

Rabbi Rosen Responds to the Questions of Iowans

On April 29, 2013, Rabbi Brant Rosen spent a very full day in Des Moines prior to his public forum at Drake University. In meetings with the media and small groups of interested folks, Rosen fielded questions throughout the day. The following is a short list of the most frequently asked questions and a summary of Rabbi Rosen's responses.

Q: Do you think we need to do a better job of reaching out to the Jewish community?

Dialogue and conversation are important. There is a place for that, but it should not get in the way of the work for peace and justice in Israel–Palestine or elsewhere. It is my job as a rabbi to work for the dispossessed and the oppressed.

Q: Is a two-state solution still possible?

I don't believe so. Demolishing homes, systematically moving Palestinians out of Area C (the primary area set aside in the peace process for a Palestinian state) into Areas A and B, revoking property and citizenship rights, Judaizing Area C – that's all been part of the plan. No way you can imagine a viable, contiguous state. Israel has moved people out, putting them behind walls and warehousing them.

Q: You say you are not hopeful about the prospects of a two-state solution. What would a one-state solution look like?

We don't know that yet. We are only beginning to explore alternatives. I look not to the political class but to the grassroots, to some creative thinkers for new possibilities. Whatever shape – federations? confederations? – must include equal rights for all the people on the land, national and cultural rights for all. These discussions are taking place in academic and activist circles. Perhaps with the death of the *peace process* we can find some new ways to respond.

Q: Why do you criticize Israel and ignore the rockets out of Gaza?

I believe in nonviolence. I try to understand why people respond violently. I understand that when people are oppressed they will eventually resist and sometimes the resistance is violent. The power dynamics are unbelievably weighted in Israel's favor – not only having one of the strongest militaries in the world, but also having the *unconditional* support of the only super power in the world.

You have to look at the casualty rate—the disproportionate Palestinian civilian deaths. In “Operation Cast Lead” it was overwhelming – about 1400 Palestinian deaths to 14 Israeli deaths.

Q: Why do you side with those who are firing rockets into civilian neighborhoods in Israel? It's terrible to experience the fear the people in Israel experience.

As a Jew I am implicated by the Jewish state. They do this in my name. I understand the fear of the Israelis. I have friends and family there and have spent significant amount of time in Israel. Targeting civilians is always wrong. Still, we cannot be so sanguine about

Israel's claim to minimize casualties. You know when you drop bombs in a populated area, or when white phosphorous is released, we all know the wind carries it.

I don't believe I'm taking sides. Long term security for Israel is not assured by going into Palestinian areas and bombing them with such ferocity. The question becomes, "Where will security come from? Will it come from greater and greater firepower or from granting human rights to all the people on the land?"

For more insights from Rabbi Brant Rosen, follow his blog at www.rabbibrant.com.