

250 “Global Artists and Writers” Fear Coronavirus “Devastating” In Gaza, Want Military Embargo on Israel (Part 1)

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Even before getting to the story, let me lead with a singular datum that we should all keep in mind: until now, there have been only two recorded deaths from the coronavirus in the P.A.-run territories. And there have been no deaths in Gaza.

Two hundred and fifty “global artists and writers” (GAW) have signed on to one of those virtue-signalling collective appeals to Israel to “stop the siege of Gaza.” The story, from AFP, is

[here](#):

More than 250 global artists and writers including rocker Peter Gabriel, director Ken Loach and actor Viggo Mortensen have appealed to Israel to stop the “siege” of Gaza, saying the coronavirus epidemic could have a devastating effect in “the world’s largest open air prison.”

There is no “siege” of Gaza, but rather, a “blockade,” and a most incomplete one at that. The difference is clear: a “blockade” means that goods of some kind are prevented from entering a territory. A siege means the opposite: an enemy is prevented from leaving a territory which is under attack, until that enemy finally surrenders.

The Israelis are not trying to return to Gaza. They were glad to leave the Strip. They just want to be free of rockets being fired into Israel, free of infiltration by Hamas or Islamic Jihad terrorists whose reason for being is to kidnap or kill Israelis. Why is that so hard for the “250 global artists and writers” to understand? Israelis are only trying to prevent the Gazans from killing them. They are trying to prevent the manufacture or acquisition of more weapons of war, including rockets and mortars, and to make it harder for the Gazans to construct bunkers and terror tunnels. That is why they have “blockaded” – that is, prevented from entering Gaza – certain goods that can be used for that manufacture of weapons and the construction of those terror tunnels and those bunkers.

Israelis are trying to prevent Hamas from firing rockets into southern Israel, and to keep its fighters from entering Israel to kill or kidnap soldiers and civilians, as that group has for years been attempting to do, both by means of the dozens of terror tunnels into Israel that its fighters have dug, and by their attempts, during the Friday installments of the Great March of Return that have gone on since March 30, 2018, to break through Israel’s security fence.

The word “siege” is much more alarming than “blockade.” It was chosen deliberately by these “global artists and writers”; it conjures up images of people being starved into surrender by an implacable and ruthless enemy. Most of us are put in mind of the greatest siege of modern times, that is, the Nazi siege of Leningrad between 1941 and 1944, when 800,000 residents of the city died. Gaza has never been under siege by Israel. Israel does not blockade food supplies. Nor does it “blockade” medicines or medical equipment. And if children in Gaza need advanced medical treatment, those Palestinian children are brought to Israeli hospitals. Israeli doctors associated with the Save A Heart organization have saved the lives of thousands of Palestinian children. Not exactly “siege-of-Leningrad” material.

The “global artists and writers” sound the alarm: “the coronavirus could have a devastating effect” on Gaza. Could. That same alarm has been sounded for the past four months without letup by those who want to force Israel to completely lift its blockade. But so far, in all of “Palestine” – that is, in both Gaza and the P.A.-ruled territories in the West Bank – there have been 376 confirmed cases and exactly two deaths. By comparison, in Israel there have been 16,607 confirmed cases of coronavirus and 671 deaths. Judging by these figures, it is not Gaza – where there have been zero deaths from coronavirus – where those “global artists and writers” should be worrying about a “devastating effect.”

And is Gaza, as these “global artists and writers” insist, an “open-air prison”? What kind of “open-air prison” has million-dollar houses for 600 of its best-connected “prisoners”? There are at least three large shopping malls in Gaza City alone, boasting that they have “international brands.” What kind of “open-air prison” has shopping malls? Have you heard of an “open-air prison” that has an Apple Mobile store? What “open-air prison” has rooftop restaurants promising “fine dining,” luxury car dealerships including one specializing in gleaming

late-model Mercedes-Benz, massage therapists, spin classes, boutiques selling cashmere sweaters, Manolo Blahnik shoes, and designer jeans, resorts with Olympic-sized swimming pools, cabana boys, and private beaches – all of which you can find in Gaza?

It is not Israel that treats the Gazans as prisoners, but their own Hamas rulers, a class of thieves who steal the Strip blind, and violently suppress any signs of dissent. It is not Israel that tries to stifle economic development in Gaza. When the Israelis left Gaza in 2005, they handed over 3,000 greenhouses that they had built, and hoped that the Palestinians would continue to use, taking advantage of the already successful business of growing and selling flowers and fruits to the European market, and flourish even more. Instead, the Palestinians vandalized and destroyed those greenhouses, helping themselves to whatever they could find – like copper piping – of value. Is that Israel's fault?

The Israelis also encouraged Gazans to work in Israel, where they were paid at least twice what they received from Arab employers at home. The number of work permits given to the Gazans has varied; in times of terror, fewer permits are granted; in periods of relative calm, more are allowed. In late 2019, Israel granted 5,000 Gazans permits to work in Israel, mainly in construction and agriculture. The Israelis, far from wishing to keep Gazans "imprisoned," would like to have still more Gazans working in their country, provided they can assure themselves, through intensive vetting, that those allowed in will not engage in terrorism. Israel wants the Gazans to be gainfully employed, and prosperous, in the hope that this will cut down on terrorism. It was the head of the Mossad, Yossi Cohen, who last February traveled to Qatar to persuade the Emir to continue to provide, periodically, cash payments to Hamas. That money allows Hamas to pay for fuel for the Strip's power plant, pay its civil servants, and provide aid to tens of thousands of impoverished families. Israel was

fundraising for the Gazans. What do the “global artists and writers” think of that?

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