "colonizers" created the modern State of Israel?

At the time of the State's founding in 1948, these peoples were of three ilks. One, native Jews living in Israel mostly in isolated villages and hovels, subsisting on infertile land. Two, Jewish refugees who fled Europe after centuries of second class citizenry, blood libels, and ultimately a Holocaust that displaced virtually all of them, and that murdered nearly 66% of them. Three, Jewish refugees from all across the Arab world who were violently expelled.

When you envision *colonizers* do you picture the withered, nearly penniless, persecuted dregs of society?

The genocide lies
Israel is subjecting the Palestinians to an ethnic cleansing that is wiping them out

Genocide is an evil of the highest order but we have sadly seen it many times in human history. We unfortunately know what it looks like. Is that what is happening to the Palestinian people? "Genocide"?

Perhaps the Holocaust's extreme degree of success and orderly systematization make it feel like too exceptional a case to serve as a point of comparison in this conversation. Then let's look at another of the most grotesque stains on human history. During World War I, Armenians under the rule of the Ottoman Empire (modern Turkey) were sent on death marches through the

Syrian desert, with survivors placed in concentration camps. Between these marches, the harsh conditions in the camps, and mass shootings, an estimated 40 to 70 percent of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire lost their lives.

In contrast, how can one take seriously the claims of a Palestinian genocide when their peoples have nearly quintupled from about 1 to now over 5 million people from 1970 to today? And looking specifically at Gaza, the Palestinian population has increased from 1.3 to 2.2 million since 2005 when Israel fully withdrew all of its people and military from there. If Israel is a genocidal State, and it possesses the military capabilities we are seeing today, would the Palestinian people be growing in numbers?

But Israel is indiscriminately murdering Gazans right now - this is genocide too
In its campaign to end the Nazi regime, the UK and US spent 3 days in February 1945 bombing the city of Dresden, Germany. Nearly 4,000 tons of bombs were careened at the city causing mass destruction and raging fires. Over 20,000 Germans were killed, constituting a large proportion of the ultimately 2 million German civilians that died in the efforts to defeat the Nazi regime in World War 2. In Dresden, the Allies wanted to both disrupt the capabilities of an industrial city that contributed to the German war machine, but also to terrorize the German people and pulverize their spirit into helplessness.

Israel has dropped upwards of an estimated 25,000 bombs in Gaza since October 7th. Accepting the reported death toll at wholesale as provided by Hamas - which is incentivized to inflate these numbers, and which does not distinguish between civilian and combatant deaths - Israel has killed ~12,000 Gazans. So for each of its massively devastating, building toppling bombs, Israel has killed about half a person per bomb. Does that sound indiscriminate?

Meanwhile, it is widely documented why Israel's bombing has had so low a relative death count. Israel routinely precedes its assaults with widespread campaigns warning civilians (and by extension the enemy) of the general and specific areas being targeted. Leaflets have been dropped by the millions, automated and personal phone calls made by the thousands, and many buildings have received "roof knocks" to give its civilians ample time to evacuate.

Would a genocidal military campaign fail to kill one person per bomb, and would it warn civilians of its intentions?

Truth kernels
The State of Israel is a modern miracle being wrongfully dragged through the mud. Its peoples once lived in its lands over 2500 years ago, were scattered across hostile territories, lived under duress and the mercy of inhospitable overlords, but never lost their hope to be a free people in their homeland. And since they have returned in 1948, these scorned outcasts who were reconstituted in poverty and with divergent customs managed to forge a modern democratic State surrounded by countries of theocratic despots. It is home to 2 million Arabs who enjoy every bit of rights as its Jewish and Christian citizens, and Arabs have held positions in Israel's Supreme Court, military brass, seats of Parliament, and a recent coalition government. Its

women are celebrated and Tel Aviv hosts one of the world's most vibrant and celebrated Gay Pride parades in the world. It is also a wellspring of ingenuity with its tech industry driving major technology we rely on daily, and its scientists breaking through with cures for diseases and environmentalist solutions.

Are these the hallmarks of a Genocidal, Colonial State?

Follow-up Questions For Your Friends

- Is Hamas a terrorist organization?
- What does a "Free Palestine" look like *exactly*?
- Why do you think it is that the most vocal nations calling for Israel to end its military campaign against Hamas include Iran, Syria, and Russia?
- Have you been to any of the marches for the 200,000+ Muslims killed by Saudi Arabia in Yemen over the last decade? The 700,000+ Muslims killed by Ashar Assad's regime in Syria over the last decade? The 800 Muslim civilians brutalized in their homes in Sudan just two weeks ago?

Epilogue: On Death

It is horrific to witness the murder and displacement of innocents. In writing about such things above, there is a coldness to my speech, especially when using numbers to quantify the human cost of war. Regrettably, in trying to prove some crucial points about how Israel is being held to an impossible standard, citing stats is necessary but it also minimizes the tragedy of every life lost.

(This piece was originally entitled “Your Friends Marching Are Either Liars Or Ignorant Zealots”. A friend convinced me to change the title to not be so negative and confronting, in the hopes of attracting more readers.)