



The U.S. and Israel have been acting in tandem to extend and deepen the occupation. In 2005, recognizing that it was pointless to subsidize a few thousand Israeli settlers in Gaza, who were appropriating substantial resources and protected by a large part of the Israeli army, the government of Ariel Sharon decided to move them to the much more valuable West Bank and Golan Heights.

Instead of carrying out the operation straightforwardly, as would have been easy enough, the government decided to stage a “national trauma,” which virtually duplicated the farce accompanying the withdrawal from the Sinai desert after the Camp David agreements of 1978-79. In each case, the withdrawal permitted the cry of “Never Again,” which meant in practice: we cannot abandon an inch of the Palestinian territories that we want to take in violation of international law. This farce played very well in the West, though it was ridiculed by more astute Israeli commentators, among them that country’s prominent sociologist the late Baruch Kimmerling.

After its formal withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, Israel never actually relinquished its total control over the territory, often described realistically as “the world’s largest prison.” In January 2006, a few months after the withdrawal, Palestine had an election that was recognized as free and fair by international observers. Palestinians, however, voted “the wrong way,” electing Hamas. Instantly, the U.S. and Israel intensified their assault against Gazans as punishment for this misdeed. The facts and the reasoning were not concealed; rather, they were openly published alongside reverential commentary on Washington’s sincere dedication to democracy. The U.S.-backed Israeli assault against the Gazans has only been intensified since, thanks to violence and economic strangulation, increasingly savage.

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