



Life Matters Journal

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

As we approach the end of the year, it is with great pleasure that I present to you our December edition — an issue brimming with thought-provoking insights and diverse perspectives. In a world often marred by polarization, this issue serves as a reminder of the importance of rehumanizing our narratives.



In this issue, John Whitehead and Sophie Trist bring you a nuanced examination of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, offering a deeper understanding of the complexities at play; Jordan Kennedy sheds light on the FACE Act and how it has been disproportionately used against pro-life activists, including our very own Herb Geraghty; Grattan Brown and Dr. Monique Ruberu provide valuable insights into supporting those navigating the heartbreak and regret that often follows abortion; and finally, our founder, Aimee Murphy, delves into the core values that underpin our work here at Rehumanize International.

As we reflect on the events of the past year, I want to encourage you all to seize this moment to reevaluate our perspectives, engage in meaningful dialogue, and work towards a more compassionate society. In a world where headlines often seem to pull us apart, *Life Matters Journal* continues to strive for a deeper connection, fostering a space where diverse voices converge to explore the shared human experience.

Thank you for being a part of our community. May this issue inspire you to embrace empathy and rehumanization as we navigate the challenges and opportunities that the new year holds.

For life,

Maria Oswalt

P.S.: I apologize that this issue was slightly delayed in getting to you all. I took some time off at the start of this month to get married! You may recognize my husband's name, Francis Ittenbach — he's one of our staff editors.

This journal is dedicated to the aborted, the bombed, the executed, the euthanized, the abused, the raped, and all other victims of violence, whether that violence is legal or illegal.

We have been told by our society and our culture wars that those of us who oppose these acts of violence must be divided. We have been told to take a lukewarm, halfway attitude toward the victims of violence. We have been told to embrace some with love while endorsing the killing of others.

We reject that conventional attitude, whether it's called Left or Right, and instead embrace a consistent ethic of life toward all victims of violence. We are *Life Matters Journal*, and we are here because politics kills.

Disclaimer

The views presented in this journal do not necessarily represent the views of all members, contributors, or donors. We exist to present a forum for discussion within the Consistent Life Ethic, to promote discourse and present an opportunity for peer-review and dialogue.

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Life Matters Journal

DECEMBER 2023

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A War That No One Will Win: The Violence in Israel and Palestine

By John Whitehead

Editor's note: This article was originally published on October 13, 2023, on the Rehumanize Blog. More recent developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict may not be reflected here.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has erupted into a terrible new wave of violence. To date, thousands of people, including over 1,500 Palestinians and over 1,200 people in Israel, have been killed. Thousands more have been injured.¹ If not stopped, the violence seems destined to escalate to ever more devastating levels.

The Attack

The violence began October 7, when armed members of the militant Palestinian group Hamas — based in the Gaza Strip, the tiny Palestinian territory Hamas controls — began attacking communities in southern Israel.

Mohammed Deif, a commander of Hamas' military wing, said that the attack was a response to Israeli abuses of Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, and Jerusalem. "In light of the orgy of occupation...and in light of American and western support [for Israel] and international silence, we've decided to put an end to all this," Deif declared.²

Hamas gunmen killed hundreds of people, including children, across 20 locations in Israel. Victims included attendees of a music festival, members of kibbutzim communities, and people on the street. Hamas also took an estimated 150 hostages.³

As Israeli commander Itai Veruv described the attacks, "It's not a war or a battlefield; it's a massacre...It's something I never saw in my life, something more like a pogrom from our grandparents' time."⁴

The Response

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared that "We will exact a price that will be remembered by [Hamas] and Israel's other enemies for decades to come."⁵

Israeli military forces have launched intensive airstrikes against the densely populated Gaza Strip, their stated purpose being to kill Hamas members. The strikes have hit mosques, hospitals, and schools. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have reportedly fled their homes.⁶

Prior to the Hamas attacks, Gaza already had been under a 16-year Israeli blockade that turned the territory into what humanitarian groups have called "the world's largest open-air prison."⁷ The Netanyahu government is now intensifying the blockade by cutting off all electricity, food, and water to Gaza's 2.3 million people until Hamas' hostages are released.⁸

In the United States, President Biden has said "We stand with Israel" and announced shipments of military assistance to Israel.⁹

The Consequences

As costly as this conflict has been to both sides, it could become worse. Israeli forces could invade Gaza. Hamas could execute its hostages. The conflict could expand to include other nations and organizations: Israeli forces recently both exchanged fire with the militant group Hezbollah in Lebanon and bombed targets in Syria.¹⁰

The most pressing danger posed by the current violence is the devastating toll the current blockade of Gaza will have on the Palestinians deprived of vital supplies. Gaza's only power plant has already shut down for lack of fuel. The territory's largest hospital is dependent on generators likely to run out of fuel in a few days. As the hospital's director, Dr. Muhammad Abu Salima, commented, "If electricity stops, our hospitals will become nothing but mass graves."¹¹

One possible source of help for Palestinians is the route from Gaza to Egypt, which could allow people to leave and aid to arrive. Egypt has supported Israel's Gaza blockade in the past but may make an exception now. Egypt, Israel, and the United States are apparently negotiating about this.¹²

Preventing a Disaster

Both Hamas and the Netanyahu government are guilty of using violence indiscriminately to kill civilians. Both are also guilty of using violence recklessly and stupidly in pursuit of goals that violence cannot achieve.

Hamas' recent attack has not advanced justice for Palestinians but only invited brutal retaliation and empowered the most hawkish elements in Israeli politics. Netanyahu's collective punishment of Gaza will not advance Israeli security in the long run; it will only deepen hatred of Israel and empower Hamas or similar groups. As Rabbi Miriam Grossman recently said, "The answer to all of this grief cannot be mass murder."¹³

Israeli forces should secure the border with Gaza to protect against further attacks. However, the Israeli bombing of Gaza must stop, and the flow of food, fuel, and other supplies to the territory must resume. Until that happens, the route through Egypt should be used to get refugees out of — and humanitarian aid into — Gaza.

The United States and other nations must not support, through military aid or other means, the Netanyahu government's punishment of Gaza's people. Rather, the international community should encourage an end to this punishment, a de-escalation of the violence, and negotiations between Israel and Hamas for the release of the hostages.

U.S. citizens should consider contacting the Biden administration by phone, at 202-456-1111, or email to advocate the above course of action. They can also contact their representatives in the House and Senate to urge them to support this approach.¹⁴

Those interested in donating to help the victims of the violence can consider giving to American Friends of Magen David Adom or Islamic Relief USA.

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Call to Repeal Disproportionately Applied FACE Act Picks up Steam in Congress

By Jordan Kennedy

On August 29th, five pro-life activists, including Rehumanize International's own Herb Geraghty, were convicted¹ of felony conspiracy against rights and a FACE Act offense in connection with an anti-abortion protest in Washington, D.C. The FACE Act (an acronym for "Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances") was signed by President Bill Clinton in 1994.² While mostly intended to protect physical access for those seeking abortions, it also outlines protections for religious freedom.

At the time of its signing, abortion was a constitutionally protected right under *Roe v. Wade*; however, as of June 2022, abortion is no longer recognized as a constitutional right. *Roe* was overturned by the Supreme Court in the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision, which put the issue of abortion regulation back to the states.³

It should follow then, that the FACE Act, intended to protect a constitutional right which no longer exists, is itself now unconstitutional. Rather than acknowledge citizens' First Amendment rights to assemble and peacefully protest, the Biden Administration has doubled down on its use of the FACE Act to prosecute and jail pro-life activists.

On September 19th, Rep. Chip Roy, a Republican Congressman from Texas introduced legislation to repeal the FACE Act. In a press release on his House website, Rep. Roy called the Biden Administration's use of the FACE Act as "an unconstitutional federal takeover of police powers" that "must be repealed."⁴ The move to repeal the Act has so far been co-sponsored by twenty-five legislators and seven non-profit organizations, including Students for Life of America and Live Action.⁵

While not shocking to those working in the pro-life and consistent life ethic movements, it should be noted that applications of the FACE Act have been wildly disproportionate. In 2022, the Department of Justice charged 26 pro-life activists with FACE Act violations.⁶ According to CatholicVote.com, since May of 2023 alone, 88 pro-life groups (including crisis pregnancy centers) and 192 churches have been attacked or vandalized.⁷ Prosecutions under the FACE Act for those who violently attacked churches and clinics are almost nonexistent, yet nonviolent pro-life activists engaged in civil disobedience continue to feel the full force of the federal government. It is time to repeal this unconstitutional, disproportionately-applied law and continue with the much tougher work of building a culture of dignity and life in our communities.

You can get involved in the fight to repeal the FACE Act by calling, emailing, or meeting with your local Congressional representative.

It is of the utmost importance that we, as a collective, understand that our work is not over in the wake of *Dobbs*. People in this movement are being jailed, having their lives upended for boldly defending the inherent dignity of all. How will we stand up for them?

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JAIL SUPPORT

Send letters (NO cards or photos) to Herb:
Attn: Herb Geraghty 283932
William G. Truesdale Adult
Detention Center 2001 Mill
Road Alexandria, VA 22314

Use blue or black ink on standard lined or blank white paper.
 Make sure to include your name & return address on the envelope!



“They Destroyed Everything That Had Kept Me Here”: The Rising Violence in the West Bank

By John Whitehead

Editor's note: This article was originally published on November 20, 2023, on the Rehumanize Blog. More recent developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict may not be reflected here.

While world attention has understandably been focused over the past month on the Israel-Hamas violence centered around the Gaza Strip, violence has also been escalating in the West Bank. Long-running Israeli violence against Palestinians in the West Bank has intensified since Hamas's October 7 terrorist attack that killed roughly 1,200 Israelis, most of them civilians.¹

Between October 7 and November 10, 168 Palestinians, including 46 children, were reported killed by Israeli security forces in various confrontations in the West Bank. Regular raids by Israeli troops that target armed Palestinian groups, as well as clashes with Palestinian demonstrators protesting the Gaza war, have led to many Palestinian deaths.² Another eight Palestinians, including a child, were killed by Israeli settlers during this period. Combined deaths since October 7 from Israeli forces or settlers account for more than 40 percent of Palestinian deaths in the West Bank in 2023.³

The violence has not been one-sided, either: reportedly at least 23 Israeli civilians have been killed in the West Bank and East Jerusalem in 2023, a significant increase over previous years.⁴

A less lethal but still serious pattern has been an acceleration in Palestinian communities in the West Bank being forcibly displaced by Israeli settlers. Even before October 7, the United Nations reported that settler violence in the West Bank had displaced over 1,100 Palestinians since 2022. Five Palestinian communities were

completely emptied during this period, with 13 more being partially emptied.⁵ This already-unprecedented level of violence and dispossession has only grown since October 7: by early November, 1,149 more Palestinians in the West Bank had been displaced.⁶

Settlers have variously destroyed Palestinians' crops, generators, and solar panels; burned the tents of Bedouin herders; and threatened or beaten people.⁷ For example, Palestinians living in the villages of Umm al-Kheir and Susiya reported masked men in military uniforms beating people up.⁸ The Israeli rights group Yesh Din reports incidents of Palestinians' olive trees being burned down or covered with cement.⁹

Abu Jamal, one of 40 people displaced from the herding community of Al Ganoub on October 9 by armed settlers, recalled that “Settlers set fire to our tent and stole my goats... They destroyed everything that had kept me here.” Another 51 people were forced out of a herding community in Nablus by settlers on October 12. One refugee, Abu Ismail, says “I had no choice but to leave everything behind to protect my children.”¹⁰

Most of the displacements since October 7 have occurred in an administrative region called “Area C,” which accounts for 60 percent of the West Bank and is under Israeli control. Other displacements have occurred in Area B, which is technically under Palestinian Authority jurisdiction but has an Israeli security presence.¹¹

The Israeli authorities' response to these displacements has been mixed. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has publicly condemned settler violence and Israeli settlers and soldiers have clashed.¹² Yet in many settler attacks documented by the United Nations in 2023, the attackers were accompanied or even supported by Israeli forces.¹³ UN data from prior to October 7 also shows

that Palestinian complaints about displacement rarely elicited responses from authorities.¹⁴

Aser al-Tal, a shepherd recently forced from his home, commented, “Those settlers are above the law; they are the state now... Those settlers could slaughter us and no one would care.”¹⁵

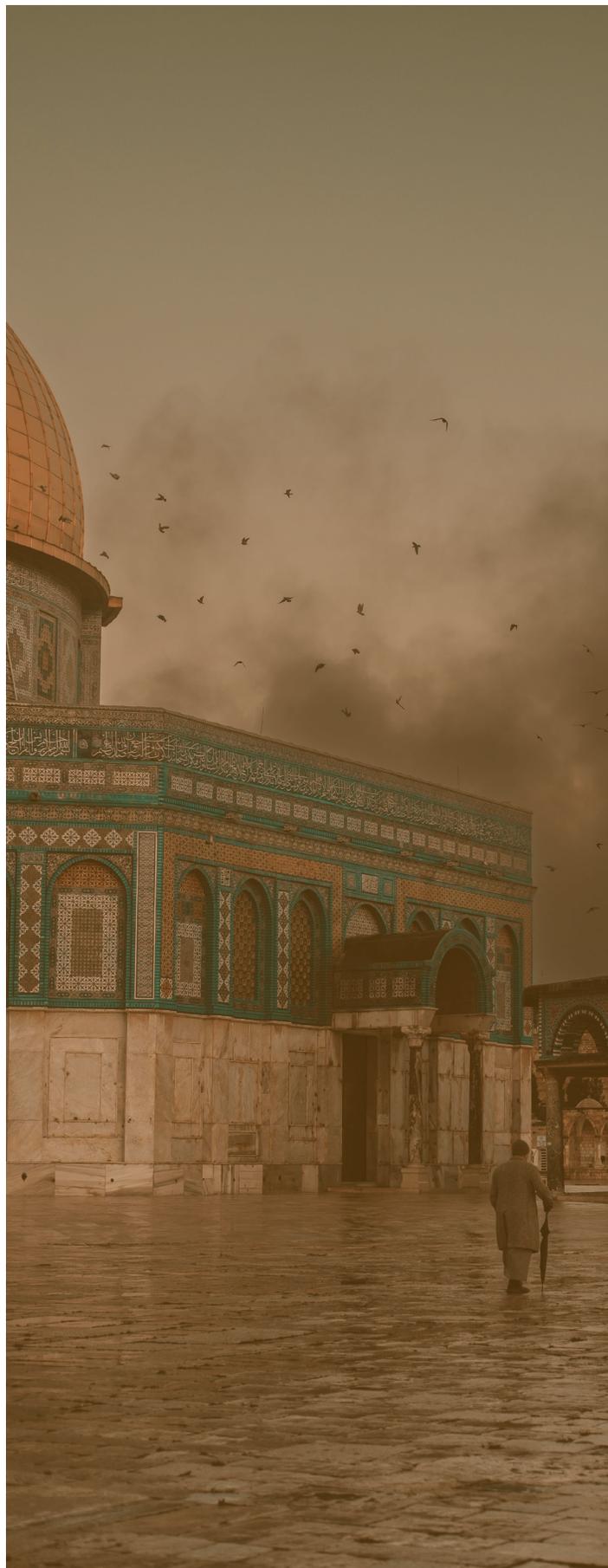
The Israeli government might act to halt or slow this pattern of violence and displacement in the West Bank if pressured by the United States. The Biden administration could make US military aid to Israel partly conditional on Israeli authorities taking effective action to curb the abuses in the West Bank.

US citizens should consider contacting the Biden administration by phone, at 202-456-1111, or email to advocate the above course of action. They can also contact their representatives in the House and Senate to urge them to support this approach.¹⁶

Those interested in supporting organizations that help Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, and elsewhere, might consider donating to United Palestinian Appeal, Anera, and Islamic Relief USA.

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Healing My Post-Abortive Patients

By Grattan Brown, STD, and Monique Ruberu, MD



When a woman has an abortion, it becomes a part of her medical and personal history. Her ongoing gynecological care may become part of her healing process. Stories from women who have had abortions, like the ones shared by Dr. Ruberu below, reveal that having a child after an abortion can also play a part in her healing process. Some women may have questions about a past abortion's effect on future fertility and feel relief upon becoming pregnant; others may express the feeling that bringing a child into the world makes up for the child she chose not to bring into the world.

Many women suffer from fear and shame after their abortions. Some suffer from physical symptoms for months or years after the abortion procedure, and some might even try to hide their past abortions from their OB/GYN. But compassionate professionals can help draw those stories out to be able to provide the best care possible for such women. A pro-life OB/GYN is one of the best people that a post-abortive woman can have as part of her story because they can use science and medicine not only to help women further understand their bodies, but also help them to embrace the beauty of fertility and their value as women.

Dr. Monique Ruberu is a board-certified OB/GYN and is staunchly pro-life. She is compassionate and non-judgmental, and is deeply committed to her patients' spiritual and physical healing. Here is her approach to treating such patients, in her own words.

How have you been?

During her very first visit to my office, I'll always find out if a woman has had an abortion. I ask "How many times have you been pregnant in your life?" and "How many living children do you have?" If some of her children are no longer living, I ask if they were miscarriages or abortions. Then, they will tell me whichever it was. Regardless, I always say "I am so sorry for your loss." If a child was lost to abortion, I ask if anybody has ever offered my patient abortion recovery services. Nine times out of 10, she will say no. Then I will tell her about services like Rachel's Vineyard, Project Rachel, Surrendering the Secret, and Silent No More. Most of my new patients are very surprised that these services are available and are interested in learning more.

As we talk, my patients who have had an abortion often share more about the situation that led to the abortion or what the procedure was like. I am always blown away by the fact that most of these women have been holding on to their abortion stories for years. There was one woman who shared with me that she had her first abortion at the age of 15. Her parents did not know about it –

and still don't. Her boyfriend at the time coerced her into having the abortion and told her not to tell anyone about it. To this day, nobody knows about it except her boyfriend, me, and one other friend who talked her into keeping her next baby from the same boyfriend. As you might expect, she left that guy, but she has carried the guilt of this abortion and the sadness of having lost that first child for over 20 years.

Doctoring the Spiritual Burdens

As well as guilt, post-abortive women carry heartbreak, depression, sadness, anxiety, and fear. Some of them share with me that on the anniversary of their abortion, they look around just to see children of the same age that their child would be. Some have also said they are not able to go into dental offices because the sound of the drills is the same as the sound of the suction machine. Others even mention that they will have recurrent nightmares with little babies reaching out to them. Some of these women belong to the pro-life community and have thrown themselves into pro-life service, but suffer silently because they don't want anybody to know that they themselves had an abortion. They are doing the work, but they are afraid to share their experience and to receive healing.

Then there are the women I am treating for infertility. For some, a past abortion makes them ask, "Did that abortion cause me to become infertile?" For example, I had one patient who would always deliver early because she had cervical incompetence. That means the cervix cannot hold the pregnancy because it dilates early, which can occur after trauma from prior dilation of the cervix. During an abortion, the doctors have to dilate the cervix very widely, so I could not honestly tell this woman, and cannot tell women like her, that there's no relation between their pregnancy loss and prior abortion.

Fifty years of Roe-facilitated abortions have left some of my patients with emotional and spiritual conflicts that affect their physical and mental health. The good news is that they can receive healing. Healing begins with listening in a non-judgmental way and offering to care for the whole person. Thanks be to God there are so many opportunities for these women, but they have to learn about these opportunities and, sadly, the majority of post-abortive women have no idea about what is available for them.

Dr. Monique Ruberu is a board-certified practicing OB/GYN in Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania.

This article was adapted from a two-part podcast series at Bioethics On Air.



Israel and Palestine: An Urgent Need to Rehumanize

By Sophie Trist

Hamas's recent attack on Israel, which left over a thousand unarmed civilians dead, is unquestionably a heinous, obscene act of terrorism that cannot be justified under any circumstances. Rather than confine their resistance to military targets, Palestinian militants made the despicable choice to murder 260 unarmed people at a music festival, go door-to-door in Israeli villages shooting and kidnapping scores of women, children, and elders, and threaten to execute these innocents on camera. Trying to absolve Hamas terrorists of responsibility for this attack or treating them as heroes, as some on the left have done, is morally bankrupt. The cold-blooded slaughter and abduction of civilians is not part of any anti-imperialist struggle for liberation. These are not the legitimate tactics of freedom fighters. Those of us concerned about Palestinian rights must not celebrate or glorify this atrocity in any way; neither should we minimize the grief and anguish of Israeli families whose loved ones have been killed or taken hostage.

However, it is also important to recognize that this attack did not take place in a vacuum. It is just the latest in a cycle of repression, violence, vengeance, and more repression that has engulfed the region for decades, dehumanizing people on both sides of the conflict. Millions of Palestinians have suffered years of military blockade and occupation, dispossession and violent attacks by Zionist extremists building illegal settlements on their land, prolonged and arbitrary detention in Israeli jails, and increasing restrictions on civil rights and freedoms under successive Israeli governments. The policies of Israel and the United States set the stage for — though do not excuse or justify — this latest outbreak of violence.

This blog post cannot summarize all the history and myriad complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but it's crucial to understand the anger and hopelessness that is driving Palestinians to lash out. Under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government, Israel has rapidly expanded the approval and construction of Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank.¹ Israel has even begun retroactively legalizing outposts built on land officially registered to Palestinians. Many of these settlers do not hide the fact that their primary goal is to impede Palestinian statehood and sovereignty, and when they attack Palestinian villages, the Israeli government does little to meaningfully hold perpetrators accountable.

² The Geneva Convention labels the transfer of an occupying pow-

er's civilian population into disputed territory a war crime; it's often an element of or prelude to ethnic cleansing. The Israeli minister in charge of settlement construction has urged radical Zionists to seize as much territory as possible by force and has made disturbing and genocidal comments about Palestinian people.³

Prior to the recent escalation in the conflict, 2023 had already been the deadliest year on record for Palestinians in the occupied territories, with over 230 killed from January to October. Nearly forty of the victims had been children and teenagers.⁴ In a long and vulnerable Facebook post, a Palestinian-American woman gave a glimpse of the thousand traumas and acts of violence that make up daily life under military occupation. Her family was forced from their home twice, with no compensation or legal process, and she was held at gunpoint during an Israeli military raid at age nine.⁵

Israel and Egypt have been blockading the Gaza Strip since Hamas took power there in 2007. For over a decade, over two million Palestinians have lived in what Human Rights Watch calls an "open-air prison," almost completely cut off from the outside world.⁶ Isaac Saul, a Jewish commentator who has spent time living in Israel, offered a nuanced, well-balanced take on the situation:

"Israel is unwilling to give the people in Gaza and the West Bank more than an inch of freedom to live... You cannot keep two million people living in the conditions people in Gaza are living in and expect peace. You can't. And you shouldn't. Their environment is antithetical to the human condition. Violent rebellion is guaranteed. Guaranteed. As sure as the sun rising."⁷

Though the U.S. has meekly protested some of Israel's most radical policies, particularly settlement expansion, our government has mostly been content to ignore the Palestinians' plight.

In the days following Hamas's attack, Israel has launched indiscriminate airstrikes on the Gaza Strip, focusing on damage rather than precision. The death toll keeps rising — ten days in, and over 4000 are dead, many of them civilians and UN personnel. Supporters of Israeli policy argue that Israel warns civilians when airstrikes are imminent, while Hamas often uses them as human shields, and there is some truth to that. But Palestinians contend that these warnings happen more rarely than Israel claims and often do not come in enough time to evacuate. People cannot flee the Israeli bombs because Egypt has refused to open the Rafah Crossing and give Palestinians sanctuary within its borders. Israel's Defense Min-

ister has ordered a complete siege of Gaza and has cut off all water, food, fuel, and electricity. “We are fighting barbarians and will act accordingly,” he said.⁸ This is an atrocity in answer to an atrocity.

The United States rightfully blasted Russia for using similar tactics against Ukrainians, but most Americans are either silent or encouraging Israel to pursue its reprisals with maximum force. At a pro-Israel rally in New York City, protesters urged the killing of all Palestinians.⁹ Larry Derfner wrote in *Newsweek*, “Let another thousand or so Palestinian civilians be killed... I want revenge too, and I want to restore some sense of deterrence.”¹⁰ According to Mr. Derfner, children as young and infinitely-precious as those murdered and kidnapped by Hamas deserve to die for praying differently and being born on the other side of a border. According to him, only Israeli lives are valuable. It’s the same ghoulish, dehumanizing mentality that saw some Pro-Palestinian protesters chanting, “Gas the jews!” at a rally in Sydney and defacing Jewish schools and synagogues with Nazi graffiti. The worldview of people calling for genocide against Palestinians differs only in substance from Hamas’s twisted desire to kill Jews and wipe Israel off the map.

People across the world are referring to the Hamas attack as “Israel’s 9/11.” In response to the horrific attacks in 2001, the United States launched catastrophic invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, causing tens of thousands of civilian casualties, untold environmental damage — and terrorist groups are still committing atrocities. If Israel goes through with an invasion and reoccupation of Gaza, we’re likely to see more deaths, more resentment, and more radicalization. As Isaac Saul writes,

“There is no way out of this pattern until one side exercises restraint or leaders on both sides find a new solution. Israelis will tell you that if Palestinians put their guns down then the war would end, but if Israel put their guns down they’d be wiped off the planet. I don’t have a crystal ball and can’t tell you what is true. But what I am certain of is that every time Israel kills more innocents they engender more rage and hatred and recruit more Palestinians and Arabs to the cause against them. There is no disputing this.”

Doing the same thing repeatedly and expecting a different result is a common definition of insanity, but this is what Israel and the U.S. are doing.

I don’t have an answer, but there must be a better path. It will take decades of hard, painful work from both sides to rehumanize and heal from the myriad traumas each has inflicted on the other. All I know is that my heart breaks equally for the Israeli mother who has been dragged into captivity with her two little girls, the people who have had to watch videos of their friends and relatives being tortured and murdered, the Palestinian parents who have lost their child to an Israeli airstrike, the medical staff in Gaza hospitals fighting to save lives with no electricity or medicine. I reject the idea that empathy for Palestinians and support for their human rights and dignity equates to support for Hamas’s brutality. The first of many steps toward ending this cycle of violence is recognizing that both Israelis and Palestinians are human beings, with immeasurable worth — and the right to live in safety and freedom to nurture their families in peace.

Notes

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Rehumanize's Core Values: Origins

By Aimee Murphy



Back in summer of 2011, I was a freshly-minted college graduate, working full time as a front office assistant at an urgent care clinic. After spending so much of my time and energy during undergrad devoted to human rights, I was trying to stifle that ember of passion in order to “make it” in the one job I’d been able to land since graduation. But in my free time, I was making connections with folks from all sorts of different backgrounds on social media, trying to figure out how I could use everything I’d learned as an Ethics, History, and Public Policy major at Carnegie Mellon University. I knew that I couldn’t be done doing human rights work.

I also knew that, though I’d tried to find jobs within various pro-life and generic human rights groups, I always felt like something was *missing* from the work I’d be doing at those orgs I considered joining. Within the standard fare of pro-life groups, I had never felt particularly welcome: I was an out queer Latina, a former atheist who sympathized with those eschewing religious affiliation, I was politically unaffiliated and unwilling to tow the GOP party line, and an unapologetic feminist. Yet, within many of the largest mainstream human rights orgs (like Amnesty, for example), I knew I wouldn’t fit in, because I was outspokenly against abortion. Furthermore, I felt like there was a niche in the Consistent Life Ethic movement that was yet unfilled: a welcoming space to educate and equip youth and young adult activists who could make change at the grassroots level.

I knew that if I was going to invest my time and energy into a human rights or pro-life organization, that I needed it to be a place where I would have felt welcome as 16-year-old me, when I was

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just entering the pro-life movement, but felt largely unwelcome because I didn’t fit the stereotype of the “old, straight, white, Christian, Republican man” that was so often the face of the movement. I needed it to be hospitable to LGBT people, to atheists and agnostics, to liberals and leftists, to people of color and Indigenous people, to pro-lifers and to social justice warriors. I needed it to be a space where I could bring my whole authentic self, instead of asking “do they even want me here?” Thus, radical inclusivity became a core value right away.

I also needed it to be a space where people could learn and talk about ideas in an open and respectful way, where we could work to convince people in a kind and charitable way, not try to score political points. Thus, we added rehumanizing, respectful dialogue to our package of core values. Furthermore, I needed it to be a space that wouldn’t kowtow to political partisanship, but rather built bridges and challenged the political status quo. Thus, we knew that non-partisan orientation and multi-partisan collaboration were crucial additions to our core values, too. Perhaps most centrally, I needed it to be a space that wholeheartedly rejected violence as a solution, and sought to protect all humans, regardless of circumstances. Thus, nonviolence and our shared inviolable human dignity were the crux around which all of this was based, and the most core value of them all. To sum it all up, this organization we were creating needed to be a space where every human could stand for the life and dignity of every human: it needed to be inclusive not only in who we worked *with*, but in whose rights we worked *for*.

In many ways, I had this restlessness in me to create this new space that would be what I needed. To echo James Baldwin, “The

place in which I'll fit will not exist until I make it." So eventually in August, I posted in a Facebook group for LGBT Pro-Lifers, asking for peoples' opinions on whether I should start a magazine or a conference dedicated to the Consistent Life Ethic. The consensus was set: start a magazine, maybe work on a conference later. And one college student from the group, Nicholas Neal, reached out and sent me a private message: he was invested in this idea, and wanted to help as much as he was able. Thus it was that Rehumanize International (at the time, Life Matters Journal, or LMJ) was born. I was the first President of the organization, and he was the first Vice President.

We immediately got to work on the first issue of LMJ, and Nick and I began sifting out the core values of the organization. In the first volume of issues, we included a statement that has helped guide us from the very beginning:

This journal is dedicated to the aborted, the bombed, the executed, the euthanized, the abused, the raped, and all other victims of violence, whether that violence is legal or illegal. We have been told by our society and our culture wars that those of us who oppose these acts of violence must be divided. We have been told to take a lukewarm, halfway attitude toward the victims of violence. We have been told to embrace some with love while endorsing the killing of others. We reject that conventional attitude, whether it's called Left or Right, and instead embrace a consistent ethic of life toward all victims of violence. We are *Life Matters Journal*, and we are here because politics kills.

Below this prototype of a vision statement, we included a short disclaimer statement that helped us form our first mission statement:

The views presented in this journal do not necessarily represent the views of all members, contributors, or donors. We exist to present a forum for discussion within the Consistent Life Ethic, to promote discourse and present an opportunity for peer-review and dialogue.

These statements still resonate with our team to this day, and we include them in each issue of our magazine, still. They reflect some of those core values that we mentioned: commitment to nonviolence and inviolable human dignity, radical inclusivity, non-partisan commitments and multi-partisan collaboration, and openness to challenging, but rehumanizing discourse. The groundwork was laid from the very start. As Nick and I worked to build our first board, we collected a motley crew of passionate and hopeful college students and recent college grads that flouted easy partisan categorization. Together, the first board crafted our first formal vision and mission statements. Over the years, not much has changed in them. The current versions read as follows:

Vision: we are dedicated to creating a culture of peace and life, and in so doing, we seek to bring an end to all aggressive violence against humans through education, discourse, and action.

Mission: to ensure that each and every human being's life is respected, valued, and protected. We adhere to an ethos called the Consistent Life Ethic, which calls for opposition to all forms of ag-

gressive violence against human beings, including but not limited to: abortion, capital punishment, embryonic stem-cell research, euthanasia and assisted suicide, police brutality, torture, and unjust war. Additionally, we achieve our vision by maintaining our organization as non-sectarian and non-partisan, and furthermore by promoting collaboration amongst many organizations across movements.

Perhaps you can read into these statements that from the very get-go, we knew that there were some values that were important to us in our organizing:

- Nonviolence
- Radical Inclusivity
- Multi-Issue Organizing
- Non/Multi/Trans-partisan Organizing
- Dignity-Affirming & Persuasive Dialogue
- Restorative Conflict Resolution
- Grassroots Empowerment
- Better Together: Strength Through Diversity

We believed then as much as we do now that these core values are strong guideposts for all of the work we do, and the broad movement we seek to build to change the world. No matter who is at the helm or stewarding the programs we might take on, we know that if we return to these values, we can find our way through the most challenging work.

One of the things that I love about these values that we've woven together is that they allow for such beauty of diversity. People within the organization have different perspectives, and can have unique takes on these issues, but we can agree on these core values and on the Consistent Life Ethic that binds us all together in this work. It makes for a stunning tapestry of the human experience, and ensures most of all that we have "all hands on deck" to change the world; indeed, if we actually want to see an end to all violence, and respect for *all* humanity, then each and every member of our human family needs to be convicted and charged with the task at hand. We need everyone. So, though we might have a long way to go, we have a strong compass that can guide us on the way.

