
Book Review

Carter: Time for Israel To Comply With International Law

by Michele Steinberg

Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid

by Jimmy Carter

New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006

263 pages, hardcover, \$27.00

What comes across in former U.S. President Jimmy Carter's careful book, is that there is only one human race. Therefore, the occupation of Palestinian lands must end, and the international agreements and United Nations resolutions going back to 1948 must be accepted.

The standard of conduct that Carter asks of the Israelis, is that they embrace the children of Palestine with justice and mercy, to the same degree that they embrace their own children. Carter's book poses the paradox that the poignant words, "Let my people go," of the Negro Spiritual, "Go Down, Moses," known to every American, as referring to the Jews, should be also applied by the Israelis, to giving justice, peace, and an end to the occupation to the Palestinians.

In the book's final words, Carter simply states:

"The bottom line is this: peace will come to Israel and the Middle East only when the Israeli government is willing to comply with international law, with the Roadmap for Peace, with official American policy, with the wishes of a majority of its own citizens—and honor its own previous commitments—by accepting its legal borders. All Arab neighbors must pledge to honor Israel's right to live in peace under these conditions. The United States is squandering international prestige and goodwill and intensifying global anti-American terrorism by unofficially condoning or abetting the Israeli confiscation and colonization of Palestinian territories.

"It will be a tragedy—for the Israelis, the Palestinians, and the world—if peace is rejected and a system of oppression, apartheid, and sustained violence is permitted to prevail."

Carter leads up to this point, with a chronology of his own direct experience in visits to Israel, negotiations as President of the United States, and as head of The Carter Center. He writes about simple truths and the meeting of simple needs: the availability of water, which, he observed, during his early trip with his wife, Rosalynn, to the Jordan Valley, is denied to the Palestinians because the northerly Israeli settlements have dammed the river for their own agricultural projects. That the Palestinian land in the West Bank of the Jordan River, from which come the olives and other agricultural goods that are the sole basis for the economy, not be stolen from them—in the name of security—by a wall that Carter identifies as “a prison.” That family homes not be bulldozed, leaving thousands of children homeless. That olive trees that take a hundred years to cultivate for significant yield, should not be uprooted and destroyed, as the Israel Defense Forces have been doing every day for the past half decade.

Carter has been attacked for this book by hysterics—organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the Simon Wiesenthal Center, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)—which have pressured members of The Carter Center to quit the board of his organization, in an attempt to destroy it.

These right-wing attackers say their campaign is because of Carter’s accusation of “apartheid.” But, Carter doesn’t use that term loosely. In the chapter called, “The Wall as a Prison,” he writes: “Utilizing their political and military dominance, they are imposing a system of partial withdrawal, encapsulation, and apartheid on the Muslim and Christian citizens of the occupied territories. The driving purpose for the forced separation of the two peoples is unlike that in South Africa—not racism, but the acquisition of land.”

Reading accounts of the anti-Carter’s charges in the media, one might expect that Carter assails the Israelis for racism, and for killing Palestinian children, and that he excuses the use of terrorism. Nothing of the sort.

One finds a gentle book that makes devastating points so subtly—using first-hand experiences, and the legal record of United Nations resolutions, treaties, and letters signed by the Israelis with the United States, Egypt, the UN, and the Palestinians—that one must conclude the ADL, AIPAC, et al. are not only hysterics—they’re fanatics!

Never in the book does Carter excuse Palestinian terrorism. Never does Carter condone Hamas or any other Palestinians for refusing to recognize Israel’s right to exist. Never does Carter fail to acknowledge that innocent Israelis—including children—have died in terror attacks from Palestinians since 2001. But Carter also acknowledges that many more Palestinian children have died at the hands of Israelis since 2001, and that the United States has consistently *failed* to hold Israel accountable to international law.

FIGURE 1



Source: *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*.

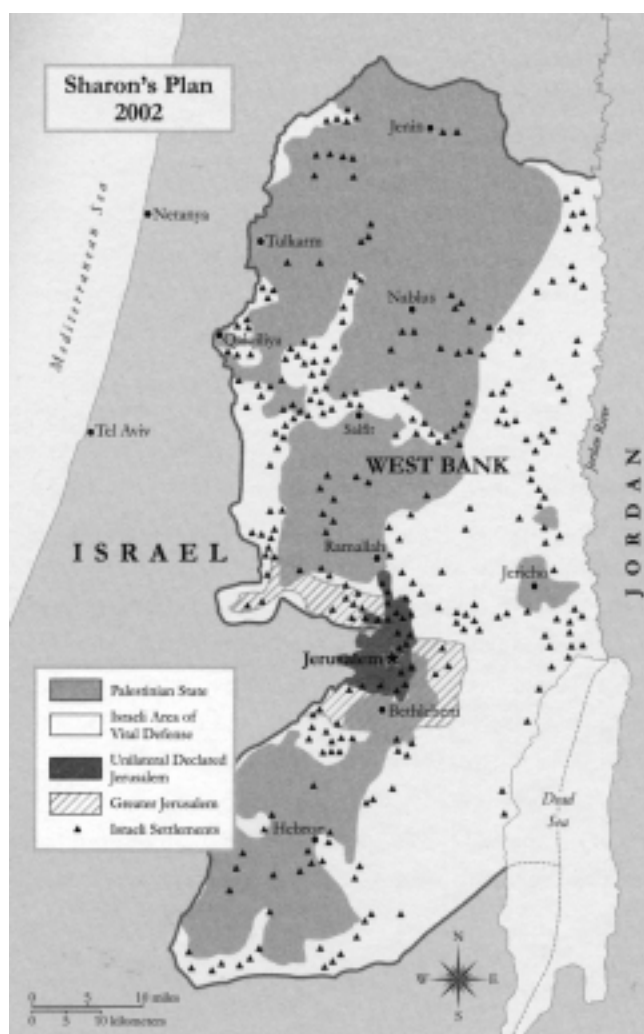
UN approved boundary, 1949-67. “Armistice agreements with the Arabs allow Israel to gain more land (77 percent of Palestine). Transjordan, renamed Jordan, controls what is left of the west bank of the Jordan River, including Old Jerusalem,” writes Carter.

The Truth Is Out

What really may be behind the disproportional outcry against Carter is the formidable legal record that he reviews, which establishes that Israel is violating international law unless it adheres to the 1948 borders set by the UN, and reaffirmed by Resolutions 242 and 338, or changes them by negotiations with the Palestinians.

The diplomatic record is all there in a series of maps of Israel and Palestine, and appendices to the book, which are breathtaking to read in one sitting. In merely 25 pages of appendices, providing UN Resolution 242 of 1967, UN Reso-

FIGURE 2



Source: *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's government rejected any discussion of Israeli settlements in "Judea and Samaria" in the Road Map proposal.

lution 338 of 1973, the Camp David Accords of 1978, the Framework for Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty of 1978, UN Resolution 465 of 1980, the Arab peace proposal of 2002, the student of Southwest Asia can see how close peace is, if serious talks take place.

Especially enlightening is Carter's account of the meetings between Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli President Menachem Begin. He concludes: "We all knew that Israel must have a comprehensive and lasting peace, and this dream could have been realized if Israel had complied with the Camp David Accords (1978) and refrained from colonizing the West Bank, with Arabs accepting Israel within its

FIGURE 3



Source: *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*.

The completed and proposed sections of the "Segregation Wall" seize large sections of Palestine, and trap communities in isolated areas.

legal borders."

In 2002, in Beirut, the Arabs finally did agree to move toward accepting Israel within its legal borders.

Carter is honest about the Israeli intransigence against talking to the Palestinians since the Bush Administration took power, in a way that is rarely ever heard any more in Washington. He does ruffle feathers in Washington and Tel Aviv—and in other capitals that have stood by and allowed the bloodshed to continue.

Carter is also honest about the election victory of Hamas in January 2006, encouraging the move that Hamas made to authorize Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to continue to negotiate the Road Map. Carter also greets with hope, the

tenuous agreement reached in prison among Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti, and leaders of Hamas and other Palestinian organizations that reject the Oslo Accords.

Though it is outside the scope of the book, that Barghouti prisoner proposal has now become the basis of the Fatah-Hamas national unity government agreement.

Jimmy Carter Is Right

Carter establishes that the morality of peace towers above the arguments made by the White House and the Sharon and Olmert governments since 2001, that they will not negotiate with the Palestinians. But, six decades of bloodshed, and the last six years of “no future” for the Palestinians, say that Jimmy Carter is right.

On Dec. 10, 2006, less than three weeks after Carter’s book was out, the “Baker-Hamilton Report” of the Iraq Study Group, a bipartisan high-level commission, also affirmed that Carter is right—stability will not come to the Middle East without an agreement that gives the Palestinians their just and lasting peace.

Also on Dec. 10, as the hysterical attacks on Carter continued, Democratic Party statesman Lyndon LaRouche declared in a statement, reprinted in this issue (see preceding article), that “Jimmy Carter is right.”

Now, months after the publication of the book, a national unity government of the Palestinian Authority has been formed by President Abbas and Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, a Hamas leader, which holds the promise of recognizing a sovereign Israel within—as Carter says—its legal borders. Again, the United States and Israel refuse to deal with this government.

Will the chance again be lost? Jimmy Carter’s book is more urgently needed than ever.

Two of the Arab and Israeli leaders who dared to make peace were assassinated by the fanatics of their own camps. In 1981, President Sadat was killed by the Muslim Brotherhood. In 1995, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin was killed by a fanatic of the Israeli settlers movement—the occupiers of the West Bank.

Rabin said on the occasion of signing the Oslo Accords with PLO Chairman Yassir Arafat, “We who have fought against you the Palestinians, we say to you today in a loud and clear voice, enough of blood and tears, enough.” In toasting the accord, Rabin said, “History belongs to those who have the courage to change the axioms.”

Carter’s book makes it obvious that almost everything that needs to be settled for an agreement to cease all hostilities between Israel and Palestine is already there—and has been there for a decade and a half—since the Madrid Conference of 1991 and Oslo of 1993.

For those reasons, this book belongs on the bookshelf of every policymaker concerned with Southwest Asia, and of every student interested in the area.