

## **Fifty years, fifty lies**

**It began with the question of what to call the West Bank and Gaza. On Israel Radio it was decided to use the term 'temporarily-held territories.' This was lie No. 1**

By Gideon Levy | Jun. 1, 2017 | 2:36 AM

Let's assume the occupation is justified. Let's also say that Israel has no choice. Let's not even call it an occupation. Let's say it was recognized by international law and that the world has applauded it. Let's assume that the Palestinians are grateful for its presence. Nevertheless, a small problem still hovers over it: the whole thing is based entirely on lies.

From beginning to ever-receding end, it's all a pack of lies. There is not one word of truth associated with it. Were it not for these lies it would have imploded in its rottenness a long time ago. Were it not for these lies, it's doubtful if it would have ever come into being. These lies, some of which the right takes pride in ("for the sake of the Land of Israel it's permissible to lie"), are enough to make any decent person recoil in revulsion. One doesn't need its other horrors to be convinced of this.

It began with the question of what to call the territories. On Israel Radio it was decided to use the term "temporarily-held territories." This was lie No. 1, implying that the occupation was temporary and that Israel intended to evacuate these territories, that they were only a bargaining chip in the quest for peace. This is probably the biggest lie and is certainly the most decisive one. It is the one that has enabled the celebration of its jubilee anniversary. The truth is that Israel never intended to end the occupation. Its alleged temporariness only put the world to sleep with its deceit.

The second major lie was the argument that the occupation serves the security interests of Israel, that it's a self-defense measure by a helpless nation beset by enemies. The third lie was the "peace process," which never really took place, and which in any case was only meant to buy the occupation more time. This lie had many legs. The world was an accomplice, continuously lying to itself. There were arguments, presentations of maps (all of them alike), peace conferences were held with numerous rounds of talks and summits, with envoys rushing back and forth, and mainly empty patter. These were all based on a lie, which was the assumption that Israel even contemplated ending the occupation.

The fourth lie, obviously, is the settlement enterprise. This project was born and raised in a lie. Not one settlement was established honestly, starting with the overnight stay at the Park Hotel in Hebron, through the "labor camps," "protective camps," "archaeological digs," "nature reserves," "green spaces," "fire zones," "survey lands," outposts and expansions – all those fabrications committed with a wink and a nod, culminating in the biggest lie in this context, that of "state lands," a lie that can only be likened to that of Israel's Palestinian "present absentees."

The settlers lied and the politicians lied, the army and the Civil Administration in the territories lied – they all lied to the world and to themselves. From the protection of an antenna tower grew a mega-settlement and from a weekend at that hotel grew the worst of the lot. The cabinet members who ratified, the Knesset members who nodded and winked, the officers who signed and the journalists who whitewashed, they all knew the truth. The Americans who "condemned" and the Europeans who were "infuriated," the UN General Assembly that "called on" and the Security Council which "decided," none of them ever had any intention of following this up with any action. The world is also lying to itself. It's convenient for everyone this way.

It's also convenient to issue the endless daily lies that cover up the crimes committed by the Israel Defense Forces, the Border Police, the Shin Bet, the Prison Service and the Civil Administration – the entire apparatus of occupation. It's convenient to use sanitized language, the language of the occupier so beloved by the media, the same language it uses to describe their excuses and self-justifications. There is no whitewashing in Israel like the one describing the occupation and there is no other broad coalition that expands and supports it with such devotion. The only democracy in the Middle East that employs a brutal military tyranny and the most moral army that kills more than 500 children and 250 women in one summer – can anyone conceive of a bigger lie than this? Can anyone think of a greater self-deception than the prevailing opinion in Israel, by which all this was forced upon us, that we didn't want this, that the Arabs are to blame? And we still haven't mentioned the two-state lie and the lie about peace-seeking Israel, the lies about the 1948 Nakba and the "purity" of our arms in that war, the lie about the whole world being against us and the lie about both sides being to blame.

Since Golda Meir's "we'll never forgive the Arabs for forcing our children to kill them" to "a nation cannot be an occupier on its own land", lies keep following lies. It hasn't stopped to this day. Fifty years of occupation, fifty shades of mendacity. And now? Another fifty years?