

Notes & Sources

This article with links to all notes and sources, as well as photos & videos is online at www.IfAmericansKnew.org/media/thomas.html

1. Helen Thomas's apology: <http://helenthomas.org>
2. Flotilla Survivor Testimonies: <http://www.israel-palestineneews.org/2010/06/flotilla-survivor-testimonies.html>
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13. Amnesty International Report: Suffocating Gaza - the Israeli blockade's effects on Palestinians: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/suffocating-gaza-israeli-blockades-effects-palestinians-2010-06-01>
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16. Christian Aid: Israel 'using food and medicines as weapons': http://www.ifamericansknew.com/cur_sit/food-weapon.html
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"...Many commentators evince particular anger at Thomas's inclusion of Germany and Poland as places to which Israeli colonists should return, suggesting that Hitler is still in control and waiting to pounce.

"The happy fact is, however, that World War II and the Nazi holocaust ended well over half a century ago. In Poland today there is a vibrant Jewish revival with a 10-foot tall Menorah being lit in the center of Warsaw during Hanukah, and Germany has become, according to the New York Times, 'a country where Jews want to live.' In fact, in recent years more Jews have chosen to immigrate to Germany than to Israel.

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The Manufactured Controversy Over Former Senior White House Correspondent Helen Thomas

What news reports didn't tell us

Alison Weir, President of The Council for the National Interest and Executive Director of If Americans Knew

Whenever Israel commits yet another atrocity, its defenders are quick to redirect public attention away from the grisly crime scene.

Currently, there are headlines about allegedly anti-Semitic comments made by senior White House correspondent Helen Thomas. Pundits across the land evince outrage at her off-the-cuff 25-second statement made to a man who appears to be holding a camera right in her face.

Thomas issued a public apology for her words, but this was insufficient to assuage the wounded feelings of powerful antagonists, and she has now retired from a long and distinguished career.

Before we examine her comments and evaluate their possible validity, let's look at other recent events having to do with Israel:

• On May 31st Israeli commandos killed at least nine unarmed volunteers attempting to take humanitarian supplies to Gaza.

According to eyewitness reports and forensic evidence, many of these aid volunteers were shot at close range, including a 19-year-old American citizen killed by four bullets to the head and one to the chest fired from 18 inches away.

Israel immediately imprisoned eyewitnesses and hundreds of other aid participants, confiscated their cameras, laptops, and other possessions, and prevented them from speaking to the press for days. Among the incarcerated were decorated U.S. veterans and an 80-year-old former ambassador who had been deputy director of Reagan's Cabinet Task Force on Terrorism.

When they finally emerged and were able to tell their stories, many described horrific scenes of Israeli commandos shooting people in the head, of those tending the injured being shot in the stomach, of people bleeding to

death while flotilla participants waved white flags and pled for help.

They also described being beaten brutally by Israeli forces, again and again – including those on ships that, in the U.S. media's judgment, experienced "no violence." A 64-year-old piano tuner from California, Paul Larudee, described hundreds of Israeli commandos boarding his ship. When he refused to cooperate with them, soldiers then beat him numerous times both on board the ship and after he was imprisoned on land.

Eventually he was taken by ambulance to an Israeli hospital. He wasn't treated, however, and Larudee believes he was taken there because Israel didn't want media to see his black eye, pronated joints, bruised jaw and body contusions.

Marine veteran Ken O'Keefe described similar beatings while in Israeli custody. In his case, the public was able to see his bloodied, battered face in video clips and still images – but only on the Internet, since American mainstream media failed to report on his press conference or to publish the many still photos of his injuries.

• Other gruesome photos available to the American public only on the Internet are of Emily Henochowicz, a 21-year-old American student whose eye and eye socket were recently shattered by Israeli forces. She has since had her eyeball removed, three metal plates inserted in her face, and her jaw wired shut.

Henochowicz was not on the flotilla; she was taking part in a nonviolent demonstration against the Israeli assault when an Israeli soldier shot a high-velocity tear-gas canister into her face.

A Swedish citizen standing with Henochowicz said, "They clearly saw us. They clearly saw that we were internationals and it really looked as though they were trying to hit us. They fired many canisters at us in rapid succession. One landed on either side of Emily, then the

third one hit her in the face.”

Henochowicz is not the first to have been shot by such a canister.

- Thirty-year-old Basem Ibrahim Abu Rahmeh died when an Israeli soldier shot one at him while Abu Rahmeh participated in a demonstration against Israeli confiscation of Palestinian farmland. A video of this is also available on You Tube; U.S. networks have also chosen not to broadcast this.

- Californian Tristan Anderson was shot in the head by a similar canister while he was taking photographs following another demonstration. Part of Anderson’s brain was removed and he was in a “minimally responsive state” for 6-7 months.

He is now in a wheelchair, has almost no movement in his left arm and leg, is blind in one eye, and his mental functioning is significantly reduced. Photos of the shooting are also available on the Internet.

- Since at least 2006 Israeli forces have closed off Gaza to the outside world, essentially imprisoning 1.5 million men, women, and children, and denying them foodstuffs, medicines, and building materials, as documented by such agencies as Amnesty International, Oxfam, and Christian Aid, which said that Israel was using food and medicine as weapons.

- One of the multitudinous victims of this illegal siege is five-year-old Taysir Al Burai, who suffers from an acute neurological disorder and requires round-the-clock care. According to the UK Guardian, he could be cured if Israel would allow him to leave Gaza, but to date his parents’ repeated requests have been denied.

- Another victim is 7-month-old Mohammad Khader, whose swelling in the brain required specialized treatment unavailable in Gazan hospitals depleted by the Israeli siege. His distraught parents’ applications asking Israel to allow them to travel abroad were similarly denied. Their tiny son died a few days ago.

Such stories go on and on.

Yet, the rage we see in the U.S. media is directed against none of this. People shot in the head, eyes and brain parts destroyed, the elderly beaten, small children and infants caused to suffer and die, parents to grieve – none of this has caused a hint of anger. In fact, most of it has been considered of too little importance even to report.

Instead, media reports are filled with outrage at “anti-Israel” words spoken by 89-year-old Helen Thomas.

In Thomas’s lifetime Israel has ethnically cleansed over a million people, replaced them with colonists from around the world, committed dozens of massacres, tortured thousands of people, killed and maimed untold numbers of

children, mangled limbs, and committed outrages on women, old people, the weak and the infirm.

It has assassinated people throughout the world, invaded numerous countries, spied on the U.S., killed and injured 200 American servicemen (the anniversary is this week), and tortured and imprisoned Americans. All while receiving more American money than any other country on earth.

For years, long before her recent words, Thomas has been the target of Israel’s vicious American volunteers, the Zionist blogosphere abounding with nasty slurs on her looks and her Lebanese ancestry, this latter also consistently emphasized by the media, despite her Kentucky birth and Michigan upbringing.

One of the reasons for the ferocious animosity toward her is the fact that Thomas is one of the very few mainstream reporters to challenge the neocon engendered lies

Thomas’s questioning attempted to elicit from Obama the fact that Israel already possesses nuclear weapons. While the rest of the press corps has conspired in the cover-up of this fact and others, Thomas worked to expose them. Not surprisingly, the many people complicit in these manipulations, such as former Bush spokesperson Ari Fleischer, have led the charge against her.

that led the U.S. into wars that have caused massive death, destruction and tragedy and to continue to expose ongoing policies of violence and cruelty.

As the same groups and individuals who pushed the US into attacking Iraq have in recent years been escalating their efforts to push the U.S. to now similarly decimate Iranians under the pretext that Iran might be developing nuclear weapons, Thomas’s questioning attempted to elicit from Obama the fact that Israel already possesses nuclear weapons. While the rest of the press corps has conspired in the cover-up of this fact and others, Thomas worked to expose them.

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Thomas’s “outrageous” statement

It is useful to examine the video and context of Thomas’s allegedly “anti-Semitic” comment.

A man, apparently holding a camera right in her face, asks for her comments about Israel. She says, “Tell them to get the hell out of Palestine. Remember, these people are

occupied. And it’s their land...” He interrupts her and asks where they should go. She responds, “They should go home. To Germany, Poland, America, and everywhere else.”

While Thomas has since apologized for her hasty words and many Israelis have the right to continue living where they are, the reality is that Israeli settlers did, indeed, come from elsewhere; they are, in fact, illegally occupying Palestinian land (a fact acknowledged even by the U.S. State Department); and international law does require that they leave.

Many commentators evince particular anger at Thomas’s inclusion of Germany and Poland as places to which Israeli colonists should return, suggesting that Hitler is still in control and waiting to pounce.

The happy fact is, however, that World War II and the Nazi holocaust ended well over half a century ago. In

Poland today there is a vibrant Jewish revival with a 10-foot tall Menorah being lit in the center of Warsaw during Hanukah, and Germany has become, according to the New York Times, “a country where Jews want to live.” In fact, in recent years more Jews have chosen to immigrate to Germany than to Israel.

Thomas’s call for colonists to return to America (this destination was left out of many articles) is far from outrageous given that a great many West Bank settlers are from the U.S.

Overall, reporting on the incident has largely departed from the standard journalistic practice of quoting people from both sides of an issue. Quotes from Thomas supporters are missing, even though the You Tube page featuring the infamous video contains a large number of comments supporting her. In contrast, quotes from Thomas’s detractors, almost all of them Zionists, are ubiquitous, but generally fail to divulge the speakers’ frequent conflicts of interest.

For example, the *Washington Post’s* Howard Kurtz quotes Jeffrey Goldberg without mentioning that Goldberg is an Israeli citizen who served as a prison guard at an Israeli prison that held hundreds of Palestinians without charge, some killed in cold blood by the prison commander.

Mainstream media organizations do not seem to have investigated reports that the man who videotaped Thomas, Rabbi David Nesenoff, also made an offensive video featuring himself and another man impersonating a buffoonish Catholic priest and Mexican immigrant.

Similarly, news reports that a high school had disinvited Thomas as a graduation speaker almost never inform readers that many of the school’s parents and students wished Thomas to remain, even though this unreferenced group may represent a majority of the school. Members of this group have created a Facebook page, “Helen Thomas should have been our graduation speaker,” that states:

“The purpose of this group is to quietly but firmly protest the ability of a small minority to impose its will on the larger group through engaging or threatening to engage in disruptive discourse. This group affirms a belief in reasonable discussion and feel that in this scenario, a clear minority was able to override a larger majority by distorting the issues and discussion.”

Replacing Thomas at the upcoming graduation ceremony will be CBS’s Bob Schiefer, who has close family ties to George W. Bush and has rarely, if ever, challenged administration falsehoods that sent the nation to war and that keep it there still.

Regarding his reporting on Israel-Palestine, media watchdog Fairness and Accurate In Reporting (FAIR) issued an alert in 2006 objecting to Schiefer’s “shallow, dismissive coverage of complicated and tragic events.”

It is not known who will take over Thomas’s front-row seat at White House briefings. Given the record of the current press corps, it is likely that Israel partisans are breathing a sign of relief.

One more obstacle to the Zionist juggernaut has just been removed.

ADDENDA:

- A *Washington Post* poll showed 91 % of voters support her.
- Additional information has come to light about Ari Fleischer's significant role in initiating and orchestrating the attacks on Thomas. According to Washington Post blogger David Weigel, Fleischer emailed numerous journalists about the video and gave quotes to anyone who asked, "a simple gesture that poured rocket fuel on the story."
- Nessenoff has removed his original video from You Tube. He has now posted a longer version on his website.

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