

"Writing the truth
as I see it;
trying not to
offend
those who will
disagree."

The truth as I see it™

Idaho Common Sense™



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Israel or Palestine?

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President Harry Truman said, "No two historians ever agree on what happened, and the damn thing is they both think they're telling the truth."

Imagine tracing your ancestry back thousands of years to the land they were driven from, the land you are now asking to have returned to you. Imagine living on the land your ancestors walked 3000 years ago. Imagine digging in the soil and finding primitive pottery from generations past. Imagine.

Don't these people deserve that land, regardless of who has inhabited it since they left and regardless of who inhabits it now? Don't they have a right to their original homeland? Don't they have a right to their own state, their own nation?

But, what about the people living on that land now? Isn't the land now their homeland? Don't they have rights too? Can we expect them to subjugate themselves to a people hostile to them? Must they become a minority in their own land, with little or no voice? Or, do they have the right to stand up to the world, declaring why they will not give up their homeland, expecting the world to understand?

So what will happen in the Middle East with the lands of Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank? Will there continue to be an Israel? Will there ever be a Palestinian state? The Jews, forced out of Israel thousands of years ago, want all of their homeland back, not land shared with Arabs. And the Arabs, whose land it has been in recent history, love this same land just as passionately and will resist giving it up.

From 1516 through World War I, the land now called Israel was part of the Ottoman Empire, protecting a route for the annual pilgrimage from Istanbul, Turkey to Mecca. Following World War I, the League of Nations (the precursor of the United Nations) gave France and Great Britain "mandates" in

the Middle East with Great Britain controlling Palestine.

Following World War II, many Middle Eastern countries demanded independence and most were granted their independence, but not Palestine.

Instead, in 1947, the United Nations issued Resolution 181, the Partition Plan for Palestine, creating an Arab state and a Jewish state. The Arabs rejected the plan, leading to the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, when Israel captured additional Arab lands, leaving the Arabs with two separate pieces of land, Gaza and the West Bank.

Not surprising, the Israelis called this the War of Independence while the Arabs called it the Catastrophe. Although the history books say the war ended with the 1949 Armistice Agreements, it did not. It continues smoldering, regularly erupting, with no end in sight.

Who is right, who is wrong? Are the Arabs at fault because they defied the United Nations resolution, refusing to acknowledge the Jews right to those lands? Are the Israelis at fault because during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War they expanded their territory beyond that resolution's boundaries?

Who owns this land that both claim, each side with no tolerance for the other? British author Sir John Glubb said, "To enable one country to appreciate what another people really thinks and desires is both the most difficult and the most vital task which confronts us."

I started this column discussing a people wanting their historic homeland returned to them, the lands from which they were forcefully removed generations ago. I asked if they had rights to those lands and if those lands should be returned to them.

Was I referring to the Jews, driven from their homeland? Or could I have also been referring to another culture, the American Indians we drove from

their homelands? Don't the Jews and the American Indians have more in common than not? They both had homelands. They both succumbed to foreign invaders who displaced them from their homelands. And neither have regained the homeland of their ancestors.

What about the second group of people I discussed, the people told they must accept the sovereignty of a people who no longer are a part of their nation, a people who are hostile toward them.

Was I referring to the Arabs living under Israeli control? Or could I have been also referring to the American Colonies living under British control? The Arabs demand sovereignty, refusing to live under the rule of another people, just as the American Colonists did. The Arabs are demanding nothing less than the same rights we demanded.

Who owns a country, a nation? Are those questions only answered with war, the victor taking the land? Don't we determine national boundaries with force? Aren't countries born in violence and don't they die in violence?

Who is right and who is wrong? Who owns the land? Who decides? Who can stop the killing? Who knows the answers?

Napoleon Bonaparte said, "History is a myth agreed upon."

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