



MUIR REPORT: WELCOME TO A HAPPY SHORT MISERABLE LIFE

Jerry, or "Yerry" as his friends call him, works for us around the house. **He left Honduras about 7 years ago after watching his sister and her husband being shot to death, in their living room, as they were watching television.**

Jerry has a huge, muscular torso that balances on short piano leg stubs, which look like parentheses. He can do everything, although his carpentry and electrical skills are quite good, his plumbing acumen is not so great. The hot water pipes he installed still bang violently when we take a shower. Jerry says it's ghosts. If you ask him if he can do something, whether it's cutting the lawn or doing brain surgery, he will always nod his head vigorously, even if he's never heard of it before. **God forbid any work escapes his grasp.**

Jerry works 7 days a week. He lives in a bad neighborhood with the shadow of the oil refinery towering over him and his wife, Alita. **She also works seven days a week**, raising their two children, taking care of Jerry's mother and feeding and washing clothes for 7 other men who also live in the house with them.

Rent is high here and crime is constant. Their trucks are always being burglarized and their tools stolen. They can't call the police. **They don't need any unwarranted attention.** Jerry always checks the lights on his pick-up before he hits the road and always travels in the slow lane, also called the "brown lane" and he never exceeds

the speed limit. He likes to do big jobs because every time he contracts for work he's taking a chance of being caught and sent back home to his native Honduras. He doesn't understand why Americans complain that black people don't work enough but brown people work too much.

Jerry still cannot speak English and can barely write in Spanish so he uses his 7 year old daughter as a translator. She and his 4 year old son are the joys of his life. **Jerry doesn't want to be rich or engage in world domination.** He just wants to give his children a better life than he had, by doing an honest day's work for an almost decent salary. His only concession to vanity is the shiny chromium wheels on his 25 year old truck.

When I had my hip operation, his wife Alita and his daughter came and took the garbage cans out every week. **Alita brings us tamales on special holidays and looks hurt if we try to give her money for them.** He and his wife and children go to church every Sunday to worship the same God as the people who want to separate them from their children and condemn them to a short miserable life with a certain violent death. Jerry, and thousands like him, have made fortunes for house flippers, farmers and loan sharks by working long hours for low wages. They spend every penny they earn buying tons of plastic toys and sugary drinks for their children. They're perfect Americans.....let's keep them and build the wall around California.

MUIRWALKER

Israel/Palestine Reality Check

Israel is doubling down while Trump is still around. On 28 January, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that Israel would reject an extension to an international civilian monitoring mission hated by Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank city of Hebron. The reports of this monitoring mission (the *Temporary International Presence in Hebron*), were kept confidential but in December data was leaked to the press. To the surprise of absolutely no one, the report concluded, based on 20 years of monitoring, that Israel is in "severe and regular" breach of international law in Hebron.

Israeli settlement building is also scaling new heights as Israel seeks to physically divide the West Bank in two, severing Jerusalem in the process. Here is the problem for Israel: The more settlers it has, the more land it keeps. The more land it keeps, the more Palestinians it has to deal with. With more than 620,000 settlers now in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, creating a viable, contiguous state for Palestinians has simply become physically impossible. That leaves three options: Move Israeli civilians from occupied territory (and implement international law), force Palestinians out of the West Bank, including Jerusalem (and engage in another massive round of ethnic cleansing), or treat the two as inextricably conjoined.

Israel has had 25 years to prove that it is willing to abide by international law, end its civilian settlement project in, and relinquish control over, occupied territory, while allowing refugees their right to return. It has not seized the opportunity. In that time, it is not only the number of settlements and settlers that have grown. There are now nearly as many, if not as many or more, Palestinians in the area of historic Palestine, from river to sea, as there are Israelis.

There has long been a debate about *two states or one state* that has morphed into one about *three states or no states*. But the reality is this: There is only one state on the ground. It has disputed borders and contains two peoples that largely adhere to three religions. Israel has made it impossible for the two to physically separate. There is no suggestion from anyone – in Israel or elsewhere – how to change that. There is only wishful thinking and intransigence. What is therefore left is to decide how this one state functions. So far, this one state functions like an apartheid state. Palestinians live



under a separate legal system to Israelis, and the latter are in uncontested and complete overall control.

There are nuances and variations within this picture: Palestinians with Israeli citizenship, Palestinians with Jerusalem IDs, Palestinians in Gaza or in Hebron, all of whom live in slightly different circumstances. Yet even if some of them enjoy greater freedoms than others, they are alike in that all enjoy fewer rights than the Jews who live around them.

Apartheid states can't continue forever. Historian Benny Morris, who helped lay bare Israel's guilt in creating the Palestinian refugee problem, wrote recently: "The occupation regime will continue to function. The Arabs will suffer and the Jews will also suffer (although a bit less). At the end of the process, the one state will take shape." In fact it is already one state. A badly run one, yes; one in which only one set of people have full rights, yes. But one state in the classical sense of control over borders and territory and the assertion of a monopoly on the legitimate use of force.

This is the case, whatever mirage of power Hamas and the PA think they are fighting over. This shadow struggle was made more visible when on 29 January, the government of Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah submitted its resignation. It did so to clear the way for President Mahmoud Abbas to form a new government. In December he had dismissed the Palestinian Legislative Council and called for new parliamentary elections. The move to dissolve parliament is largely symbolic. After a US directed coup negated the results of a 2006 elections that Hamas won, the legislative body has no longer met. Legislation has

been imposed by presidential decree since and that will continue.

The Palestinian Authority is feeling the pinch in the West Bank. Last year, the US suspended its financial assistance to the United Nations agency that cares for Palestinian refugees. Now new legislation, aimed squarely at the Palestinian Authority, allows US citizens to sue recipients of US aid who are "complicit in acts of war". Since Israeli occupation, underwritten by the US, frames any resistance to its rule as terrorism, this has forced the Palestinian Authority to reject any US government aid. This *Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act* has hit projects funded by USAID, the State Department development agency, as well as US funding for Palestinian security forces.

The Trump-Netanyahu campaign to erase "Palestinians" from the map of "Israel" leaves all these non-Jews within a Jewish state stripped of any chance of a state of their own. It is a reality Palestinians, first and foremost, need to confront now. They can start by not squabbling among themselves over a fantasy of a separate state.

Contrary to the position of the United Nations, the Trump administration has just recognized Israel's sovereignty over the occupied Golan Heights of Syria.

A major factor behind Israel's initial seizure and continued occupation of the Golan are its fresh water resources. Indeed, the occupied Golan is one of three sources of fresh water to the Israeli state – and is the largest in size and most plentiful, as it comprises the mountain streams that feed Lake Kinneret (the Sea of Galilee) and the headwaters of the Jordan river. This water is of major importance to Israel, now in its fourth year of a drought so massive that a NASA study called it the worst drought in the region in nearly 900 years.

The Golan's importance to Israel also includes massive oil reserves in the area, discovered in 2015. Following that discovery, the Netanyahu-led government granted exclusive drilling rights to Afek, an Israeli subsidiary of New Jersey-based energy company Genie Energy, Ltd. Advised by powerful U.S. Players like former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers, former Vice President and Halliburton executive Dick Cheney, and former CIA Director James Woolsey.

-Omar Karmi

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