

August 31, 2004

I have received Mr. Kent's letter of August 25, 2004, regarding my complaint about Global's show "Jenin: Massacring the Truth". His response was disappointing and it did not even try to answer the three points I raised in my letter about what happened in the Jenin refugee camp (all sources I quoted were from the Israeli media). In addition to the continued distortion of facts about what happened, he insists on considering the Israeli version of events as a chapter of the holy book.

I will attempt briefly to set the foundation of historic facts.

- 1- The Jenin refugee camp was established in 1953 on 373 dunums (approximately one square kilometre) of land within the municipal boundaries of the Palestinian town of Jenin. It was established after the dispossession of the Palestinian people in 1948, where the creation of Israel resulted in over 400 Palestinian towns and villages being wiped off the map of the world and two-thirds of the Palestinian people being made refugees. The estimated 13,000 people in the camp were part of these refugees and their descendants. Global's so-called documentary presented a distorted image, by showing an aerial picture of the entire city of Jenin, including the refugee camp, as proof of the minimal destruction to the camp itself. This is like showing the city of Beirut from the air to prove that what happened at Sabra and Shattilla refugee camps was not as horrific as reported.
- 2- Since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, for the past thirty-seven years, the Jenin Camp and its people were under brutal Israeli occupation. The vast majority of its inhabitants were born under occupation and never knew freedom. The show and Mr. Kent's letter ignore the Israeli occupation as the main cause for the conflict.
- 3- The people and defenders of the refugee camp were in their ghetto and they were not attacking nor surrounding Tel Aviv; the Israeli army was the one who attacked, murdered and wreaked havoc on the camp and its inhabitants. The only crime the people of the camp did was to resist occupation and an advancing military machine. In his response, Mr. Kent refers to "civilians caught between Palestinian and Israeli fighters" and states, "in Mr. Himel's documentary (sic), there is recognition of those tragic losses on both sides of the conflict". We remind everyone that there were no Israeli civilians that lost their lives in Jenin, only the soldiers of an invading army.

Lets move to the immediate aftermath of the attack on the Jenin camp in April 2002, and rather pivotal points ignored by Global's "documentary".

- a- Israel sealed the camp from the outside world for at least ten days and when the Red Crescent-Red Cross ambulances were finally allowed by an order of the Israeli High Court to enter on April 13, 2002, the Israeli army restricted their movement. In fact, the Red Crescent stopped the recovery efforts for lack of cooperation from the Israeli army.

- b- Israeli troops tried to smuggle dead Palestinian bodies out of the camp to try to minimize the Palestinian casualties. The Israeli paper Ha'aretz reported on April 14, 2002 that, "The High Court of Justice issued an interim order Friday blocking the IDF from moving out the bodies of dead Palestinians from the Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank." And that, "Some of the bodies had already been removed from the camp Thursday and moved to a site near Jenin", and "armed Palestinians, will be buried in a special cemetery in the Jordan Valley."  
<http://www.haaretzdaily.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=151704&contrassID=2&subContrassID=1&sbSubContrassID=0&listSrc=Y>

The true count of Palestinian casualties will never be known due to Israel banning a UN fact-finding mission, and due to all the obstacles Israel put in front of humanitarian organizations in recovering the dead. Under the title "Profound contempt", the Israeli journalist Amira Hass wrote in Ha'aretz on April 15, 2002, (and we recommend this article to Mr. Kent and his Global superiors) "About 13,000 people live in the camp, whose area is about one square kilometre; 42 percent of them are children, 4.5 percent are over the age of 65. Even if we assume that it wasn't 90 missiles that were shot at the camp every day for a week, but 'only' 20, and even if we assume that it wasn't 10 tanks that fired and shelled simultaneously, but only two, isn't it reasonable to assume that civilians were killed, and not only 'terrorists in pockets of resistance'?"  
<http://www.haaretzdaily.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=152102&contrassID=2&subContrassID=4&sbSubContrassID=0&listSrc=Y&itemNo=152102>

Following are some Israeli reports about the numbers of casualties.

- On April 12, 2002 Ha'aretz reported that "The IDF issued a rare 'clarification' Friday, which corrected **a slip of the tongue** (*our emphasis*) by the army's chief spokesman, Brigadier-General Ron Kitrey. Kitrey told Army Radio on Friday that, 'there were apparently hundreds of people killed in the Jenin refugee camp'."  
<http://www.haaretzdaily.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=151544&contrassID=1&subContrassID=0&sbSubContrassID=0>
- Under the headline "200 Palestinians are believed to have been killed" the Ha'aretz paper reported on April 12, 2002 that, "The IDF intends to bury today Palestinians killed in the West Bank camp. Around 200 Palestinians are believed to have been killed in clashes with Israeli soldiers since the start of the operation last week, although it is unclear how many of the bodies can be buried."  
<http://www.haaretzdaily.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=151227&contrassID=2&subContrassID=1&sbSubContrassID=0&listSrc=Y>
- Ha'aretz reported on April 14, 2002: "The exact number of Palestinian dead at the camp is still not known. The IDF places the toll between 100 and 200."

We are not going to play the "numbers game" regarding the civilian dead in a refugee camp under attack by an overwhelmingly superior conventional army, which controlled all aspects of reporting and information about what transpired. Mr. Kent's letter and the

Global “documentary” also conveniently ignored Israel’s refusal to allow the official U.N. fact-finding delegation to tour the camp immediately following the events of April 2002, a delegation sent according to Security Council Resolution 1405. Suffice to quote the report of Amnesty International, issued on April 22, 2002, which stated, "The evidence compiled indicates that serious breaches of international human rights and humanitarian law were committed, including war crimes, but only an independent international commission of inquiry can establish the full facts and the scale of these violations". <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/ENGMDE150582002>

Mr. Kent’s glib dismissals of documented Israeli destruction and devastation and the voices of the Palestinian survivors in the documentary “Jenin, Jenin” are not just unbalanced journalism, but also smack of the worse kind of racism. On August 30, 2004, even the Israeli High Court, after lengthy legal challenges, was obliged to allow the screening of “Jenin, Jenin” in theatres and on television in Israel. <http://www.haaretzdaily.com/hasen/spages/471310.html>

It is obvious from Global’s letter that they are aware that there are contrasting viewpoints on this issue. As such, it is their duty, as Mr. Kent so ably pointed out, to offer a “broad spectrum of information”. Given that the station has aired Jenin: Massacring the Truth a number of times this year, a show even Mr. Kent recognized presents only one “reflection of an event”, and there have been numerous complaints about the show, it would seem these facts alone compel Global TV to offer their audience another viewpoint on this important issue.

Robert Fisk in the British paper the Independent on December 18, 2002, wrote: “As Index on Censorship reported, Bill Marsden, an investigative reporter for the Montreal Gazette has been monitoring Canwest's interference with its own papers. ‘They do not want any criticism of Israel,’ he wrote. ‘We do not run in our newspaper op-ed pieces that express criticism of Israel and what it is doing in the Middle East...’” <http://www.independent.co.uk/story.jsp?story=362545>

This is why we think Global, a CanWest company, will not allow differing points of view on the Palestinian-Israeli situation as part of their programming. Therefore, we ask the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC) to intervene and enforce balance on Global.

Yours truly,

Hanna Kawas  
Chairperson, Canada Palestine Association.

c.c. CRTC