

## Text without Context: Corporate Media on the Middle East

By Polly Mann

In the photographs flashed around the world, his ears seem too large for his pale hollow-cheeked face, and his obviously new uniform seems too large for his frail body. This is the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, recently released from a Palestinian prison after five years of imprisonment. Most of the U.S. and its allies in the world read accounts of the event, published by the mainstream corporate media, with their professions of “fairness and balance” in reporting the news. That media most often ignores the “underdog” position of much-abused and maligned Palestinians in the Middle East conflict as they report on Palestinian violence against Israel.



### 7,834 Palestinian Prisoners Remain

Israel is expected to release 550 more Palestinian prisoners in December, but at least 7,834 currently remain. Addamer, a Jerusalem-based Palestinian support and human rights organization, keeps track of arrests and detentions, provides prisoner profiles, updates, fact sheets, statistics and quarterly trends. It issues urgent appeals and conducts campaigns.

For example, the following was taken from a news service report and featured in the Star Tribune of Minneapolis and other media around the country: “He [referring to Gilad Shalit] clearly had been kept from sunshine for years” . . . “the wounds he

suffered when he was captured in 2006 had been 'incorrectly treated' and he had been 'prevented from exercise.'" What isn't mentioned is the sad fact that it is a condition of almost all prison facilities, worldwide, that exercise is limited. Medical conditions of all Palestinians are and have been compromised by the Israeli strictures placed upon them, and many deaths have resulted from long-term neglect.

Among the printed Israeli comments regarding the event were those of Israelis decrying the exchange: It was a "grave mistake" to release "450 of the worst murderers the IDF ever went after," they said, objecting to the "release of more than 1,000 [Palestinian] prisoners." An account was given of Chicago-born Israeli Alan Bauer, who complained of two Palestinian female prisoners being released; the women had driven a man to a site where he detonated a suicide bomb that killed three people and wounded many, including Bauer and his son—i.e., "they are releasing murderers."

On the other hand: All Palestinians released were pale and frail, and most were in extremely poor physical condition. This is what happened to just three of the 700,000 Palestinians who have been held at various times by Israel throughout the years: 1) Benan Oudeh, for example, accused of throwing stones during the first Intifada at the age of 15, was so badly beaten by the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) that his testicles had to be surgically removed. 2) Luwaih Ashqar was so badly beaten during Israeli interrogations he can no longer stand on his feet and is confined to a wheelchair. He was "luckier," however, than 3) Palestinian prisoner al-Samad Harizat, who died in an Israeli prison as the result of "violent shaking" which caused a subdural hemorrhage within his skull.

Rabbi Michael Lerner wrote in Tikkun online (Tikkun.org October 19, 2011): "There are thousands [of Palestinians] still in prison in Israel. Few have received a trial by a jury of their peers. Many have been imprisoned for resisting the occupation army, not for acts of terrorism against civilians. They too deserve freedom... we know little about the thousands of Palestinians still being held in Israeli jails, or about most of those who have been released (except for the genuine terrorists amongst them who get the attention of the media.) ...That Israeli prisoners [Palestinian prisoners in Israel] have been tortured has been established over and over again by international human rights organizations, as well as B'Tselem, the Israeli human rights organization." Lerner sees this as a moment for Israel to end torture and open its own prisons to the observation of human rights organizations, and calls for fair trials or the release of detainees interrogated with torture.

In conclusion: Yes, technically some Palestinians must have been guilty of violence against Israelis. But the corporate media seldom mentions that Palestinians are repressed, humiliated, jailed, wounded, and killed on the land they and their ancestors have occupied for centuries. They are seldom ever offered a path to redress the wrongs done them. The amount of justice they receive in Israeli courts is debatable.

One thing is certain: The United States government does not give Palestine the billions of dollars in weapons that they do Israel. Unlike the Israelis, the Palestinians have no tanks, no airplanes, no troops. Is it any wonder that, in their miserably disadvantaged state, they are bitter and disillusioned, and that some have sought revenge.

Polly Mann is a co-founder of Women Against Military Madness and a regular contributor and columnist for the WAMM newsletter. She serves on the WAMM Newsletter Committee.

## Root Cause Analysis Basics

---

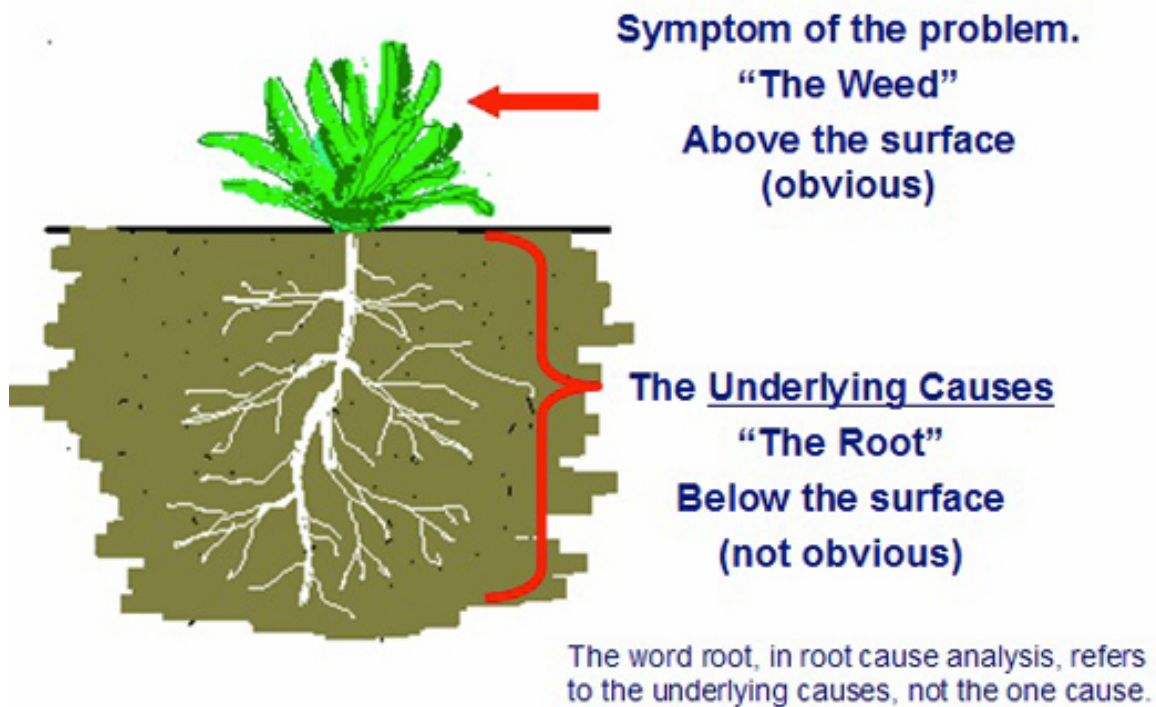


Diagram PPL.

Western media reports on Israel/Palestine don't address root causes of the issue which are: home demolitions, land grabs and the oppression, imprisonment, wounding and killing of Palestinians who resist—or simply try to exist.