

**Blase Bonpane on WORLD FOCUS,
Blase's Commentary on Jesus and Current Events.**

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(Blase begins the program with a chant.)

Blase: Hello, this is Blase Bonpane with World Focus, coming to you from KPFK, Los Angeles. We're podcast and available 24/7 on kpfk.org where we're heard internationally.

We listened to that hymn which is of recent origin, maybe about 1,000 years ago it was written and it tells us that where there is compassion and love, God is present. Now if people can't affirm the existence of God they can say "GOOD" is present. Those two words are quite related, aren't they?

Where there is compassion and love, good is present. Where there is compassion and love, God is present is the way it was written.

So, during the Christmas and New Year week, we've looked at some of these scriptural references in the life of Jesus. Our focus has been on lifestyle rather than dogmas that were created after his death because these dogmas can be very divisive and frequently just represent the arrogance of imperial religion.

Human beings take on the process of trying to define God and as they do that, they deify themselves. Such dogmatics are irreverent and self-righteous. Then when the new pop atheists talk about God/ no God they are generally talking about religion, but theism does not require a religion. It should have some understanding of comparative religions but it does not require a religion.

What does it require?

First, that there are qualities that have been respected by philosophers and theologians for centuries. These qualities are visible in human conduct but very often missing in the conduct of people who claim to be religious. We can see clearly that churches generally follow the state and rarely interfere with the state. This is so obvious in our own history.

Quasi-religious statements like the Pledge of Allegiance, we identify our nation with God. This is unfortunate because, after twelve years of reciting this “prayer” on a daily basis, students are apt to think that the state represents God and God’s foreign policy. Of course, nothing could be more obscene.

But the state is simply an entity that claims the right to legalized violence within its borders, and if it is an imperial power, it claims the right to use violence globally. The absence of religion makes an international and global spirituality possible.

And it is very possible.

If we look around the world and see various sermons given during the Christmastime, we find one that is quite striking by the Rev. Mitri Raheb in Bethlehem, of all places. The Rev. Raheb’s sermon stated,

“O little town of Bethlehem” is one of the most famous Christmas Hymns. Bethlehem has become almost a mythological place: Children imagine it with a few “huts,” a few camels and the holy family. At the time of Jesus, Bethlehem was a little town of 300-1,000 inhabitants. What people might not know is that the city of Bethlehem today is not in Israel but in Palestine, and that it is a bustling city with 28,000 people. One third of them are Palestinian Christians.

When Christians today sing “O little town of Bethlehem” they seldom think of the real city with the real people. When it comes to Bethlehem and to Christmas, Christianity has become so spiritualized and so commercialized. It’s all about Santa, the Tree, the gifts, and the food. But what happened in Bethlehem 2000 years ago was something real. Jesus was born as a refugee. His family was forced to leave Nazareth and go to Bethlehem. Later his family had to flee the brutality of King Herod and go into hiding in Egypt for two years. Today Bethlehem has almost 20,000 Palestinian refugees who lost in 1948, when the State of Israel was established, their land, homes and belongings and came to Bethlehem seeking refugee. They are still living in three refugee camps waiting for a just solution.

The Christmas story of the Bible has nothing to do with what we know today as Christmas. Take the story of the Magi or the kings from the East. That story is read in a nostalgic way and is being performed over and over again. But a closer look at the story will show that it talks about the Roman Empire and their occupation of Palestine. Empires do not control only the native people they rule; they also work to ensure that visitors coming in contact with the land and its native people are controlled. In 2010 a well-known evangelical preacher came to attend a theological conference in Bethlehem.

Upon arrival at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv, Israeli officials told him that they would like to invite him for a cup of coffee in their offices and have a chat. For almost four hours he was questioned about his decision to attend a conference in Bethlehem, what he thought of the Palestinian Kairos Document, and how he knew some of these “radical” Palestinian theologians. This was supposed to be VIP treatment. Others who are part of solidarity movements with Palestine are often detained at the Israeli airport and sent back to their home countries. When this highly reputed American evangelical preacher told us his story I told him, “Welcome to Palestine. As someone who knows his Bible well you should not have been surprised by such treatment. The same VIP treatment was also extended to the Magi from the east that came to see Jesus in Bethlehem. Herod too invited them ‘for a cup of coffee’ to ascertain why they wanted to travel to Bethlehem, and how they knew about the newborn child. So now you have experienced something biblical. Welcome to the Holy Land!” I still recall how everyone in the group laughed. Then an American woman attending the conference asked me, “So what should we tell the Israelis at the airport when they question us about where we have been? What should we say?” I replied “I wish I could tell you what the angel told the Magi, after visiting Jesus; basically showing them another route not controlled by the Empire. Unfortunately, all roads, airports and borders are controlled by Israel. By the way, an invitation to drink a cup of coffee by Israeli or Arab intelligence authorities is known in political jargon as interrogation.” We seldom read the story of the Magi as them being interrogated by the occupation that holds the power. But this is what it was.

Bethlehem at the birth of Jesus was a besieged city. Today Bethlehem is again a besieged city surrounded from three sides by a 25 foot high concrete wall. So what if Jesus were to be born today in Bethlehem? If Jesus were to be born this year, he would not be born in Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph would not be allowed to enter from the Israeli checkpoint, and so too the Magi. The shepherds would be stuck inside the walls, unable to leave their little town. Jesus might have been born at the checkpoint like so many Palestinian children while having the Magi and shepherds on both sides of the wall.

So where is the Gospel in all of this? The good news is this: God came into no other than this troubled, wounded and real world. He is real and wants to enter into our real world with all its complexities and fears. Christmas is real. It is not a myth or a wonder world. The Gospel is that God became one of us, one like us. He came as a child, vulnerable, and weak. And yet through his vulnerability was able to overcome the empire. Christmas is God’s promise to us that we will have life, peace, and future. For us Palestinian Christians and citizens of Bethlehem the Christmas story of then is our story today. Praise God that Jesus is the same: yesterday, today and forever.

Wow, that's coming right from the pulpit in Bethlehem at this Christmastime and I think everybody knows what the reference was there in Biblical literature. The reference that he was making was to the first chapter of Matthew which says that "At Jesus' birth what happened in Bethlehem at Judah in the reign of Herod, astrologers from the East arrived in Jerusalem and asked "Where is the newborn ruler of the Jews? We observed his star rising and have come to pay homage." At this news, Herod became greatly disturbed as did all of Jerusalem summoning the chief priests and religious scholars and asking them where the Messiah was to be born. "In Bethlehem of Judea," they informed him. Here is what the prophet has written."

So Herod became frightened and began his interrogation and told them, "Go and get detailed information about the child. When you have found him, report back to me that I may go and offer homage, too." Of course, then the astrologers were told by an angel, "Get up and take the child and his mother and flee into Egypt," and then Herod moved in to kill all of the male children that were two years old and younger living around Bethlehem. The slaughter took place in an attempt to kill the alleged Messiah and with the hope and the anger at the Magi, the astrologers, for not going back to Herod as he asked them.

So, this is all extremely interesting but you know Jefferson and others had problems in dealing with scripture. Jefferson sat down and cut out all the areas of the New Testament which he thought were fantasy and he wanted to say "What was this person about? Was it necessarily a religion?"

It seemed that Jefferson understood what I was trying to get across myself which was that this was rather a lifestyle which anyone can follow. And I would say it's not a religion in the form of dogmatics; it's more a lifestyle about how you live.

The first sermon that Jesus gave was called "The Sermon on the Mount" where he focuses his attention on the poor and we saw immediately that he was counter-intuitive and did not like conventional wisdom. Everything he said was unconventional. The focus of most people in the world is on money and power and he told us to focus on the poor. That is where our focus should be. Those who don't have, those who fall through the cracks. Those who don't have money and power.

And it was reinforced when he said, "Happy are those who are mourning for they shall be consoled." To enter into the mourning of people, the suffering of people, in order that we might have happiness, that is to have the Shalom fullness of life by entering into the sorrow of others. We have an understanding that we are doing something worthwhile. And again, today

everything's about power. Insane people continue to make nuclear weapons that can destroy this entire planet and the statement of Jesus was the opposite. Happy are those who are gentle. They will inherit the land. And you might want to think about it a little bit. The gentle have been winning. Who wins the wars of the recent years? The gentles seem to win. Those who don't have an air force win. Those who don't have a Pentagon win. Those who don't have a CIA win.

That's what happened in Indo-China. Those who didn't have anything won. Why did they win? Well, they were defending their family; that's why they won. They didn't need an air force. They didn't need a Pentagon. They didn't need a CIA. Happy are the gentle. They have inherited the land. They were able to fight knowing that they were starving and thirsting for justice and they will have their fill.

So, this is all counterintuitive and it's a secret that many people never seem to learn. They just never catch on. It doesn't require dogmatics. It's about a lifestyle.

"Happy are those who are merciful to others. They will be shown mercy." Well, we live in a sadistic situation. We are sadistic to our so-called enemies and to many people who are not our enemies. We are sadistic with our drones. We are sadistic with our military policy. We are sadistic in our prisons. This is entirely unnecessary. In a humane, loving society, people who are a danger to public safety could be mercifully instructed on how to become rehabilitated from what they have done.

This is not softness. This is intelligence. "Happy are those who are merciful to others. They will be shown mercy."

"Happy are the single hearted."

This is a lifestyle, just saying what you think and being who you are. That's a lifestyle, and so many people don't have it. They babble. They lie. Politicians are almost hopeless. It's almost impossible for them to tell the truth.

Here again, counter-intuitive.

“Happy are those who work for peace.” So many people earn their living by working for war. Wall Street is really War Street. That’s all it’s ever been. It makes its money on war and continues to do so.

Of course, Jesus knew people who followed this would have a problem so he stated that “Happy are those who are persecuted because of your struggle for justice.”

So, this is the lifestyle that he’s talking about and it should be so clear to everyone. I don’t think it requires sectarianism to see that lifestyle. Just as we can see the lifestyle of Mahatma Gandhi and say “That doesn’t mean we have to become a Hindu, does it?” We can do the same with Jesus and say “What was the lifestyle that he was promoting?” and a sectarian answer is not an answer. It means that we don’t understand what’s going on instead of that we do understand what’s going on.

So, this sectarianism is killing us throughout the world today. We see Sunni and Shia killing each other the same way Protestants and Catholics killed each other for centuries. And their new faith where they can say they know all about God which they don’t – nobody does – and the less we know the more reverent we can be. The more we claim to know about God the less reverent we are to the point where we become simply arrogant and self-righteous.

Well, these sects in Christianity have practically destroyed it so much so that many people who are very much interested in Jesus simply call themselves followers of Jesus indicating that they want to follow his lifestyle. They do not want to follow some manmade dogmas that just make people hate each other.

OK, look at it in Islam. We’re seeing terrible brutality between Shia and Sunni. Both Sunni and Shia Muslims share the most fundamental Islamic beliefs and articles of faith. The differences between these two main subgroups within Islam initially stemmed not from spiritual differences, but political ones. That is true throughout the history of Christianity, as well. These are political decisions.

Over the centuries, however, these political differences have spawned a number of varying practices and traditions which have come to carry a spiritual significance.

The division between Shia and Sunni dates back to the death of the prophet Muhammad and the question of who was to take over the leadership of the Muslim nation. Sunni Muslims

agree with the position taken by many of the prophet's companions that the new leader should be elected from among those capable of the job. This is what was done. And the prophet Muhammad chose friend and advisor Abu Bakr as the first Caliph of the Islamic nation. The word "Sunni" in Arabic comes from the word meaning "one who follows the traditions of the prophet."

Now on the other hand, some Muslims shared the belief that the leadership should have stayed with the prophet's own family among those specifically appointed by him or among Imams appointed by God himself. So the Shia Muslims believe that following the prophet Muhammad's death leadership should have passed directly to his cousin/ son-in-law Ali ibn Abi Talib.

Throughout history Shia Muslims have not recognized the authority of elected Muslim leaders, choosing instead to follow a line of Imams that they believe have been appointed by the prophet Muhammad or God himself. The word "Shia" in Arabic means a group of supporters of the party of people, the commonly known term is shortened from Shiatu ali or "the party of all" and they're known as followers of Ali ibn Abi Talib, the people of the household of the prophet.

So, these are the little slight distinctions at the beginning that lead to sectarianism. Sectarianism leads to hatred. It has all but destroyed Christianity. It is causing tremendous chaos in Islam at this time and we see that religion frequently follows the state rather than giving leadership. So what we have to do is talk about lifestyles that will change the state, lifestyles that can be approved by the former religious authorities of all the world.

Well, let's look at today. Let's go from the biblical years and the early Islamic years to today's New York Times. Here we have a wonderful ad, full page, which says, "Come together" and then it quotes Abraham Lincoln. "The struggle of today is not altogether for today - it is for a vast future also." His annual message to Congress, December 3rd, 1861.

Then, what do we see? "Starbucks.com – Fix the debt."

Now to understand what "fix the debt" means we have to go to our real experts and I would suggest that we see what Phyllis Bennis is saying because there we have an expert and she's talking about "Operation Fiscal Bluff - How to Fix the Debt / Budget Lobby. It's protecting billions in defense contracts for its corporate backers. See today's NYT: "Fix the Debt." Fix the Debt – a powerful corporate-backed lobbying group advocating debt reduction with a 60 million dollar budget *just for PR* – it's probably what paid for the ad today. It's failed to embrace

defense spending cuts as a “viable” deficit reduction option. Despite the fact that “defense” spending makes up more than half of discretionary spending. The group’s core principles, so-called “fix the debt”, focus on social security, Medicare and Medicaid reforms and pro-growth tax reform and fail to even mention defense spending. Friends, our economy doesn’t need growth, it needs distribution. You go back to the early days that we referred to before when John the Baptist was cussing everybody out because of their behavior and they asked, “What can we do?” “Share what you have,” is what he said, “and things will work out fine. Share...” well, that’s cooperation, not competition.

So Fix the Debt wants to point the finger at social security while virtually ignoring defense spending which makes sense *only* in light of its corporate backing. A review of the group’s corporate ties reveals that many of Fix the Debt leaders have lucrative connections to companies with billions of dollars in defense contracts. Fix the Debt leaders have ties to 43 companies with defense contracts totaling 43 billion dollars in 2012. Fix the Debt leaders profiting from defense include the group’s co-chairs, steering committee members and CEO council members. They have ties to these companies as board members, executive CEOs, and lobbyists. Now we can talk about Boeing, with 25 billion in defense contracts, or Northrup Drummond, with 8 billion, leading the pack. Then we have Boeing’s CEO, James McNerney, Jr., is on the Fix the Debt CEO council. And Northrup Drummond’s CEO Nick Fazio is on the Fix the Debt steering committee. These people are doing exactly what many members of congress are trying to do, which is to put a frame around social security and Medicare and saying we want all that money too for our trash business, our business that makes useless trash that kills people. And we want that money for that because we can make a profit off it. Honeywell and GE have ties to three Fix the Debt lenders, more than any other defense contractors.

So who discovered this? Well, Phyllis Bennis, an amazing scholar, and we do have some great scholars in the United States. She’s the director of the Institute for Policy Studies, you might check out IPS-DC.ORG. She has books, the fifth edition of her best-selling “A Primer – Understanding of the Palestinian / Israeli Conflict.” In its fifth printing now. Phyllis Bennis, thank you for explaining why we would see a full page ad in the New York Times today with a logo that looks like Starbucks – in fact it is Starbucks.com – and Fix the Debt.

So they are working with defense contractors to steal the money from social security and Medicare so that they can have more money to kill people with endless war. Well, let’s just call it what it is, and yet we continue to listen to people in Congress who pick on these programs without understanding that the United States spends very little on its people compared with the rest of the developed world – and we’re not happy about what’s going on in our culture.

So there will be more demonstrations.

Coming up, Friday, January 11, the anniversary of Guantanamo, and at that time we'll call attention to the type of films that are coming out at this time. We want to take a good look at the CIA's view of the world. And we're calling on everyone to be at the theaters in creative, substantive ways to expose the purpose and core message of this film, which states quite simply "torture may be bad, but it protects us." Do you see the slight problem there?

"Zero Dark Thirty" I would give a zero. I would say it's very dark and we should call "30" as journalists say, as it's worth as a piece "art." "Zero Dark Thirty" depicts the world through the CIA's eyes and falsely depicts torture as necessary.

This is a tragic statement for a film. It's exactly what was being said about slavery at the time of Lincoln. Slavery is very bad, but it's going to protect us and the economy. The theme was dead wrong. We hear the same thing about war: war is very bad, but it protects us. It does not. It will destroy us. We are a country filled with horrendous nuclear weapons, enough in our silos to destroy the world. Our life expectancy is quite short because of these weapons. Now the same specious rationalization is being used about torture. It does not help us, quite the contrary. It creates enemies; it is evil, just as war is evil.

We have great people dealing with this reality. I am proud of Phyllis Bennis. I am also proud of Glenn Greenwald who writes for the Guardian. He explains to us that we are recklessly endangering ourselves with our behavior. We are recklessly endangering every citizen of the United States – to say nothing of the rest of the planet. He goes on to say in an article that effectively conveys both the gross immorality and strategic stupidity of Obama's drone attacks, like this one reported in the Washington Post, which details with how the US-supported Yemeni dictatorship lies to its own people each time the US kills Yemeni civilians with its drone attacks and how these civilian-killing drone attacks relentlessly and predictably drive Yemenis to support Al Qaeda and to devote themselves to anti-American militancy.

I mean, we heard Chalmers Johnson talk about Blowback, it's the most obvious thing in the world, it's self-evident – but we don't get it because of public relations like we see in today's New York Times.

"Since the attack, militants in the tribal areas surrounding Radda have gained more recruits and supporters in their war against the Yemeni government and its key backer, the United States. The two survivors and relatives of six victims interviewed separately

and speaking to a Western journalist about the incident for the first time, expressed willingness to support or even fight alongside AQAP, as the al-Qaeda group is known.

"Our entire village is angry at the government and the Americans,' Mohammed said. 'If the Americans are responsible, I would have no choice but to sympathize with al-Qaeda because al-Qaeda is fighting America.'

"Public outrage is also growing as calls for accountability, transparency and compensation go unanswered amid allegations by human rights activists and lawmakers that the government is trying to cover up the attack to protect its relationship with Washington. Even senior Yemeni officials said they fear that the backlash could undermine their authority.

"If we are ignored and neglected, I would try to take my revenge. I would even hijack an army pickup, drive it back to my village and hold the soldiers in it hostages,' said Nasser Mabkhoot Mohammed al-Sabooly, the truck's driver, 45, who suffered burns and bruises. 'I would fight along al-Qaeda's side against whoever was behind this attack.'"

Similarly, the LA Times has a long article on drone attacks in Yemen and quotes Ahmed al Zurqua, an expert on Islamic militants, explaining the obvious: "The drones have not killed the real Al Qaeda leaders, but they have increased the hatred toward America and are causing young men to join Al Qaeda to retaliate."

(Short break)

Friends, I repeat the phrase that we might think about it – “Where there is compassion and love, God is there.” For those who can’t affirm the existence of God we can say equally well, “Where there is compassion and love, good is there.”

And so it’s necessary for us to talk about evil. We don’t like to but we have to identify it in order to deal with it and we’re so grateful that scholars like Phyllis Dennis and Glenn Greenwald are with us and Glenn is talking about how we are “recklessly endangering” the citizens of the United States and the rest of the globe with our behavior and he continues here saying,

“History will surely record that one of the most moronic collective questions ever posed is "Why do they hate us?" - where the "they" are: "those we continuously bomb and kill and whose dictators we prop up." Noting the two US drone attacks on December 24 in

his country, the 23-year-old Yemeni writer Ibrahim Mothana asked: "Two US drone strikes in Yemen today. Should we consider them a Christmas gift?!" That's exactly what al-Qaida undoubtedly considers them to be.

Speaking of the "why-do-they-hate-us?" question, the Bahraini democracy activist Zainab al-Khawaja has a powerful Op-Ed in the New York Times detailing the extreme brutality and repression of the regime against its own citizens, and explaining the self-destructive though steadfast support for that regime by the US and its close Saudi allies:

"But despite all these sacrifices, the struggle for freedom and democracy in Bahrain seems hopeless because Bahrain's rulers have powerful allies, including Saudi Arabia and the United States.

"For Bahrainis, there doesn't seem to be much of a difference between the Saudis and the Americans. Both are supporting the Khalifa regime to preserve their own interests, even if the cost is the lives and rights of the people of Bahrain.

"The United States speaks about supporting human rights and democracy, but while the Saudis send troops to aid the Khalifa government, America is sending arms. The United States is doing itself a huge disservice by displaying such an obvious double standard toward human rights violations in the Middle East. Washington condemns the violence of the Syrian government but turns a blind eye to blatant human rights abuses committed by its ally Bahrain.

"This double standard is costing America its credibility across the region; and the message being understood is that if you are an ally of America, then you can get away with abusing human rights."

With rare exceptions, the only people delusional and naive enough to believe the US is serious about its "commitment-to-human-rights" rhetoric - as opposed to exploiting human rights concerns as a tool to undermine regimes it dislikes - are found in the west. In the regions where the US enthusiastically supports even the most repressive regimes provided those regimes show fealty to US dictates, the stench of this hypocrisy, of this radical dishonesty, is so potent that it cannot be evaded."

Well friends, we're seeing what Greenwald said and I would just like to mention that we can't talk about gun control as a domestic issue only. Of course it's a domestic issue; we've allowed our nation to become a nation of gun fanatics carrying all sorts of assault weapons, threatening our people, and naturally we're concerned about domestic gun control. But we have to look at

the fact that we're connected to the rest of the world and related to domestic gun control is the control of weapons that can blow the planet away. We're putting billions of dollars into nuclear weapons that will probably destroy us, our civilization, and the world.

So, let's talk about gun control. Let's talk about gun control in the military. Let's talk about international gun control. The main weapon of mass destruction in the world is the assault rifle and that's of course, excluding nuclear weapons because they haven't been used since Hiroshima and Nagasaki and we were the culprits.

Yes, international gun control would be a very healthy thing to do.

Well, going back to some of the things that Greenwald has brought out which are important. He states that:

"... it is an extraordinary testament to the power of propaganda that one constantly finds westerners claiming with a straight face that the same country that hugs and props up the Saudis, the Bahrainis, the Qataris, the Kuwaitis and so many others is committed to undermining tyranny and spreading freedom and democracy. Or, as Hillary Clinton put it in 2009: "I really consider President and Mrs. Mubarak to be friends of my family."

The long-time Berlin correspondent for Al Jazeera, Aktham Suliman, recently resigned, and he explains in this rather amazing interview that he did so because the regime in Qatar, which owns the network, has been increasingly shaping and dictating the news network's coverage of events to advance the regime's interests. In particular, he cites Al Jazeera's coverage of the conflicts in Libya and Syria which, he says, has been systematically distorted in order to justify the wars which the Qataris seek against the dictators in those countries which they dislike:

"Of course Muammar Gadhafi was a dictator, and of course he'd ruled for far too long. Of course there was a desire among the Libyans to get rid of him. All that is clear. But it's also clear that killing a dictator, as happened with Gadhafi, is absolutely unacceptable on human rights grounds, revolution or no. And that's not emphasized. That is: We stressed the necessity of a revolution in Libya and the humanity of the revolutionaries, but said nothing about the murder of a dictator.

"What should also give us pause for thought is that it wasn't just Gadhafi who was killed. Many others were killed after him - including, incidentally, the man who shot Gadhafi.

He was killed by another group of revolutionaries. That's the actual environment in Libya. And that's exactly what you don't see on today's Al Jazeera. That's not professional.

"In Syria, too, society is divided. You have the pro-Assad people, and those who are against him. However, when you make one side out to be mass murderers and turn the others into saints you're fueling the conflict, not presenting the situation in an appropriate and balanced way. There are murders, injustices and good things on both sides. But you don't see that on Al Jazeera. My problem is and was: When I see Al Jazeera's Syrian coverage, I don't really understand what's going on there. And that's the first thing I expect from journalism."

As was true of Saddam, there is no question that Gadhafi and Assad have committed atrocities. But just as was true in Iraq, that does not justify the grossly simplistic propaganda that distorts rather than clarifies what the realities in those countries are.

Documents just obtained from the FBI by the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund reveal, as the New York Times put it, that "the [FBI] used counterterrorism agents to investigate the Occupy Wall Street movement, including its communications and planning" and in general show "how deeply involved federal law-enforcement authorities were in monitoring the activities of the movement." The heavily redacted documents, which can be read [here](#), reveal numerous instances of the FBI collaborating with local police forces and private corporations to monitor and anticipate the acts of the protest movement.

As obviously disturbing as it is, none of this should be surprising. Virtually every seized power justified over the last decade in the name of "terrorism" has been applied to a wide range of domestic dissent. The most significant civil liberties trend of the last decade, in my view, is the importation of War on Terror tactics onto US soil, applied to US citizens - from the sprawling Surveillance State and powers of indefinite detention to the para-militarization of domestic police forces and the rapidly emerging fleet of drones now being deployed in countless ways. As I've argued previously, the true purpose of this endless expansion of state power in the name of "terrorism" is control over anticipated domestic protest and unrest."

Well, we want to give credit to both Phyllis Bennis and Glenn Greenwald for identifying these very serious problems that we're living with at this time because everything is in place to have a complete police state and we think that can be turned around. That is our hope and that is why we remain optimistic. We recall the days of World War I where any criticism of the war could lead to imprisonment. We have all of that type of thing in place now. If it is implemented it will certainly destroy everything that we stand for in the United States.

People continue to comment on what has taken place in Connecticut and we should comment on it. We have comments from Josh Ruebner from the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation. Thoughts coming in are very worthwhile considering, ...

“Just three days before last week’s tragic massacre of 27 people, including 20 first graders, in Newtown, Connecticut, **Israel Weapons Industries (IWI)** proudly announced the opening of its U.S. subsidiary in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

IWI will now further saturate the market for guns in the United States by offering U.S. “shooting enthusiasts” several varieties of the **TAVOR semi-automatic rifle** and the **UZI sub-machine gun**, according to its CEO Uri Amit.

Speaking at a vigil in Newtown on Sunday, President Obama said: “We can’t tolerate this anymore. **These tragedies must end.** And to end them, we must change...Surely, we can do better than this.”

We share these sentiments and, along with the entire nation, offer our deepest condolences to the families affected by this profound tragedy. Adding these deadly Israeli-made guns to the U.S. market will only make this epidemic of gun violence worse.

Yes, President Obama, we must end these tragedies not only in the United States, but abroad as well. Last month, **Israel killed at least 182 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, including 47 children**, during an eight-day attack, according to the World Health Organization.

Israel killed these Palestinians with **U.S. weapons** provided as military aid at **taxpayer expense**. Earlier this month, we launched a petition to the State Department demanding that it investigate Israel’s misuse of U.S. weapons in Gaza and hold it accountable for violating the Arms Export Control Act.

So far, nearly **10,000 people** have signed the petition on our website and on **causes.com**. Help us double this number before we deliver the petition to the Obama administration next month by signing it and then posting it to your Facebook profile and tweeting it to your Twitter followers.

Clearly we must do more. Not only is the Obama administration failing to hold Israel accountable; to make matters worse, on International Human Rights Day, the Pentagon notified Congress that it wanted to give Israel **6,900 Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAM)** tail kits and more than **10,000 bombs**—weapons worth \$647 million—to replenish Israel’s arsenal for its U.S.-made **F-16 fighter jets.**”

So, we’ve got to look at gun control in a very serious fashion and understand that it’s yes – domestic, and yes – international, and we have high hopes that all of this can be brought about.

“Israel Weapon Industries (IWI) – a leader in the production of combat-proven small arms for governments, armies, and law enforcement agencies around the world – launches operations of its US subsidiary, IWI US, Inc.

The company has leased a 21,000 sq. ft. facility in Harrisburg, PA, and will initially begin marketing the TAVOR SAR bullpup rifle line in several configurations and the UZI PRO Pistol, which will be showcased at the 2013 SHOT Show, January 15-18, in Las Vegas, Nevada.”

Friends, let’s work on behalf of sanity and gun control and nuclear weapons control and war control. We’re deteriorating so rapidly that it’s very hard for our students to get an education. It’s very hard for our people to get medical care. The deterioration can only continue so long.

We realize that we’ve wasted our legacy on trash, unnecessary wars caused by lies. It’s time for us to repent and turn ourselves around and turn the nation around, as well.

And we do believe that all of this is possible. The gentle of the earth have been winning wars that they didn’t start. They win the war when they don’t have an air force; they don’t have a Pentagon; they don’t have a CIA; and they don’t have an NSA.

Thank you for listening today.