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**Only Direct, Clearly Descriptive Words, Like 'The Occupation',  
Can Explain Jerusalem/Palestine To Americans**

**Euphemisms and Omissions Further Complicate the Issue**

No one in his or her right mind, and it is understood that not everyone qualifies for inclusion, wants anything bad to happen to an Israeli, or Palestinian, or American. The tragedy is that terrible things have happened in the past, are happening now, and will happen in the future to all three groups - and to others - because of what is and what is not happening in Occupied Palestine. All of us fervently hope this prediction is totally wrong, but are profoundly fearful that it is not.

Every rational person informed on the issues has the same identical objective: all the peoples of the region living in peace and security, regardless of nationality, religion or ethnicity. The only point on which there is any disagreement, and the divergence can be extreme, is how to arrive at that goal. Two relevant points merit attention.

The first is rudimentary: none will live in peace and security unless all do. The definition of genuine peace and security is that everyone shares it. Attainment of that objective will be neither easy nor rapid, and it is accepted that numerous problems and some rather unpleasant memories will persist. Just as in Europe and elsewhere, however, these issues do not necessarily have to have a seriously negative effect on peace and security.

The second point is critical. Generated outside the area of immediate concern, but with a major impact on almost everything that goes on inside, is the role of the United States. America's massive military, economic and, above all, fervent political support, facilitate every and any Israeli action. Like every sovereign nation, Israel has the right to do whatever it believes will advance its interests, domestically and internationally, and then deal with the results, whether anticipated or unexpected. Israel's citizens are directly involved in the issues, participate in the choice of decision-makers, and are face-to-face with those results.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about Americans, generally and justifiably not renowned for the breadth and depth of their interest in and knowledge/understanding of international affairs. In part, this results from their country's size, and the distances that separate it from most of the others. An additional, perhaps more important factor is the limited information that actually reaches the general public on the subject of events overseas, and Israel-Palestine is clearly the outstanding example. It is not surprising that the very low level of attention paid to this critical situation results in a costly combination of ignorance, misinformation and apathy.

Far too many Americans, largely unaware of the nature of their significant involvement in ongoing Mid-East crises, do not understand the loss of credibility, reputation, and respect, or the resentment and sometimes fierce reactions it generates. A major contributor to the problem is the tendency of the media to place Israeli actions in the best possible light or, more

frequently, just leave them out, with the result that they remain largely misunderstood or unknown. It is a closed circle: Americans are not informed so they are not interested; they are not interested because they are not informed.

An additional, potentially significant layer of insulation is added to this basic lack of understanding by the words almost always employed, by virtually everyone, on all sides of the issue, when addressing the problem verbally or in writing. Those words serve to create an image of the Israel-Palestine relationship that is divorced from reality. They may not have been inserted into the dialogue intentionally, but the standard vocabulary almost always employed is not merely euphemistic, it is highly misleading. This is the issue I wish to place before this gathering, a crime of which we are all guilty. Consider the words we all use, all the time, and then let us resolve to drop them from the vocabulary.

"Ending the Conflict". This constantly employed phrase has no relationship whatever to the actual circumstances. There is no 'conflict' going on. Conflicts are fought by armies across borders. There is only one army, and there is no border. What must be ended is an OCCUPATION, illegal under international law, and resistance to that OCCUPATION is recognized as legitimate by those same laws. It is both depressing and instructive to note that the word 'OCCUPATION' is hardly ever included in U.S. media coverage, or even in speeches and/or articles by those strongly opposed to it, and yet it is the shatteringly obvious key to the entire problem. Like the other words and phrases discussed below, 'Ending the Conflict' may have been introduced and promoted because it has a diversionary effect on efforts to move toward resolution of the issues, since 'Ending the OCCUPATION' is what must be achieved.

"Peace Process". These two words constitute another powerful euphemism, either together or 'Peace' by itself. Overused in the extreme, it does the same long-term damage, getting marginally informed people to think, briefly, about how that non-existent 'conflict' they always hear about could be peacefully resolved. A 'peace process' between the occupier and the occupied is an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms, since there is no war, and no conflict, just a brutal occupation.

"Searching for a solution". This phrase indicates that no one knows what the solution might be, but ending the occupation is and has been the objective of everyone interested and/or involved in arriving at an end state of peace and security for all sides.

"Negotiations". This is an agreement between independent, relatively equal parties to discuss how to resolve an issue that divides them. But armed guards do not 'negotiate' with prostrate prisoners. At best, the Palestinians can only beg. There is not the smallest shred of anything even distantly resembling balance or equality between the two sides, eliminating any meaningful 'negotiations'. And yet, enormous efforts are expended to get the parties to enter into 'direct talks', as if they are not in constant, too often unpleasant contact. They are not even separated by a border, and Israelis wanting to talk to Palestinians know precisely where they are, and exactly how to get there.

"Recognition". The U.S., joined by Israel of course, insists the Palestinians must, repeat must recognize Israel. This is seen by the average American as something fairly reasonable, but only if three basic requirements are totally ignored.

- Recognition is reciprocal. A recognizes B in exchange for B recognizing A. No one has ever even mentioned, let alone seriously proposed, that Israel should recognize Palestine, but mutual recognition is how it is done.
- Recognition is given to a state with its territory enclosed by international borders, but no one knows exactly where Israel's are now, or where they will be in the future. Would it include all or just part of Jerusalem; how much of the West Bank? There is no exact location for, or limitation on, what exactly it is that the Palestinians are being required to recognize.
- States, not groups of people, extend recognition to another state. The PA and Hamas are not states, and demanding that they extend non-reciprocal recognition to the occupier, with unspecified size or exact location, is a violation of rationality, international practice, and reason.

We have all heard and read these words countless times, and used them ourselves. In the context of the enormous, contentious, critical and dangerous problems we are attempting to resolve, for the benefit of all parties, they may not be of great significance. Considered in the light of their unfortunate contributions to making the task even more difficult, especially in terms of America's involvement, I believe that the minimum effort required to eliminate them from the discourse is eminently worthwhile.

I therefore urge constantly and carefully replacing those unfortunate words and phrases with more accurate, descriptive, powerful, and evocative words, words which accurately describe policies and actions that threaten the stability and future of an entire region and its inhabitants, as well as those far away. Continuation of the illegal OCCUPATION of Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza is clearly not in the best interests of anyone, most assuredly not the Palestinians, nor Israel, nor the United States. Closer attention to the words used to describe that yawning abyss can contribute to avoiding the ongoing slide into it.