

Misguided support for Israel

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I read the editorial on the current Middle East crisis titled "Middle East on the brink" in the July 15 issue of the Leader-Post and was appalled by the misinformation and one-sided viewpoints expressed. I would like to point out some background facts that should have been mentioned in the editorial to give context to the current crisis.

The elephant in the room is the ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands, namely the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and Israel's refusal, with the support of the U.S., British and Canadian governments, to dismantle its illegal settlements in the occupied territories and to end its occupation.

To this day, the government of Israel continues settlement construction, land expropriation and housing demolitions in the West Bank, all of which clearly demonstrate Israel's refusal to adhere to the rule of law. Under international law and the Geneva Conventions that govern military occupations, Israel is prohibited from changing the population demographics of occupied land. But it has now settled more than 150,000 Jews from New York, Toronto, Montreal, London, Moscow etc. in the occupied lands. Moreover, as an occupying power, Israel is responsible for the security of the occupied Palestinian people, but it fails daily.

As occupied people, under the same international laws and Geneva Conventions, the Palestinians have a right to resist occupation. Israel responds to the internationally recognized Palestinian right to resistance through overwhelming force. This illegal occupation and its associated injustices have been going on for more than 36 years.

The Israeli military response in Gaza, and now in Lebanon, to Palestinian attacks on its military has been totally disproportionate, according to the international community and UN observers in Gaza, except the U.S., U.K. and Canada. The claim by the U.S., U.K. and Canadian governments and your editorial that Israel has the right to defend itself in this case is faulty. What Israel is defending is its unlawful expansion of its territory through occupation and building of Jewish settlements on those lands.

The editorial sheds crocodile tears when it laments that it is unfortunate that civilians in Gaza and Lebanon have been "caught in the crossfire." As I write, more than 105 civilians have been killed in Lebanon since the Israeli military attacks began. This is clearly not a proportional use of force, but rather a deliberate punitive military expedition in Gaza and now in Lebanon.

The U.S., U.K. and Canadian governments and their supporting media like the Leader-Post, should do some soul searching, and ask themselves if blaming the victims -- occupied Palestinians and their regional allies -- for the current crisis serves the purpose of international peace.

Israelis should also realize that in the age of long-distance missiles, building walls to isolate Palestinians in prison-like enclaves will not bring it security. Historically, isolating walls, like the Great Wall of China and the Berlin Wall, are failures. Similarly, occupation and colonization doesn't last very long in the Middle East.

The meeting of the G8 in Moscow should have enforced a ceasefire by all parties and called a broad Middle East peace conference to tackle the cycle of violence arising from the continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands and its refusal to implement relevant UN resolutions. After all, the U.S.-, U.K.-led coalition invaded Iraq because its government was accused of not implementing UN resolutions. Surely they can demand that Israel also implement relevant UN resolutions?

If this long U.S.-, U.K.-, Canadian-government-supported Israeli occupation of Palestinians is not resolved soon by the Israelis and Palestinians freely under the auspices of the G8, then we should prepare ourselves for another ruinous 100 years of war in the Middle East with all its implications of rising international terrorism.

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