

Commentary: U.S. financial aid to Israel supports apartheid, threatens world peace

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A European Commission poll of 7,500 Europeans in 15 countries once cited Israel as the top threat to world peace, ahead of North Korea and Iran (the U.S. came in second). With military combat power ranked at number three in the world, Israel's hair trigger war machine invades its neighbors and maintains an illegal occupation of Palestinian territories entrenching an apartheid rule that looks similar to that of the former South African regime.

Former President Jimmy Carter's new book *Palestine; Peace Not Apartheid* offers a fascinating perspective on the current system of apartheid "with Israelis totally dominant and suppressing violence by depriving Palestinians of their basic human rights," treating them as second-class citizens and prisoners in their own land. Carter has no doubt that the U.S. submissive attitude towards Israel is a major source of anti-American sentiment and terrorist activity throughout the world.

Moreover, U.S. tax-payers are funding Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine with an aid package worth over \$5 billion per-year, every dollar of which must be raised through U.S. government borrowing. Total U.S. aid to Israel equals approximately one-third of our foreign aid budget, yet Israel compromises .001 percent of the world's population and has one of the world's higher per capita incomes.

The financial aid received from the U.S. allows Israel to purchase tanks, Apache helicopter gun ships, F-16 planes, machine guns and bullets all used to commit atrocities against a population that has no military, no rights, and no basic protections. Furthermore; U.S. funding allows continued building of illegal settlements on Palestinian land in violation of UN resolution 242.

Any word against the occupation by a Palestinian will bring swift retribution in the form of torture, imprisonment, and sometimes death. Family members of so called "activists" may have their homes bulldozed to the ground; their crops destroyed or may be imprisoned and sentenced by military courts that rarely meet the standards of international law. Palestinian children are tried and sentenced at the age of 12 and a child can receive 6-months in prison for throwing a stone. At the age of 14 Palestinian children are tried as adults, another violation of international law.

Illegal Jewish settlements are carved from the choicest land leaving Palestinians destitute within small fragmented sections of land divided by an ever-growing wall being built to create a barrier and force the separation of the two peoples. When finished the wall is projected to be three and one-half times as long as Israel's border. Carter's book explains how the wall already "cuts directly through Palestinian villages, divides family from their gardens and farmlands" causing economic and social hardships. The International Court of Justice (the judicial arm of the UN) has called upon Israel to cease construction, dismantle what has already been erected, and compensate those who have suffered losses, but construction continues.

It's no wonder that U.S. support and funding of Israel has created a growing Arab hostility toward the United States and we are now less secure than ever from the threat of terrorism at home and against our interests abroad. Perhaps we should consider what the Europeans and Arabs already know, that fundamentalist Islam is not the cause of terrorism. From Pogo; "We have met the enemy, and he is us".

Northwestern community columnist Wendy Laird Suzuki was born and raised in Seattle and has lived in San Francisco and Tokyo, Japan. She's traveled extensively in Asia, Europe and the Middle East and is an advocate of human rights, freedom and environmental awareness. She is a pharmaceutical representative who lives in Oshkosh with her 15-year-old son Ian, two dogs and a parrot.

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