

As I understand it, Gaza was governed by another authority until Hamas brutally butchered and supplanted them. It's a dictatorship that receives millions from Iran. It also has received money from Israel under Netanyahu.

As I understand it, jobs in Gaza go to party loyalists, not to all, so it's hard to see how that population has been able to live. The situation now must be precarious for much of the population.

As I understand it, the Israeli government is cracking down on dissent in Israel since the war started. There were peaceful protests for 39 weeks every Saturday night—I went to one in Jerusalem on October 1st before I flew back to New York on October 3. Now, the police use batons to beat non-violent protesters in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

As I understand it, the majority populations of Iran and many other countries are “rooting” for the Palestinians to be liberated, but there is no clear path to peace. Some children are taught to chant “death to America.” Do we each have a target on our backs due to the various kinds of hate being stirred up in America?

As I understand it, there are more guns than people in the United States. Is there any way to turn off hate talk?

As I understand it, some Jewish settlers are taking over lands in Israel from Bedouins and Palestinians whom they've forced to leave their homes.

As I understand it, places of higher education in Jerusalem are temporarily closed since so many reservists have been called up.

My niece, a professor and artist, didn't know about the thousands who became ill and died due to the toxins in the air during and after 9/11. This is a small example of the degree to which educated folks each have different bodies of knowledge. Most Israelis are frustrated that others do not know the full history of the region. At the same time, Palestinians have 180-degree different views of the same periods in history. The Ottoman Empire ruled Jerusalem and much of the Middle East from about 1516 until 1917 when the British took over, which started the uprootings of Palestinians. If those in the New York area are still suffering from the effects of the 9/11 implosions, what will happen to the people in Gaza, Israel, and neighboring regions during and after the current bombings? Don't Israel and Hamas realize they are poisoning their own people and especially children?

As I understand it, the horrors of the unmasked-for war in Ukraine cover a vast region and over 250,000 Ukrainians and Russians have died. Like Iranians,

Russians do not have free speech or civil rights. Why is everyone watching this cataclysmic devastation and loss of life on TV and then becoming more upset on both sides seeing this happening in Palestine?

Can meditating, finding a few moments of peace, even tuning out, help us if not them?

Hate speech, name-calling, and mis-information now infect every level of daily life. Congress went home early yesterday instead of passing a budget due in seven days. We whose brains are still functioning need to do what we can to preserve not just the notion of democracy but also the notions that racism, xenophobia, and antisemitism have to be erased—we need laws that permit difference and not-laws taking away our rights.

As I understand it, bullies take advantage of laws and people. Bullies lie, cheat, and mutilate to get what they want. The Supreme Court ruled Against Dred Scott, buried at Calvary in St. Louis. We need to muzzle all bullies who trample on the rights of those who want to live in peace.

11.11.23 Jan Garden Castro, Brooklyn