

Greetings, Proffesor Finkelstein.

I do not know whether you will ever get to read this email, but even if you do not, writing it serves me as an exercise in reflection.

I first learned about you and your work only a few years ago, specifically after the beginning of the genocide in Gaza. I admit that I was captivated by the precise and direct way in which you articulate your arguments, like a well-sharpened blade cutting through an object. I believe that political and academic discussions nowadays are filled with unnecessary circumlocutions, when they are not simply exercises in cynicism or cosmetic pomposity. In this context, finding people who speak without a word too many or too few is a balm.

Over the past two years, I have read several of your books: *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*, *The Holocaust Industry*, *Beyond Chutzpah*, *Gaza: An Inquest into Its Martyrdom*, *I'll Burn That Bridge When I Get to It!*, and, most recently, *Gaza's Gravediggers*.

I consider myself a person of the Left—in plural, cause i do not believe there is one Left, but rather several—in what I understand to be the most basic sense that can be attributed to that “label”: I firmly believe that a great part of the inequalities that separate people are not natural, but socially constructed and imposed and are, therefore, necessarily surmountable.

I believe that the struggle of the Palestinian people calls for a non-naïve reflection on political violence.

Unfortunately, I found it somewhat difficult to give rational form to my intuitions on this matter. That changed when I finished reading your latest book. The contents of its prologue contributed enormously to organizing my thoughts and to articulating the reasons why, until then, something deep within me had prevented me from condemning Hamas for the acts it has carried out, although some of them can definitely be considered atrocious.

After finishing your latest book, I felt compelled to revisit some of my earlier readings, most especially Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. The eloquent way in which Fanon begins is memorable:

“National liberation, national renaissance, the restoration of nationhood to the people, Commonwealth: whatever may be

the headings used or the new formulas introduced, **decolonization is always a violent phenomenon.**”

In its pages one finds a portrait of the foundations and characteristics of violence under conditions of colonial resistance. Sometimes this is expressed in somewhat obscure and ethereal language; at other times, through brutally explicit examples, as in the case he recounts of two Algerian boys who murdered their European playmate.

As Sartre would suggest in his preface to the book —in words addressed to European “liberals”:

“Read Fanon: you will learn how, in the period of their helplessness, **their mad impulse to murder is the expression of the**

natives' collective unconscious."

I also revisited Gillo Pontecorvo's magnificent film *The Battle of Algiers*. There is a scene that vividly illustrates how an asymmetry of military power necessarily leads to an asymmetry in the methods available to colonial resistance. While in French custody, one of the leaders of the resistance is questioned by European journalists. One of them challenges him about the "cowardly" use of women's baskets to carry bombs, allegedly killing many innocent people. The Algerian leader responds by morally reframing the question. He asks the journalist whether it is not even more cowardly to attack defenseless villages with napalm bombs that kill thousands more people. He then concludes:

“Obviously, planes would make things easier for us” —referring to the French aircraft. **“Give us your bombers, sir, and you can have our baskets.”**

The moral frameworks appropriate to normal conditions cannot simply be applied to a brutally asymmetrical struggle for freedom. I confess that I do not favor targeted violence or, as a Chilean professor I once had would put it, “vanguardist” violence. As a Latin American, I know very well the counterproductive results of *foquismo*. I have always considered the violence of the “masses” to be politically more effective. Applied to the Palestinian case, I am thinking of actions such as those of the First Intifada. But I can understand the context in which the events of October 7 occurred.

Maximilien Robespierre, who despite his sins ought to enjoy a better reputation than Thomas Jefferson, once expressed the following idea in a speech:

“To subject resistance to oppression to legal forms is the ultimate refinement of tyranny.”

I refuse to condemn Hamas. I refuse despite being an atheist and advocating the secular character of the State against any form of religious fundamentalism; I refuse despite many other differences as well, because I believe that before addressing those questions, Palestine has the right to exist and to be free.

I thank you, Professor Finkelstein, for helping me give rational form to what had previously been nothing more than an

ineffable feeling of empathy.

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As a lawyer, I can tell you that I fully agree with the incisive way in which, throughout several chapters of the book, you dissect the legal and evidentiary reasoning presented before and by the International Court of Justice. The case of Judge Sebutinde is simply repugnant; Judge Donoghue's contortions in the interview are not far behind. We shall see what happens. I believe the greatest point of controversy will be the *dolus specialis*. If the worst comes to pass, you will have to write another piece exposing the potential argumentative contortions that will undoubtedly be deployed to justify an infamy.

With esteem,

A reader of your book from the Caribbean.

Although I have sufficient command of English to maintain a fluent conversation, I decided to write this message in the language in which I think, Spanish, and then translated it with digital assistance.