



## Common Ground News Service - Middle East

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### When will it all end?

by Gershon Baskin  
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JERUSALEM - When the siren sounds I cry. The world stops and despite the whining scream of the siren -- silence is what I hear. The pain of loss, the weeping of mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters -- never to touch again, never to kiss, hug or just look at. Killed in the line of duty. A hero. Serving the homeland. He fell so that others could live. Cemeteries, unending graves, each year new stones engraved with new names, new battles, new mourning families. New songs to be sung next year in the Square.

We wake with news each morning of more death, more killings, more victims and more bereaved families. Sometimes ours, more of the time theirs. Our tears, their tears, our pain, their pain. We fight for our homeland, they fight for theirs. Our cause is just, we say. They say that theirs is just. We have the most moral army in the world. They are bloody murderers, we say. They say we kill innocent women and children much more than they have ever killed. We cry for our children. They cry for their children, too.

Death pains a Jewish heart as much as it pains a Palestinian heart. We all carry our traumas with us and each and everyone one of us, Jew or Arab is a victim of this conflict carrying the trauma of war with them deep inside. This conflict has left no one without pain. For 100 years we have been killing each other for a piece of this land, for a piece of peace and quiet. We have been blinded by our pain and they have been blinded by theirs.

We don't believe that they long for peace like we do. We don't believe that they want peace, like we do. They don't want their children to play in the parks on sunny weekends. They yearn to kill us, to push us into the sea, to wipe us off the map. That is what we see when we look at them. They are different from us.

When they see us, they see in us exactly what we see in them. Enemies. Brutal enemies who kill without remorse. The dead have no names for the other side. They have no families, there are no tears, there are no bereaved ones who remain behind longing, waiting, crying, remembering. Our newspapers, their newspapers -- two dead, killed by the enemy. A 15-year-old killed by accident. A Qassam kills two children. No names, no matter.

An eye for an eye only makes a lot of blind people, Gandhi told us. Our pain and their pain make a lot of wounded souls. Our cause is just, no doubt; but so is theirs. Our yearning to be a free people in our land is not different from theirs. We have no other state; this is the only home for us. They too have no other; they too are not welcome in other lands, only in their own.

We will never be a free people in our land until they too will be a free people in their land. We are linked to each other, tied to this land that has taken too much of our blood and too much of theirs.

It is time to make the desert bloom, not with blood, not with tears, but with the love that we both share for this land. Our love for Israel is no stronger than their love for Palestine. Our songs for Zion play in our minds and hearts just as their songs for Biladi play in theirs.

We dwell in our histories. We tell and retell the stories of heroism. We have our ceremonies, we light our candles, we sing our songs. We cry and we remember. We are glued to the TV screens on our memorial days. So many memorial days. So many ceremonies. So much history. So much to remember.

My children don't want to go to school -- "it's just going to be a day of ceremonies" -- they say. I explain: "There is no choice -- you will go to school, the ceremonies are important and there is nothing to argue about."

After the evening siren, standing on the side of our stopped car on the way back home, back to Jerusalem, my son says: "I'll go to school, I understand."

We have our state. We wake up from our mourning to the celebration of liberation, victory, Israel. For as long as I remember myself I still feel the chills in my spine when I sing Hatikva. It's a feeling that I can't explain. It is the feeling I have when I see the coast line from the window of the plane after a long trip home. I see the flag, the blue stripes and the star and I am at home.

Flying home for years with Palestinian colleagues, I always wonder what goes through their minds when they see the same coastline. They too are coming home, home to Palestine. But before they reach there, before they get home, they have to face the policeman, the security guard, the checks and the questions, the checkpoint, the soldiers, all of the obstacles before they can feel that they have reached the end of their journey.

We don't want them here and they don't want us, yet we are here to stay, and so are they. No one is leaving this land and no one will succeed in forcing the other to leave. We all know it. The entire world knows it. We have accepted to divide the land. They too have accepted it. Once demanding 100%, both of us are willing to take less. They demand 22% of the land and accept our keeping 78%. We want more, they want more, but we can all live with that 78-22 split. That is the formula for peace that is the formula for putting history behind us. No, we won't forget, and no, they won't forget. Our pain, our sorrow, our struggle our fight, will live on forever. So will theirs.

How do we convince them that we really want peace, how do they convince us? How do we both put an end to all of the sorrow and pain? How do we each acknowledge the pain and sorrow of the other side?

Perhaps only when we will celebrate each others freedom.

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\* Gershon Baskin is the co-CEO of the Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information ([www.ipcri.org](http://www.ipcri.org)). This article is distributed by the Common Ground News Service (CGNews) and can be accessed at [www.commongroundnews.org](http://www.commongroundnews.org).

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