

ISRAEL'S BUTCHERY OF BLAMELESS IS REACHING NEW LEVELS OF EVIL

WHEN SATURDAY COMES

BY ROY CURTIS



IT is as if the land beneath a million caloused Palestinian feet is itself weeping, the blood-soaked, God-forsaken soil crying out in excruciating pain.

A beseeching deathbed wail, an existential plea that it might not be abandoned, a trembling quake from the bowels of an accursed parcel of earth, the loudest, most desperate mass 999 call of this age.

A crescendo of misery and mighty pleading which the rest of the world, unless it submerges its head deep in the sands of indifference, cannot fail to hear.

What is unspooling in Gaza is not some dark, hidden secret that requires archaeological excavation. Here is a conscious immolation unfolding in real time, calculated eradication right in front of our eyes.

Extermination as official policy of an elected Israeli leader with a hollow where others house a heart.

The theft of childhood. The lynching of hope. A mowing-down of the innocent. A hyper-efficient production line of ceaseless, deathless cruelty.

A moment that holds a mirror up to us all and asks 'What it is that lives in our soul?'

Yes, Hamas are a barbaric, medieval, sub-human, death-cult. Their October 2023 malevolence demanded a response. But the campaign Israel is waging is no longer about those masked monsters.

This is not a targeting of terrorists, it is a butchery of the blameless.

A wiping-out. A culling. A political decision to take the duster to the blackboard of life, to brush back and forth until nothing remains. Nothing but darkness. The jet-blackness of undiluted evil.

With the most powerful nation on earth unwilling to place a moral roadblock in his path, Benjamin Netanyahu cares not that the world has a ringside seat as he unleashes the monster at his core.

PATHETIC

And so months pass and despite the dissenting voices of many within Israel, it continues.

Beastly acts devoid of basic humanity, brutality amplified by the nightly gut-punch of television pictures that beam supersized measures of suffering into our front rooms, slaughter on an industrial level.

The French playwright Moliere wrote: 'It is not what we do, but also what we do not do for which we are accountable.'

If he were alive today, the 17th-century Parisian would be pointing an accusatory finger at pathetic figures like your correspondent.

For 22 months, as a cataclysm born of the ideological arrogance that some people are worthless and expendable advanced to new levels of depravity, I have swallowed a pill of silence.

Last week, the great David Hickey - surgeon, athletic titan of the 1970s, a loudhailer voice for those with none, a man forged entirely from compassion, integrity and underdog fury - messaged me with details of the latest Dubs 4 Palestine gathering.

Symbolically, given the Great Hunger besieging Gaza, the meeting point was Rowan Gillespie's arresting Famine Memorial - six bronze statues depicting skeletal figures - on Custom House Quay.

I did what I have always done. Nothing. Cowardly, lazily, shamefully, I averted my gaze.

And yet, at a subliminal level, something was stirring. A slow dawning that sitting idly by is no longer an option.



DESPERATION
Children queuing up for food aid in Gaza

Over the last few days I read The Barn, Wright Thompson's immense, thought-provoking book with the subtitle 'The murder of Emmet Till and the cradle of American racism'.

It is a magnificent, deeply unsettling, impeccably researched tome, one which outlines how silence was vital in facilitating the horror that took place in the Mississippi Delta, the lynching of a 14-year-old child on an August night in 1955.

America's Deep South sought to rewrite history in real time, to cover up, to insist this wasn't happening.

That silence felt disturbing and appalling and

Imagine if the carnage of Middle

unbelievable. Until the jolting realisation of my own inertia 70 years on.

Take out your phone or open the newspaper. Look again at the photo essays from Gaza. Absorb the calamity in every freeze-frame. Observe the misery in every pixel, the hopelessness, despair and viciousness.

One I saw this week squats in my skull. A panicked, dust and blood-covered parent, a limp young body in his grasp, searching for assistance. His eyes imploring, begging, unable to compute.

See how the ravages of the past two years have rewritten the maps of every face. Every son and daughter of Gaza has witnessed events nobody ever should, things that, once seen, can never be unseen.

Every minute of every day is worse than the worst nightmare we have ever known. The only hope is that by shouting at the top of

our voices to those in power we might inch toward an awakening, enable the tormented to escape the stranglehold of the dark.

At the very least, we are duty-bound to try. Human senses can be neutered by a constant barrage of bad news or by the distance between us and them, the fact this massacre is taking place in a land the vast majority of us have never visited.

So, please, try this for a moment. Imagine the carnage clogging your social media feed is unfolding not on the far and distant shores of the Mediterranean but here, a daily truth in every Irish city, village and crossroads.

That the hellscape is the street outside your door. That the heavy ordnance is raining down on Croke Park on All-Ireland day, or on the beach or park



MONSTER Israel PM Benjamin Netanyahu has been giving two fingers to the world

East hellscape was playing out here in Ireland

or pub where you are enjoying this August Bank Holiday weekend, the supermarket where you shop.

That a missile is right now pounding already battered concrete in Templeogue or Salthill or Garryowen or New Ross or Belturbet or Gurrabraher or Killarney, churning up the earth where your infant son, teenage daughter, or elderly mother is cowering.

That somebody you love is waiting for death. Choking on every unrealised dream they have ever owned.

RAG

The last seconds of their lives an exercise in bone-shaking, pants-wetting terror. Awaiting a detonation, a flash of murderous light that will render the child you made, or the parent who made you, a nothing.

Another stilled pulse, another dismembered skull, another body identifiable only by dental records or a charred shoe.

A bloody rag all that is left of what was once a creature you loved more than life itself.

Later, flailing in a river of tears in which you have been drowning for months, you queue at a food station in Thurles or Kilkenny or Tullamore or Bundoran or Dundalk or Navan.

Hoping for a cupful of grain to fight the crucifying hunger that is crippling what remains of your emaciated, starving clan. Or some cold water to slake the terrible thirst, to rinse away the taste of death that is everywhere.

For hours you wait, the strength ebbing from the empty sack that is your body. Finally, supply trucks arrive to hand out some meagre rations and, in the surge, you can feel

your neighbours' bones rattle against your own. A crush of the malnourished.

But there is no higher power to conjure a loaves-and-fishes miracle. There is nobody to pull your drowning body from the tide of misery.

Instead, helicopters swoop, guns are unleashed and, in a hailstorm of cold, killing metal, the broken masses fall.

In the mid-1840s, Ireland was changed forever by an avoidable famine, one triggered by that same

belief that those left to starve simply didn't matter.

They were sub-human, non-entities. S**t on the wealthy landowners' shoes.

It is happening again. That Moliere line from earlier in the piece is quoted by Wright Thompson in The Barn.

He also writes, in what could be an accusatory putdown of those who continue to justify the state-sponsored erasing of the helpless, 'a cult is built on believing the absurd if the absurd justifies the cult.'

What is happening in Gaza is absurd. It is evil. History will not be kind to those who are mealy-mouthed or cultish in their response.

Events are raising that accusatory mirror before us. While observing their reflection, many in power should remember Moliere's words, the ones that insist we must be accountable for what we do not do.

Silence, at one of the more depraved hours of the 21st century, identifies an accomplice. It stains hands with the blood of innocents.

NEVER-ENDING NIGHTMARE

A man carries the body of a victim killed by Israeli bombardment in Gaza this week; below, a mother holds her severely malnourished child

