

PALESTINE

THE DRIVE TOWARD JUSTICE, FREEDOM AND PEACE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



STATE OF PALESTINE
PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION
NEGOTIATIONS AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Palestine and the Palestinians have been subjected to a systematic campaign of denial, renunciation, rejection, and negation. A systematic discourse that at its heart aims to maintain the vagueness; to convince free citizens of our globe that the issue is either too controversial or too complex to take a forthright position on. Israel's Hasbara campaign, an ongoing propaganda effort by Israel and its allies across the globe, has sought, from the very inception and arrival of Zionist settlers to the shores of Palestine, to question the existence of Palestinians, their right to their homeland, and to deny the legal and moral responsibility of the Zionist movement, i.e. Israel, for the dispossession and ethnic cleansing of Palestine.

Israel's discourse has been based on the following: (1) Israel is a democratic-secular state based on Judeo-Christian morality in the midst of a backward and despotic sea of Arabs and Muslims; (2) Israel is a strategic asset that advances American and European interests in the Middle East through its military prowess; and (3) Palestinians are either malicious or untrustworthy, devoted to a cult of violence, with a superficial connection to the land and undeserving of a state of their own. What is clear is that Israel and its allies do not aim to convince, as much as maintain, a smokescreen of controversy, sometimes costly forms of controversy for those individuals that are brave enough to take forthright positions in support of Palestinian human rights, including the right for self-determination. In other words, Israel and its friends are interested in YOU not taking a position.

The Trump presidency has so far accentuated that «facts» are simply malleable, changeable and alterable – if not outright fiction. It is an age where facts could be fabricated and utter lies could persist, where power could enforce a discourse wholeheartedly believed by millions of Americans over any “fact-checking” done by credible news organizations. For Palestinians, the assault on facts is not a contemporary phenomenon, nor is it the work of a single president. This assault has a long history and legacy going back to the nascent years of the Zionist movement. A campaign that denied the existence and determination of our people on the land of Palestine that encroaches on the basic human rights of Palestinians, and that denies them the right to self-determination and return.

In fact, Palestinians have been denied the right to collectively exist as a nation despite rightful and undisputed legal and moral claim over the land of Palestine. Palestinians have been called terrorists, violent, and devoted to death for simply

rejecting and resisting an ongoing settler-colonial occupation that denies them their basic human rights. Moreover, Palestinians have been labeled rejectionist, unwilling to compromise to reach a just and lasting solution, despite continued efforts by the Palestinian political leadership to achieve the promise of peace. This publication aims to clear the muddiness, to answer your questions, and to urge you to take a position – a position that is simple at its core: Palestinians deserve, and have a right to, an independent state of their own, to the fulfillment of their dignity as a nation, and to their basic human rights embodied in their ability to pursue life and liberty.

BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

BACKGROUND
QUESTIONS

1948

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BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

1

“Palestine was never a state”, why should it be one now?

The basis for Palestinian statehood lies in the undeniable fact that Palestinians have inhabited this land for thousands of years, nurturing a natural, intimate bond with a land that millions call home. Moreover, nation-states are a modern phenomenon, constructed from the ashes of previous empires and other forms of political and social organization. In this spirit, was there a United States of America before the American Revolution? Or was there an Italy as conceived of today before Giuseppe Garibaldi united the various warring Italian City-States? In fact, most states as represented in the United Nations have come into existence in the years following the Second World War, including the State of Israel. This also goes for the various Arab states that emerged after the demise of direct colonial rule including countries such as Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan among numerous other Arab states. Moreover, an independent State of Palestine will enable Palestinians to exercise their right to self-determination and accomplish a lasting and just solution with the end of Israel's occupation of Palestine. In other words, the emergence of an independent State of Palestine translates to an end of conflict with Israel. In this spirit, Palestine both fulfils Palestinian desire for self-determination and attains peace for all people living in historic Palestine, including Israelis.

2

What is the Balfour Declaration? What role did colonial powers play in the creation of Israel?

Israel is a state that could not have been founded without the direct support of colonial powers, specifically the United Kingdom. In fact, the Balfour declaration, a public promise by Lord Alfred Balfour declared British intent to support the “establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people”. The statement came in the form of a letter from the then British Foreign Secretary addressed to Lionel Walter Rothschild, one of the central figures of the Zionist movement. In the wake of the First World War, Britain established its mandate over Palestine. This so-called system was a thinly veiled form of colonialism and occupation that transferred land under Ottoman rule to the Allies.

The mandate system declared that it aims to control those countries until ready for statehood. Nonetheless, Palestine was subjected to a form

of British colonialism that intended to hand over the territory to the nascent and growing Zionist movement. In fact, the British facilitated and equipped the Zionists with the means to establish self-rule at the expense of the Palestinians living for thousands of years in the land of Palestine. These policies ranged from direct economic and political support, to the training of Zionist militias and the facilitation of Jewish immigration to Palestine. At the time of the inception of the British Mandate, Jews only numbered [8% of the total population in Palestine](#). The Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate were a cornerstone in the ability of the Zionist movement to later dispossess and ethnically cleanse the indigenous Palestinian population.

3

What is the Nakba? Why are Palestinians fixed on the past?

The *Nakba*, or catastrophe, expresses the calamitous events that led to the establishment of the State of Israel in the years between 1947 and 1949, and the occupation and subsequent annexation of approximately 78% of historic Palestine. The establishment of the State of Israel inflicted destruction on the Palestinian people, primarily as a result of the methodical and systematic campaign executed by the precursors of the Israeli Defense Forces - Zionist militias - of ethnic cleansing that dispossessed [957,000 Palestinians or 80% of the Palestinian population at that time](#). This included the destruction and [depopulation of more than 500 villages](#) and the near-emptying of major cities including Jaffa, Haifa, Akka (Acre), and Safad, among various other cities and urban centers, of their Palestinians citizens.

The Nakba was a fateful moment in the history of the Palestinian people. We are not stuck in the past, but the basic fact is that the past remains unresolved. In fact, the Nakba continues to this very day, through Israel's demolition of homes and its mass confinement of Palestinians, the checkpoints, the expansion of illegal colonial settlements, the Annexation Wall, and Israel's refusal to recognize its historical responsibility for the dispossession of millions of people and denying them their right of return. The Nakba is not a memory; it is everyday life under occupation. Moreover, most nations including Israel have historical narratives accounting for their past, present and future and the Palestinian national narrative is not in any way an exception.

4

What is the PLO? Why was it created?

In the wake of the Nakba and after the near-total destruction of Palestinian communities in what is now Israel, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was established in 1964 to realize two basic

rights: (1) the right of return; and (2) the right of self-determination for the Palestinian people. Through its establishment, the PLO was able to garner Palestinian, Arab and international support placing the organization as the sole and only representative of the Palestinian people.

The PLO adopted the idea that the liberation of Palestine and return of refugees can only be brought about through armed struggle. Nonetheless, in 1988 the PLO declared the establishment of a Palestinian state on 22% of historic Palestine, comprised of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. The PLO decided to pursue an end of conflict with Israel on the basis of two-states living side by side in peace and security. This led to the Oslo Accords and the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority as a transitory arrangement, and as to prepare the ground for a final status agreement with Israel. The PLO's efforts remain focused on the fulfillment of the internationally recognized rights of the Palestinian people, including through fully ending the Israeli occupation that began in 1967.

One of the goals of the Zionist movement after Al-Nakba, was to convert the Palestinian people into refugees spread all over the world with no rights or national identity. In 1959 the Egyptian foreign minister provided a recommendation to the Council of the Arab League in order to establish an official united entity to politically represent all Palestinians. The Arab League follow-up committee decided to hold the Palestinian National Council on 28 of May 1964 in Jerusalem in order to announce the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization "PLO" as the national umbrella and the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The meeting established the PLO, endorsed the National Charter, the Statute, and the internal regulations of the National Council, and formed the Executive Committee and established the National Fund and the Palestinian Liberation Army, and adopted the strategy of armed struggle.

In 1991, the PLO adopted the strategy of peace and negotiations in order to live in peace and security with the State of Israel on the basis of the two-state solution. In 1998, the PLO National Council amended the National Charter that included 33 articles. It endorsed the cancellation of 12 articles on the rejection of Israel, and amended 15 articles in accordance with the Wye River Memorandum.

What is the difference between the PNA and the PLO?

The Palestinian National Authority was established by a resolution taken by the [Central Council of the PLO](#) in 1993 in Tunis. It meant to serve as an administrative body that serves the Palestinian people inside the occupied Palestinian territory.

The PNA, an outcome of the Oslo Accords, was formed as an entity, for a provisional period, to manage and control the areas Israel withdraws from and according to the powers transferred to it by Israel. This was supposed to go on until the conclusion of permanent status negotiations with Israel in a timeframe of five years. The whole idea behind it was that the PNA would be the seed for a Palestinian state that would take the Palestinian people from occupation to freedom and independence. It should be emphasized that the PNA is the organ through which the Palestinians would gradually receive the powers from Israel according to the agreements with the PLO.

On the other hand, the PNA receives its legitimacy and mandate from the PLO. Therefore, the PLO, the highest political reference in the Palestinian political system, delegated the implementation of the agreements with Israel to the PNA. The PLO is the legal representative of the Palestinian people, and its presence, functions and actions are independent of those of the PNA. It consists of Palestinian political factions and independents that represent the Palestinian people with its political and social institutions that operate to serve all the Palestinian people in Palestine and in exile and the diaspora. All of the significant agreements with Israel were signed by the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people, while the implementation was however to be carried out by the PNA. Hence, the PNA is only a means or an arm of the PLO to bring about a smooth transfer of powers; building the institutions of the Palestinian State.

Is the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza under military occupation or is it disputed territory?

During the June 1967 war, Israel militarily occupied the remaining 22 percent of historic Palestine, comprising the West Bank including East Jerusalem, No Man's Land, and the Gaza Strip. In fact, Israel has imposed a multilayered, complex and brutal apparatus to govern occupied territory. There is no debate over the legal standing of occupied Palestinian territory. The international community and international law view this territory as Occupied

[The PLO Central Council is an elected body from members of the Palestine National Council \(PNC\) that can take legislative decisions on behalf of the PNC when it does not meet.](#)

Territory, as affirmed by various UNGA and UNSC resolutions. Moreover, the international community immediately rejected Israel's illegal annexation of East Jerusalem and continues to do so today.

Up to 2018, Israel has illegally transferred more than 600,000 settlers into the occupied State of Palestine.² More than 250,000 of those settlers reside illegally in East Jerusalem. In other words, Israel has not only placed Palestinians under a brutal and severe military occupation, but it has also violated international humanitarian and human rights law by constructing illegal colonial settlements in occupied Palestinian territory, imposing a complex legal, bureaucratic, militaristic system of control that many agree resembles the Apartheid regime of South Africa.

7

Is it anti-Semitic to support Palestinian human rights?

The idea that supporting Palestinian rights is a form of anti-Semitism has been utilized by Israel and its friends across the globe as a strategy to undermine Palestinian rights and enforce an aura of fear around any criticism of Israel. This strategy silences voices of conscience by enforcing severe forms of censorship. It is important to note that Palestinians reject any form of hate directed towards any group, including anti-Semitism. Nonetheless, criticisms of a country's systematic abuse of human rights cannot be placed under the tutelage of "anti-Semitism". Ironically, by conflating legitimate criticism of Israel's demeanor vis-à-vis the Palestinians as forms of "anti-Semitism", Israel is helping extreme "anti-Semitic" voices become mainstream.

Moreover, Israel's claim that it represents all Jews across the globe is problematic and reinforces discourses of anti-Semitism. We do not believe in this self-definition and we do not think that all Jews can be held responsible for Israel's violation of Palestinian human rights. In fact, we believe that such a claim is an inverted form of anti-Semitism that Israel perpetuates. Simply put, supporting the Palestinian right to self-determination, equality, and right of return is a position based on universal values of human rights codified in international law. Such a position cannot be anti-Semitic unless Israel claims international law is anti-Semitic.

8

Does Israel exercise violence in self-defense?

The conflict between Israel and Palestine is generally depicted as a conflict between two equal sides.

[The State of Palestine, in accordance with UNGA Resolution 67/19, has the borders of 1967: Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.](#)

In reality, the conflict is between one of the most powerful militaries in the world and a people that remain under a brutal and violent military occupation. [Between 2000 and late 2018, Israel killed nearly 10,000 Palestinians](#), most of whom are civilians. Israel's systematic use of violence does not fall under the framework of a state that defends its own borders. In fact, Israel's occupation, transfer of civilian citizens into occupied territory, which is a crime under international humanitarian law, makes its posture one of constant and permanent aggression. In other words, Israel plays offensive rather than defensive

To add insult to injury, Israel conducts atrocious mass killings routinely in various forms, including the use of advanced weaponry against an unarmed civilian population. This includes extrajudicial killings and execution without trial and the use of heavy bombardment designed to subdue Palestinians. Moreover, Israel has failed to stop Israeli settlers' "price tag" attacks against Palestinians that range in breadth and scope from burning of olive trees to the burning of Palestinian children and of mosques and churches. Israel uses violence as a means to subdue the Palestinians and ensure the continuity of its colonial settler project in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

9

Do you define Israel as a Democratic State?

First and foremost, as Palestinians we reject the notion that we have to recognize Israel's character. Nonetheless, Israel's own self-definition is revelatory, in so far as Israel combines the notion of being Jewish and democratic. This self-definition translates into real and actual tensions. In fact, over 20% of Israel's population is Palestinian. As it stands, Israel has close [to 65 discriminatory or 'apartheid' laws](#). There is, for instance, the Law of Return that guarantees automatic Israeli citizenship to all Jews irrespective of where they are born. Palestinians with Israeli citizenship, by contrast, are subject to a ban on family unification and are prohibited from living in Israel should they marry a fellow Palestinian from Gaza or the West Bank under the Citizenship and Entry Law. These types of discriminatory laws are multi-faceted and complex and challenge Israel's own self-definition as a democratic state. The idea that a stratum of Israel's society is subjected to systematic discrimination for the mere fact of being non-Jewish means that Israel's self-proclaimed democracy is one that is narrow, religiously-based and one-dimensional.

Why do you reject recognizing Israel as a Jewish State?

The idea that Palestinians should recognize the character of a state is quite bizarre. In fact, the PLO has already recognized Israel's right to exist as part of the Oslo agreements. Moreover, Israel has not demanded it be recognized as a Jewish state by any other state, including in its peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan. This only goes to show that the demand to recognize Israel as a Jewish state is meant to derail peace efforts rather than expedite or even facilitate them. Recognizing the Jewish character of Israel as it demands, means recognizing the structural discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel as normative. In short, the PLO has already recognized Israel's right to exist, and the real missing recognition is that of a State of Palestine on the 1967 border.

Why Israel's Nation-State Law is racist?

Israel's Nation State law is unique in so far as it sets a legal framework that reinforces Israel's discriminatory practices against its Palestinian citizens, practices that have been hereto *de facto*. In other words, Israel's Nation State Law made the factual (*de facto*) discrimination legal (*de jure*). The new law essentially treats Palestinian citizens of Israel as trespassers in Israel and enables their marginalization, discrimination and even their transfer. The Law's 11 articles proclaim Hebrew the national language and downgrades Arabic from a national language to just one of having a status within Israel, declares that self-determination is unique only to the Jewish people, encourages and advocates the build-up of segregated Jewish-only settlements in the West Bank, and declares Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, including East Jerusalem. The law makes it much harder for Israel to withdraw to the 1967 borders, enabling the continuation and expansion of illegal settlements and encouraging the creation of more Jewish-only settlements.

What is the Palestinian position on the Holocaust?

The Holocaust was undoubtedly a horrific and awful crime, not only against Jews and others, but against humanity at large. Israel has used this horrific crime to garner international moral and political support for its colonization project in Palestine. The utilization of the Holocaust is evident and needs little elaboration, but what is significant here is that Israel claims that due to the Holocaust, it has a right to uproot, pillage, destroy and ethnically cleanse Palestinians from their homeland, as it did in 1948. In other words, the major lesson Israel derived from

the Holocaust, a crime that at its heart dehumanized and negated the Jewish people leading to the mass killing and near-annihilation of European Jewry in the most awful of means, is that other, albeit different forms of negation, usurpation and elimination, can be exercised on another people; in this case, the people of Palestine. We believe that the lesson of the Holocaust is the fact that the persecution and horrific mass killings of the Jewish people does not give license to persecute other people, nor does it give license to exclusively claim a land and create one of the largest populations of refugees in the world, the Palestinian people.

13

Is the Right of Return designed to “flood” Israel?

The dispossession of 957,000 Palestinians and their descendants (7 million) is Israel's original sin. In other words, Israel is morally and legally responsible for the ethnic cleansing and dispossession of more than two-thirds of the Palestinian population in 1948, and the subsequent denial of their return to their villages and cities. If the right of return threatens Israel's existence, then perhaps the question is why a logical, just and rightful course of action threatens a state's existence. The problem lies primarily in what Israel claims to embody: a state for “Jews” that must maintain Jewish demographic superiority at the expense of the indigenous people of Palestine.

Despite the aforementioned, our vision requires a just solution to the Palestinian refugee issue in accordance with international law, and specifically UN General Assembly Resolution 194. Our position on refugees is also included and supported in the Arab Peace Initiative (API), which calls for “a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem to be agreed upon in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution 194.” A just solution to the refugee issue must address two aspects: the right of return and reparations. In other words, we seek a solution that recognizes the political and legal and responsibility of the events that led to the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, and a solution that is agreed upon with all parties concerned, including the State of Israel. In this sense, the right of return does not translate into flooding Israel, nor does it threaten its existence.

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What is your detailed position on the Right of Return?

Key to the resolution of the refugee issue is Israel's recognition of the applicable principles and rights of the refugees, including our refugees' right to return to their homes and lands. Israel's recognition of the right of return will pave the way to negotiating

how that right will be implemented. Choice is a critical part of the process. Our refugees must be allowed to choose how to implement their rights and normalize their status. The options for our refugees under UNGA 194 are: (1) return to what is Israel today; (2) return/resettle in the independent State of Palestine; (3) integration in host states; or (4) resettlement in third states. Rehabilitation in the form of professional training, education, medical services, provision of housing, etc. will also be a necessary component of each of the options, as are reparations.

Reparations consist of three elements: restitution, compensation, and satisfaction. The last includes Israel's recognition of its role in the creation and perpetuation of the Palestinian refugee upheaval, and a promise it will not commit the same acts against our people again. While Israel may have its own narrative to explain the circumstances surrounding the creation of Palestinian refugees, it is undeniable that when our refugees sought to return to their homes, Israel systematically, and unyieldingly, blocked their efforts. To this day, Israel continues to deny their right to return. Israel must unequivocally acknowledge its responsibility for these actions if there is to be a just, peaceful, and sustainable solution to the conflict.

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Do you accept that many Jews were kicked out of Arab countries? Aren't they also refugees?

There is no link between Arab-Jewish immigrants to the State of Israel and the forced displacement of Palestinian refugees – and to equate the two issues would diminish the historic narrative of those Arab Jews. The history of Arab Jewish immigrants is more complicated than appears and is a separate issue, and cannot be conflated with the forced displacement of Palestinians. Many Jews immigrated of their own accord, believing in the idea of Israel as a state and adopting the tenants of Zionism. Treating them as refugees denies them their own agency. Moreover, in many cases, the Zionist movement and the State of Israel played an active role in creating the conditions for the exodus of Arab Jewish immigrants from the countries they resided in in the Arab world. There is ample historical evidence that suggests that the Zionist movement and the State of Israel actively, and at times deceptively, urged Arab-Jews to immigrate to Israel. Further, we are for the right for return for all people including Arab Jewish immigrants to their original homeland. We support and welcome their return to Arab countries and for all their rights to be fulfilled by those responsible for their exodus, including the State of Israel.

What is the Palestinian stance on the use of violence?

International law affords people the legitimacy to resist occupation. In this spirit, Palestinian resistance is no different than any other nation's resistance against foreign invaders and occupiers. To this end, the PLO has adopted a policy of popular non-violent resistance against the occupying power. We believe in the ability of Israelis and Palestinians to achieve a just and lasting peace without resorting to violence.

The Gaza Strip is locked and sealed by Israel. People have been faced with an intensified isolation, living in the largest open-air prison in the world – this has been amplified to dangerous levels since 2000. In fact, Israel counts the calories per Palestinian individual that it allows into Gaza, exemplifying the level of detail it ascribes to for the control and subjugation of people. Israel's security will always be compromised as long as it continues to occupy others, expand illegal settlements, confiscate land and subjugate people. Israel's logic of control based on extensive use of violence will beget violence. Therefore, we believe that violence can only be defeated if justice prevails. We believe that Israel encourages violence by foregoing the possibility of a peaceful resolution and its insistence on the continuation of its current policies of expansion and deepening of the illegal settlements in occupied territory. In this sense, Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon and its subsequent withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and ensuing siege, while simultaneously rejecting the possibility of peace with the PLO, has given credence to the idea that Israel only withdraws through the use and utilization of violence.

ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS



ISRAELI
SETTLEMENTS

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ISRAEL'S ILLEGAL COLONIAL SETTLEMENTS

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What are Israel's Illegal Colonial Settlements?

One of the major misconceptions in relation to the illegally built settlements is their depiction as quiet neighborhoods in occupied Palestinian territory. First and foremost, the transfer of a civilian population into occupied territory is a war crime prohibited under international humanitarian law. In addition, what is also significant about illegal settlements is that they are positioned to create a matrix that confines Palestinian urban development, limit Palestinians' ability to build large infrastructural projects intended to create a better environment for development, and are positioned so that a Palestinian state cannot emerge. In other words, the settlements' *de facto control of 40% of West Bank land*, without even including other areas that are off-limits for Palestinians, separates the West Bank from East Jerusalem, and creates an archipelago of Palestinian villages and cities disconnected from one other. In sum, settlements are a tool designed by Israeli policy makers to limit the possibility of the emergence of a contiguous and independent State of Palestine.

18

Who are the Settlers?

Settlers are Jewish-Israeli citizens who are incentivized to live in the occupied State of Palestine through various financial incentives given by the Israeli government. Settlers are subject to Israeli civil law, while Palestinians are subject to Israeli military law. Moreover, settlers could be divided into three groups: (1) ideological settlers that live in occupied territory for religious and political reasons; (2) economic settlers that reside in occupied territory for the purposes of cheaper housing; and (3) ultra-orthodox settlers that live in these settlements for the availability of separate and cheap housing.

Many settlers belong to violent ideological militias that attack Palestinians on a regular basis. The nature of the attacks range in breadth and scope, but have been deadly on many occasions including the most recent death of a Palestinian mother of eight, Aisha Mohammad Rabi, near Nablus. These violent attacks are largely left unresolved with systematic complacency by Israeli authorities. In fact, the Israeli Internal Security Agency (Shabak), has repeatedly called on the Israeli government to give the security agency more leeway in pursuing such crimes, but without any success. In a *10-year review by an Israeli NGO, Yesh Din*, published in

May of 2015, the organization concluded that 85% of all investigations into settler committed violence including arson, damage to property, mutilation of trees etc. – ended with no further action by the police, and that the odds of conviction in such cases stands at only 1.9% of cases investigated. The main types of incidents against Palestinians include stone-throwing at Palestinian homes and travelling vehicles, physical assault, uprooting or damaging trees, setting fire to agricultural property and crops, and other acts of vandalism against property.

19

Is Israel a Settler-Colonial State?

Settler-colonialism is based on the idea that negation and elimination of the native population is necessary for the successful establishment of a settler state. Various forms of negation and elimination have been utilized by the State of Israel, including the destruction of Palestinian villages and cities in the 1948 war. This process continues today by implanting illegal settlements and enforcing a total obstruction on Palestinian life.

We believe that Israel's posture is one of negation of Palestinian rights and non-acceptance of the fact that Palestinians have existed and continue to exist on the land of Palestine. We also believe that Israel seeks to uproot Palestinian communities allowing for its project of a state for "Jews" to prosper at the expense of the native, indigenous Palestinians.

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Isn't the "Wall" built for security purposes?

No. The Annexation Wall is not built for security purposes and that does not mean it does not serve any security function. The Wall has been largely built for the purpose of annexing and securing Israeli settlements. The length of the Wall for example, is more than double the 1967 border – why would Israel build a wall twice the length of the 1949 armistice line to secure its borders?

The International Court of Justice issued an advisory opinion in 2004 concluding that the Wall constitutes a grave violation of international law. Thus, the Wall achieves three objectives: (1) [annexes almost 9.3% of the land in the West Bank](#); (2) separates Jerusalem from the rest of the occupied West Bank; and (3) allows Israel to appropriate water and natural resources in critical areas. The impact of the Wall is severe, separating loved ones from one other and separating farmers from their land. In many instances, the Wall translates into the annexation and appropriation of private Palestinian land. In short, the Wall is more than a "security" necessity as Israel claims, it is one of the tools applied by Israel to prevent the establishment of a contiguous and independent State of Palestine.

How does Israel forcibly displace Palestinians to this day?

Israel has appropriated and annexed thousands of acres of Palestinian land for the build-up of illegal settlements and associated infrastructure. It has also imposed an administrative burden on Palestinians, making it nearly impossible to obtain building permits in East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank, specifically in so-called [Area C of the West Bank](#). This has meant that Palestinian are unable to expand current housing and are rendered outside the law, creating a condition whereby the normal population growth does not register in Israel's urban development plans, nor in its legal and administrative apparatus.

This forces Palestinians to build without the required permits and face the threat of house demolition as a result. In fact, Israel has [demolished 5,000 homes since 1967](#) in East Jerusalem alone, [and 19,000 in total since the 1967 occupation](#), displacing tens of thousands of Palestinian families, the majority children. Moreover, Israel applies strict residency restrictions in East Jerusalem, including the so-called Center of Life test on the native inhabitants of East Jerusalem. Almost 15,000 Palestinians have had their residency in East Jerusalem revoked since 1967 on the basis of the center of life test. This makes it impossible for a Jerusalemite to live temporarily outside Jerusalem, and maintain his/her rights to residency in the city. Not only should Palestinian Jerusalemites maintain their residency under the center of life test, they must constantly prove to Israel that they qualify under the test. This has impacted the fabric of Palestinian life, forcing Palestinians from Jerusalem to rethink marriages of partners or Palestinians living outside of Jerusalem. Moreover, Israel is engaged in a policy of evicting Palestinian communities specifically in so-called Area C, by forcibly displacing them into confined areas. The case of Palestinian Bedouin living on the eastern gateway to Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley is a clear example of the continuation of Israel's forced displacement policies.

Israel still controls the Palestinian population registry, which has been used as a tool of forcible displacement since 1967, effectively dividing Palestinian families while preventing the return of Palestinians to occupied Palestinian territory.

Is the Gaza Strip under Israeli occupation?

Yes. The Gaza Strip is part and parcel of Occupied Palestine, which includes the West Bank, and which

[Area C is the equivalent to 61% of the Occupied West Bank, which remains under full Israeli control.](#)

has been under Israel's military occupation since 1967. The Gaza Strip is a 360km² small strip of land by the southeastern Mediterranean. It is surrounded by an Israeli Wall with a narrow border with Egypt. It is considered one of the most densely populated areas in the world with over 2 million people living on only 360 km²(over 5,500 people per square kilometer). Half of Gaza's population are children.

For decades, Israel maintained a permanent presence in Gaza, expropriated land and built illegal settlements in the narrow strip. In 2005, Israel redeployed its armed forces along the Wall. Contrary to Israeli propaganda, the redeployment of its forces does not constitute an end to Israel's status as an occupier. The central element, under international law, of the end of the occupation is of effective control of the territory. In this sense, Israel has maintained effective control by imposing a blockade on the Gaza Strip, including limitation on export and import, on freedom of travel for Palestinians, and complete control over Gaza's airspace, maritime boundaries, and land crossings. Moreover, Israel has routinely entered Gaza and maintained its right to do so at any time it sees fit. Since 2005, it has launched numerous military campaigns, including the 2014 war that led to [the killing of 2,200 Palestinians](#). By denying its effective control over Gaza's airspace, borders, movement of people and goods, and its repeated military forays into Gaza, Israel is attempting to absolve itself from its responsibilities as an occupying power.

THE REALITY OF PALESTINIAN LIFE UNDER ISRAEL'S MILITARY OCCUPATION

PALESTINIAN LIFE
UNDER OCCUPATION

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THE REALITY OF PALESTINIAN LIFE UNDER ISRAEL'S MILITARY OCCUPATION

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How does the Israeli military occupation impact Palestinian daily life?

It is hard, if not outright impossible, to sum up the impact of the occupation on everyday Palestinian life. Nonetheless, Israel has built one of the most complex systems of control with various forms of power assertion. This includes, but is not limited to: a policy of mass confinement and imprisonment that has directly impacted more than one million Palestinians; the imposition of a complex matrix of restrictions on movement and access; the build-up of illegal colonial settlements and various forms of barriers, including the Annexation Wall; active prevention of family reunification; and systemic infringements on Palestinian freedom of expression and right to education and life and the siege of two million people in the Gaza Strip .

Israel has also geared the Palestinian economy towards dependency, capping its potential and relegating the Palestinian economy to a subservient end-economy for its products. Moreover, Israel has unabashedly exploited Palestinian natural resources – land, water, minerals, energy, and others – with impunity. Israeli policies even extend to the intimate, by barring marriages between various clusters of Palestinians – Palestinians from Jerusalem, the remaining West Bank, Gaza, and Palestinian citizens of Israel – and denying them the ability to establish families through strict family reunification laws.

Moreover, Israel continues to deny Palestinian refugees, and those living in exile, from returning, even for the purpose of visitation or studies, and it continues to control the Palestinian population registry, giving it the sole role in determining who can reside in occupied Palestinian territory and who cannot. The occupation and the system of control that allows its perpetuation engulfs Palestinian life from the intimate to the public and impacts daily routines, nature of work, and quality of life for nearly 6 million Palestinians living in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The urgency of ending Israel's prolonged occupation emanates from the need to normalize Palestinian everyday life.

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Is it fair to compare between Israel's occupation and the apartheid regime of South Africa?

Yes. Israel's regime does in fact resemble that of South Africa, but in many aspects, is much more brutal.

In fact, ever since Israel's creation, and specifically since 1967, Israel has maintained a dual system of law: one that applies to its citizens and another that applies to Palestinians living under Israeli occupation. These policies include: separate road systems for Palestinians, the extensive annexing and expropriation of Palestinian land, the brutal and often deadly attacks on Palestinian communities, the continuous displacement of Palestinians through the demolition of homes and denial of residency and, construction of an Annexation Wall that [annexes more than 9%](#) of Palestinian land in the West Bank. All these violations are accompanied by killing, wounding, maiming, and imprisoning thousands, including hundreds of Palestinian children. In this spirit, Desmond Tutu posited, "I know firsthand that Israel has created an apartheid reality within its borders and through its occupation. The parallels to my own beloved South Africa are painfully stark indeed."

This comparison to the Apartheid regime in South Africa is not just a historical comparison, but also a legal one. Israel has clearly and factually met the criteria for such a regime under the Apartheid Convention. The first three articles of Apartheid Convention show the depth of Israeli actions and violations against the Palestinian people on a daily basis. A 2017 report published by ESCWA and later retracted due to Israeli and U.S. pressure, states: "This report establishes, on the basis of scholarly inquiry and overwhelming evidence, that Israel is guilty of the crime of apartheid."

25

What are the major policies that help Israel sustain its military occupation?

The major modes of control that Israel applies range from the use of direct and unfettered violence, to the establishment of a highly restrictive access and movement matrix that cripples Palestinian life. The occupation is sustained through three pillars: (1) the application of cruel and unusual punishment; (2) the capping and obstruction of Palestinian socio-economic development; and (3) the treatment of Palestinians as an inferior "other". These are the major modalities, which obscure the experiences of Palestinians who suffer from various traumatic experiences. In this sense, we encourage you to speak and talk to a Palestinian, to understand how the occupation is embedded in their daily lives from occupying their senses – what they see, smell, view, but also, the loved ones they lost, their sons and daughters that reside in a freezer in what can only be described as the mutilation and further subjugation of Palestinian bodies after death. The images, sights, horizon of experiences are all defined by life under occupation, the fear of losing another member of the family, the highly emotional experience of

awaiting the release of your son or daughter from prison to name a few.

Statistics might help give an indication of the totality of these experiences, but they hide the emotions and real-life trauma that defines them. Israel's policies and actions in occupied territory, from a soldier stopping a Palestinian and undressing him or her on a remote checkpoint, to the killing of Palestinian children, are ingrained in Palestinian daily experiences, and they enable Israel's forceful and brutal occupation embed fear and terror in Palestinian daily life. In short, occupation is sustained by terror.

26

Does Israel practice racial discrimination against Palestinians?

Yes. Racial discrimination by Israel against non-Jews is predicated primarily on the idea that Israel is an exclusively Jewish State by ingraining the concept of a "Jewish Nationality". Palestinians are "non-Jewish", therefore, they are discriminated against on the basis of their origin as Palestinian natives, or in other words, for their national origin. This goes for Palestinian citizens of the State of Israel, Palestinians living under military occupation, and Palestinian refugees.

The UN committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination noted racially-based forms of discrimination as practiced by Israel, including in spheres such as right to return/immigrate, family rights, access to housing and education, allocation of land, protection from violence, freedom of movement, the right to work, to right to health, and access to water resources and religious sites, are an ever-present reality. These policies are also supported by non-state entities such as the Jewish National Fund, the World Zionist Organization among others, and therefore, create a multi-layered system of discrimination that engulfs Palestinian life.

27

What is the impact of the Israeli occupation on Palestinian economic development?

Ever Since Israel occupied the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; the Israeli military government promulgated [almost 2,500 military orders](#), forcing regulations on our affairs in trade, agriculture, banking, industry, insurance, and tourism—essentially controlling every aspect of our lives. These laws were geared toward turning the Palestinian economy into one that is subservient to the Israeli economy. As an example, before the Oslo Accords, Israel actively discouraged the development of a manufacturing sector in tradable goods in

occupied Palestinian territory while promoting labor mobility, both of which led to increased Palestinian dependency on the Israeli market.

After the signing of the Oslo Accords, and especially after the lapse of the five-year transitional period stipulated in the Declaration of Principles, the dependency of Palestinian labor on the Israeli market was transformed into a dependency on the foreign-funded public administration sector embodied in various Palestinian National Authority institutions. In short, the Palestinian economy was, and remains, captive. It is an economy that is literally surrounded by a Wall, governed by a dominant power, choked by illegal settlements and settlement infrastructure, and undermined by Israel's severe restrictions on the movement of people and goods. Many studies have attempted to calculate the cost of occupation on the Palestinian economy. Conservative estimates suggest that the Palestinian economy could at minimally double/triple in its total output if the occupation ends now.

28

In what ways does Israel practice outright theft of natural resources?

Israel practices outright theft of natural resources in various realms, most importantly through its use of land and water. The theft of Palestinian land is obvious and needs little elaboration since the very build-up of illegal settlements and associated infrastructure is a clear example. However, water is also an important resource that has been subjected to Israeli exploitation. In fact, at present, Israel exploits over 90 percent of all trans-boundary water resources for exclusive Israeli use and allocates less than 10 percent for Palestinian use. This comes despite the fact that the great majority of the areas, where the various aquifer basins are fed, or "recharged," lie within the State of Palestine. Further, Israel not only steals Palestinian water but sells it back to Palestinians at several times the cost.

Moreover, by limiting Palestinian access to water, Israel effectively bars Palestinians from developing a sustainable agricultural sector that ends Palestinian importation and dependence on Israeli agro-products. These dual forms of theft, the theft of land and water (including minerals, natural gas and oil resources), have meant that our ability to create a sustainable and prosperous economy is obstructed and capped.

29

What is the impact of Israel's occupation on the Education Sector?

Israeli occupation engulfs every aspect of Palestinian life including our ability to run and develop the education sector. The policies range in scope and

breadth and include the recurrent bombardment of schools, the closing down of universities, the eviction of students and the arrest of staff and students. Moreover, Israel prevents scholars and teachers from obtaining residency to teach and live in Palestine, and often denies academics entry on the basis of attending or giving lectures in the occupied State of Palestine. This has undermined Palestinian ability for instance to maintain a normal school year calendar, or to attract international scholars to teach at local universities, or to build links with universities and schools across the world. In this sense, the Palestinian educational system is deprived of its ability to flourish under a brutal occupation. At many historical junctures, Israel criminalized education, as occurred during the First *Intifada* (*popular uprising*) when it closed down Birzeit University, arrested any students or teachers holding or participating in educational activities, and banned education for Palestinian prisoners. Consequently, Palestinians held non-violent protests to have the right to paper and pencils in the prisons.

More recently, the Israeli government has been trying to impose the Israeli curriculum in Palestinian schools in occupied East Jerusalem, a further Israeli violation of its obligations under the IV Geneva Convention, trying to deny Palestinian students of their national identity and narrative.

30

What is the impact of Israel's Occupation on the Health Sector?

Israel has held the Palestinian health sector captive and has undermined its ability to provide effective and efficient service to the Palestinian population. This is the result of various policies including, the closing of borders with the outside world which hindered the introduction of several advanced-technologies. Moreover, Israel imposes visa restrictions preventing highly qualified medical staff from visiting for short periods to help develop the health sector, hindering the possibility of attracting highly trained and professional Palestinian doctors (without Palestinian residency) to live and work in Palestine.

The closure of East Jerusalem, the largest and most important hub of medicine with its advanced hospitals and medical centers, stifles Palestinian access to these hospitals. Moreover, the hundreds of Israeli checkpoints that are opened and closed on a whim, coupled with the back-to-back patient handover system for West Bank/Gaza to East Jerusalem ambulances, have caused the conditions of severely sick patients to deteriorate and led to numerous cases of mothers giving birth at checkpoints. In addition, the strict closure of Gaza since 1993, and even more so since 2007, has drastically worsened the situation, increasing

mortality rates among Gazans. In fact, 54 medical patients from Gaza died in 2017 alone, because Israel did not issue travel permits to access medical treatment.

PALESTINIAN PRISONERS



PALESTINIAN
PRISONERS

PALESTINIAN PRISONERS

31

Who are the Palestinian Prisoners?

On 7 June 1967, the Israeli occupying forces issued Military Proclamation No. 1. Since that time, Israel has issued over 2,500 such military orders, with colossal impact on Palestinian day-to-day life. These orders serve as a legal justification for the arrest of Palestinians suspected of committing so-called "offenses". The nature of the offenses ranges in scope and breadth, and has led to the arrest of more than 800,000 Palestinians since 1967.

More than 40% of the Palestinian male population has been subjected to imprisonment. Even more troubling is that Israel has a conviction rate of 99.74% of Palestinians arrested. What this indicates is that the policy of imprisonment is one of a systematic nature, designed to sustain the occupation and to subdue the Palestinians and quell any form of resistance. Therefore, imprisonment is one of the defining features of Palestinian life under occupation and it targets all groups including the elderly, children, women and men of all ages and from different social, political, and religious backgrounds.

Israel has used its power to arrest and detain, as a means to control the Palestinian population and punish any political activity aimed at challenging Israel's occupation, thus violating basic values and norms of human rights. Even Palestinians peacefully protesting the confiscation of their lands are subject to arrest and detention. The majority of Palestinian political prisoners are charged with offenses under Israeli military orders. These orders employ a broad definition of "security", such as the ban of political expression, among others. For instance, Military Order 101 states that it is "forbidden to conduct a protest march or meeting (grouping of ten or more where the subject concerns or is related to politics) without permission from the [Israeli] Military Commander." The order also prohibits the distribution of political articles and pictures with "political connotations". Similarly, Military Order 938 even considers "supporting a hostile organization by holding a flag or listening to a nationalistic song" as a "hostile action".

32

What is Administrative Detention?

Administrative detention refers to the detention of individuals for preventative purposes. It is a procedure that allows the Israeli military to hold detainees indefinitely on "secret information" without charging them or allowing them to stand trial. Israel uses administrative detention as a

quick and efficient alternative to criminal trial, circumventing international procedural protections for the detained. Under Israeli law, administrative detention orders may last for up to six months, with indefinite renewal at the end of each 6-month period, with Palestinians held without charge or trial during this period.

Israel routinely renews the detention orders and may do so any number of times, thereby holding Palestinians without charge or trial indefinitely. Moreover, the Israeli occupying forces detains Palestinians on a broad definition of “security threat” – a definition so broad as to include “political subversion”. Further, detainees are not informed of the reason for their detention. Also, while detainees may appeal their detention, neither they nor their attorneys are allowed to access the State’s “secret” evidence, making it very difficult for them to refute the allegations against them. [Since 1967, Israel issued at least 50,000 administrative detention orders](#) and currently, over 450 remain as administrative detainees without charge or trial. This policy as practiced by Israel is illegal under international law.

33

Does Israel arrest children?

Under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Israel is obligated to refrain from imprisoning children except as a measure of last resort and only for the shortest period of time. Yet, [over 12,000 Palestinian children were arrested and detained between September 2000 and December 2017](#). More than [220 children remain in Israeli jails, some as young as 12 and 13](#).

Almost all child detainees have reported some form of torture or mistreatment, whether physical (beatings or being placed in painful stress positions) or psychological (abuse, threats or intimidation). In 2017, the majority of Palestinian children prisoners (65%) were subjected to physical abuse and strip searches, according [to a report issued by B’tselem and Hamoked](#). Children are routinely held in detention centers under appalling conditions. In some centers, up to 11 children have been packed into cells as small as five square meters. Children are also kept in centers with adults, all in contravention of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This is a systematic policy employed by Israel impacting the normal and healthy development of Palestinian children and disrupting Palestinian family life. It is telling that Israel is the only state in the world that has a military court for juveniles.

Does the Palestinian government pay salaries to political prisoners?

A major line of attack employed by Israel relates to Palestinian socio-economic support that includes salaries for Palestinian political prisoners. Israeli propaganda has employed this talking-point in an effort to cut and limit international funding of the Palestinian National Authority and as a means to show Palestinian culpability in encouraging violence. Nonetheless, the social welfare system that the PNA employs has been effective as a means to support families of prisoners who lose income, and has helped many Palestinians live a productive life after their release.

These social safety net programs (a) provide humanitarian support to the substantial number of Palestinian families that have lost a bread winner in a society already marred by persistent poverty and has the highest unemployment rates in the world; (b) prevent prisoners and their families from being exploited by radical groups; and, (c) deter recidivism.

Any step by the PNA to stop such a system has severe repercussions on thousands of Palestinian families, and will further delegitimize the PNA in the eyes of its own population, increasing the prospects of violence. Moreover, we believe that the current scope and breadth of Israel's military justice system and its all-encompassing nature, including the sheer numbers of Palestinians arrested, justifies the maintenance of this social welfare program. In fact, the issue of political prisoners is one of the key issues that has a great national consensus among Palestinians.

PEACE PROCESS



PEACE
PROCESS

PEACE PROCESS

35 What is your vision for a just and lasting peace?

Our vision is simple, it is the Palestinian people being able to enjoy the same rights granted by the international community to any other people; it is the implementation of international law and UN resolutions that support the independence of the sovereign State of Palestine on the 1967 border, with East Jerusalem as its capital, including a just solution to the refugee issue based on international law and UN Resolution 194.

This would consolidate the internationally-endorsed vision of two sovereign and democratic states on the 1967 border, with equal rights for all their citizens. We believe that once the foundation of peace and security is established, including the full implementation of international law laid out in a peace agreement, various forms of economic, socio-political cooperation between Palestine and Israel are possible and beneficial for all. We believe that peace with the Israelis means a more stable, more prosperous and a more democratic region. We also believe that the benefits of peace outweigh any political short-term gains by maintaining the status quo. Our vision is shared by members of the international community including Arab and Islamic countries, as embodied in the [Arab Peace Initiative](#). In essence we believe that peace in the holy land will dramatically change the region, allowing for a better and more prosperous future.

36 Are Palestinians rejectionists? Do “they always miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity”?

The words of one of Israel’s foremost diplomats, Abba Eban, that “Arabs never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity” has penetrated the lexicon of Israel’s apologists and has been widely used to undermine the credibility of the Palestinian and Arab negotiator for the past three decades. Nevertheless, facts run counter to the myth. What we can state with no shred of doubt is that the PLO leadership is sincere about achieving a just and comprehensive end-of-conflict agreement with Israel on the basis of a two-state solution. An objective examination shows the opposite of Israel’s

[The Arab Peace Initiative \(API\)](#) offers Israel full normalization with 57 Arab and Islamic countries in exchange of fully ending the occupation that began in 1967 of all Arab territories, the establishment of an independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem its capital as well as reaching a just and agreed upon solution to the refugee issue based on UN Resolution 194.

claims: Palestinian acceptance of the State of Israel and the confinement of Palestinian pursuit for an independent state on the remaining 22 percent of historic Palestine, the denouncement of violence, and the significant strides made by the Palestinians to meet the road map to peace criteria is attested to by numerous Israeli security officials, various international organizations including the IMF, World Bank and the Quartet. As of 2012, all the above-mentioned international institutions have declared Palestinians ready for statehood. Meanwhile, Israel has continued to perpetuate and deepen its hold over Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, leading both sides further away from peace. It is Israel that is missing the historic opportunity to end the conflict with Palestinians on terms that allow for mutual acceptance and recognition of both peoples in states of their own.

37

Are Israel's positions in negotiations rejectionist?

Yes. There is ample evidence over Israel's rejectionism and recurrent ability to miss real opportunities in the pursuit of a comprehensive end of conflict agreement. In fact, one of the clearest examples of Israel's rejectionism is in the policies it advances to this date in occupied territory, including the build-up of illegal settlements. Moreover, Israel's historic rejection of the API is another clear example of its unwillingness to broker a peaceful end of its occupation. The Saudi-brokered API, which was endorsed by the Arab League's 22 members during the March 2002 summit held in Beirut, outlined comprehensive steps to end Israel's occupation and realize an end of conflict agreement. Arab leaders offered Israel full diplomatic recognition and normalization of relations in return for the withdrawal from lands occupied in 1967. The plan is based on UN resolutions 242 and 338 which collectively called for Israeli withdrawal in exchange for peaceful ties with its Arab neighbors and the "respect for the right of every state in the area to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries". It also reaffirmed an Arab League resolution taken in June 1996 at the Cairo Extraordinary Arab Summit that "a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East is the strategic option of the Arab countries, to be achieved in accordance with international legality, and which would require a comparable commitment on the part of the Israeli government". Unfortunately, Israel declared the plan unacceptable and failed to seriously engage with the offer.

What is the major obstacle towards the advancement of peace?

Simply put, it is the will of the Israeli political leadership that stands in the face of any real, credible political agreement that ends the conflict by refusing to endorse the two-state solution and the principle of equality for all citizens. We believe there are many reasons for this current political alignment within Israel's polity, chief among them is the unwillingness of the international community, including the United States of America, to end its unconditional support for Israeli state policy, with Israel being effectively treated as a state above the law.

History has taught us that Israeli leaders are only willing to engage in a meaningful process when there is a real political or economic price to pay. At this moment, Israel seems to benefit from unfettered support embodied in the recent move of the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, U.S. diplomatic protection of Israel in the UN, and the continuation of U.S. aid to Israel. This includes the fact that the European Union and its Member States, Israel's main trade partner, is unwilling to take concrete measures against Israel's colonial settlement enterprise. Without any credible third party willing to take measures incentivizing both sides to reach an agreement, Israel will continue to entrench its settlement project in occupied Palestine with impunity. The ideological and political calculations of the current Israeli leadership are shortsighted, unhelpful and extremely dangerous for the current dynamics and future of the region.

Did the Palestinians reject a "Generous Offer" at Camp David?

A highly held myth among American and Israeli policy circles is that Palestinians rejected a generous offer by Prime Minister Ehud Barak at Camp David. The widely held myth is utilized repeatedly as a major talking point for Israeli apologists claiming that Palestinians never desired peace, and that their intentions are malicious at best. Nonetheless, it is disingenuous to imagine that a 100-year conflict could be resolved in a fortnight without any of the core issues, including Jerusalem and Refugees, being discussed before the summit.

The Barak offer was a significant move toward further negotiations, but it failed to meet Palestinian demands and Israel's very obligation to withdraw to the pre-1967 borders. In fact, an analysis by the Foundation of Middle East Peace concluded that the offer only proposed to relinquish control over between 77.5-81 percent of the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem, which most likely included Israel's retaining control over the Jordan Valley. Moreover,

the offer included Israel's continued control over one-third of occupied East Jerusalem and all of West Jerusalem. Further, Israel wanted control of the third holiest site in Islam, Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound where "Israel, incredibly, also demanded Palestinian agreement to the construction of a synagogue." These facts alone make such an offer not as generous as it was made out to be. In fact, no Palestinian leader could accept those terms for an end of conflict agreement. Further,, the Palestinians did not outright reject it, however, they returned from the summit thinking that the offer would be the basis for further negotiations. Shlomo Ben Ami, a member of the Israeli delegation to the Camp David talks and Israel's Foreign Minister at the time, said: "if I were a Palestinian, I would have rejected Camp David."

40

Did the Palestinians reject a "Generous Offer" by Ehud Olmert?

We can sincerely say that both sides were the closest they have ever gotten toward the attainment of a peace agreement in the final year of Olmert's premiership. Nonetheless, Olmert chose to launch a war on Gaza and soon, revelations over corruption haunted the beleaguered Prime Minister, making any offer illegitimate in the eyes of Israel's own political system. The myth among Israel's apologists holds that the then Prime Minister Ehud Olmert presented a map of a future Palestinian state. Nonetheless, they fail to mention that the map was presented on a napkin, already after Olmert decided to resign from his post as Prime Minister as a result of a corruption investigation. It also fails to mention that the Palestinian side presented its own offer (a border modification of 1.9% of land equal in quantity and quality) and that the Palestinians officially requested the U.S. Administration to keep, in addition to Olmert's map, for the basis of future negotiations. Thus, the Palestinians did not reject Olmert's offer, however, the political turmoil facing Israel's prime minister at that time made it difficult to continue with the process or to give it full credence.

41

Isn't it true that Palestinians never offered any concessions?

It is repeated almost tenaciously that Palestinians never made any concession in the spirit of achieving a two-state solution. But consider the facts: the Palestinians argue for the creation of a Palestinian state based on the internationally-recognized June 4, 1967 borders, to live alongside Israel. In other words, the Palestinians have recognized the State of Israel on 78% of historic Palestine, as well as Palestinian negotiators' willingness to agree to minor border modifications, equal in quantity and quality,

as well as on international mechanisms to solve the refugee issue. Palestinians have been clear that any agreement with Israel must be in accordance with international law, yet, Israel remains unwilling to make the compromises needed to attain a two-state solution and end of conflict agreement. Israel has not recognized a Palestinian state, it continues to transfer its civilian population to the lands within the territory of the State of Palestine, and have not taken any significant steps towards the attainment of peace. We simply ask you to look at the actual record of concessions that both sides have offered in the interest of peace, and you will find that the only party that has made any concession is Palestine.

42 Doesn't the internal division between Hamas and Fatah derail peace efforts?

The internal division has many roots, but among those is the conflict over the best way to attain Palestinian national goals, including the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. A credible peace process that achieves a two-state solution will ease the way towards internal reconciliation as all parties come to terms with a new paradigm, ending one of the major points of contention in Palestinian internal political dynamics. The peace process will allow the PLO to credibly argue for negotiations based on international law and UN resolutions leading to an independent State of Palestine on the 1967 border and to engage Hamas on this very point. Moreover, the PLO is the sole representative body of the Palestinian people. As such, there is no doubt about its ability to sign agreements with foreign governments, including Israel. Additionally, Hamas has agreed that if a peace agreement is reached and is put to a national referendum (Israel also plans to put any peace agreement to a national referendum) that it will accept the outcome and has recognized PLO legitimacy in negotiating with Israel. We do not believe that the current internal division derails peace efforts; on the contrary, we believe that a meaningful peace process will provide a credible political horizon for resolving all issues, including internal reconciliation.

43 If East Jerusalem is under Palestinian control, how will the rights of Jews to worship be respected?

Jerusalem is holy to three monotheistic religions and the rights of worship for all three religions and their followers from across the world is our sacred duty, both as a people and as a state. Palestine will make sure that any holy place under its governing control will be open for worship and that the rights of freedom of religion and worship are respected.

We are open to arrangements that guarantee mutual access to cultural and religious sites within both states; we are also open to the idea of an “open Jerusalem”, in the context of East Jerusalem being the sovereign capital of the State of Palestine. Palestine is also open to any mutual security arrangement that guarantees the safety and peaceful co-existence of all religious communities residing in Jerusalem, Palestine, and the region more broadly, just as it is committed to equality among all its citizens. As a matter of fact, Palestinian Christians and Muslims are those who, under a foreign colonial occupation, suffer from violation of their right to worship.

44 Why won't you return to the negotiations table without preconditions?

There is a distinction between negotiations *as a process leading to a defined end-goal*, and the negotiations process *as the end goal in and of itself*. Israel's definition of negotiations is the latter. All settlements are illegal under international law. Transferring parts of one's own civilian population into occupied territory is a war crime under the Rome Statute and a grave violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Even if we put aside the fact that settlements constitute a war crime, it is simply illogical to expect negotiations to take place while Israel continues to undermine the prospect of achieving peace by eating up more of the land. It has also been proven that Israel has used negotiations as a smokescreen to strengthen its colonial-settlement enterprise, something that is easily highlighted by the number of settlers being almost tripled over two decades, since the signing of the Oslo Interim Agreement. Therefore, it is critical, just like in any other peace process, to have guarantees that such crimes and violations are not going to continue.

45 What went wrong in the U.S. led negotiations of 2013-2014?

The PLO took the difficult decision to postpone Palestinian accession to international conventions and UN organizations in exchange for the release of 104 pre-Oslo prisoners, an existing Israeli obligation dating back to the 1993 Oslo Accords. The fourth and final phase of prisoners – 30 prisoners – were also supposed to be released. Nonetheless, Israel reneged on its own side of the deal. Since Israel failed to fulfill its side of the deal, the PLO was no longer obliged to postpone the Palestinian accession to international treaties and organizations. It is important to note that the PLO has remained fully committed to this American-led 9-month process, despite an escalation of oppressive Israeli policies such as the killing of Palestinian civilians, raids on

vulnerable communities, arbitrary arrests and detentions, home demolitions and the revocation of residency rights in Jerusalem and beyond. In a markedly watched speech, the then Secretary of State John Kerry, blamed the failure of negotiations on Israel's failure to release the fourth batch of prisoners and Israel's insistence on building more illegal settlements.

46

What about the idea of a One-State Solution?

We believe that there is a one state reality today. There is effectively one *de facto* government between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, and that is the government of Israel. A one state solution necessitates two parties, and we do not believe Israel is willing to negotiate a one state solution with the Palestinian side. The only real option that is still available is a two-state solution that safeguards the rights of both peoples. This is currently the only realistic option to end the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Having said that, Israeli policies are geared toward entrenching the one-state reality and solidifying the two-systems separating Palestinians and Israelis, a system that favors Israeli-Jewish settlers over the indigenous Palestinian population, effectively creating an apartheid system. This makes Israel the only apartheid like regime in the 21st century. In the future, new generations of Palestinians will conceive of the one-state solution as the only viable road for a meaningful end of conflict, as Israel has made sure to destroy any political horizon, destroying the prospects of peace based on the two-state solution on the 1967 border.

47

Why are the Palestinians growing weary of American leadership in solving the conflict?

Our situation is linked with the successive failures of U.S. policy. The U.S. needs to face its own moment of truth: if it wants a two-state solution, Israel cannot be treated as a state above the law. It is precisely because of the lack of a clear American stand and its willingness to tolerate Israel's misbehavior and violations of international law that the Palestinians are growing weary of American leadership in solving the conflict. In fact, we believe that American policy, specifically under the current Trump Administration, has turned from a passive posture vis-à-vis Israeli misconduct, toward a more active role in supporting the Israeli settlement project and the systematic denial of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. This makes the U.S. a culprit in the occupation rather than a credible third-party active in brokering a two-state solution.

INCITEMENT



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INCITEMENT

INCITEMENT

48 What is Incitement? How does Israel's occupation embody incitement?

Israel's occupation is the best embodiment of incitement. By its very nature, the occupation denies the Palestinians their right to life and liberty in a state of their own. Incitement is the action of provoking unlawful behavior or urging someone to behave unlawfully, and Israel manages to do both. In fact, the build-up of Israeli settlements, the failure to stop settler violence/ terror, Israel's engagement in acts of killing and violence against Palestinian communities and forced displacement of Palestinian families violate the core tenants of international law and underline the extent to which incitement in Israel is systematic state policy, rather than the work of some extreme voices.

49 Why do Palestinians engage in incitement against Israel?

In the past decade, Israel has persistently accused Palestinians of conducting a systematic campaign of incitement that results in violence. However, the reality runs counter to myth. The Palestinian leadership has been bent on creating a culture of peace that allows for mutual understanding and co-existence, and that has been translated into various policies including amendments made to Palestinian textbooks and a policy of direct engagement with Israel's public by Palestinian leaders, including the Palestinian President.

Nonetheless, the presence of the occupation and its impact on Palestinian daily life is a major factor in creating an environment conducive to violence. When Palestinians are routinely killed, when houses are demolished, when land is confiscated, when settlers engage in daily systematic attacks against unarmed villagers, when Palestinians are subjected to one of the largest mass confinement systems in the world, it is those elements, i.e. Israel's actions, which lead to violence. There is a simple fact that Israel closes its eyes to, Palestinians want to live in a state of their own, without the presence nor continuation of a foreign occupation. In sum, it's not "incitement" that is a motivation to resist the occupation. Israel must end its prolonged military occupation and illegal actions and policies for a culture of peace to be promoted between Israel and Palestine.

Yes. The Israeli leadership engages in highly racialized forms of discourse against Palestinians, including Palestinian citizens of Israel. This includes the current Prime Minister who in the last elections called on “Jews” to vote for the right-wing government because “Arabs are voting in droves”. This is a state that allows its Minister of Defense, Avigdor Lieberman, to call for cutting the heads off of Palestinians, referring to Israel’s own Palestinian citizens. This is a country where numerous politicians have called Palestinians “pigs”, “dirty”, “monsters”, and even stated that “they do not exist”. In fact, hatred and racism towards Palestinians have reached new heights. [A report by Hamleh, The Arab Center For the Advancement of Social Media, indicated that every 71 seconds there is a Facebook post inciting against Palestinians and Arabs.](#) Moreover, Israel’s textbooks do not anywhere show Palestinian towns, nor do they recognize the 1949 armistice lines, and many Israeli religious schools teach children that the destruction of the Al-Aqsa Mosque is a necessary act for the return of the Messiah. This virulent and systematic form of racism is not a symptom, nor is it the the work of individuals, but represents a systematic discourse that abrogates, negates, and dehumanizes Palestinians.

A credible peace process that aims to truly end the conflict is the only cure for the culture of hate. To build bridges between Palestinians and Israelis, peace is the only way forward. A culture of peace cannot be built without an end of the occupation, without Palestinians living in dignity in a state of their own. While, the Palestinian leadership is committed to the creation of a culture of peace, there is a limit to what could be realistically achieved under Israel’s brutal and military occupation. Moreover, we are alarmed by the statements, policies and sentiment of the Israeli government and its leading figures and the systematic racism that Israel suffers from, codified in many laws and policies that discriminate against Israel’s own Palestinian citizens and against all Palestinians. Israel’s occupation after all is a racialized form of occupation that applies different sets of laws on the basis of national origin, more clearly stated, Israel’s occupation is racist. We welcome, and will continue to welcome, any initiative that strives to address Israeli incitement and the creation of a culture of peace in the region.

MOVING FORWARD



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MOVING
FORWARD

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52 Why have the Palestinians resorted to the UN and the strategy of internationalization? Isn't that unilateralism?

Resorting to the UN is the natural right of any state. In many instances we signed treaties or joined organization in the UN that have little or nothing to do with the conflict. We acceded to these treaties without any reservations in order to empower women, children and the freedoms of choice and religion. We simply do not see why anyone would be opposed to Palestine committing itself to a convention that protects the basic human rights of its own people and that places such obligations front and center and implants itself within Palestine's legal environment.

The question of Palestine began with a colonial decision taken by the United Kingdom through the Balfour Declaration, negating the Palestinian right to self-determination, something that continued with the UN decision to divide Palestine in 1947, without taking into consideration the rights and will of the indigenous population of Palestine. It is therefore a problem created by the international community and it is their responsibility to solve it with the implementation of the long overdue inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

We also resorted to the UN to salvage the two-state solution and to speed up the negotiations process. We cannot wait until all Palestine is infested with settlers and settlements while the world continues to conduct business as usual with Israel. By joining international treaties and mechanisms, we are able to apply more pressure on Israel and leverage that pressure in order to speed up the process of negotiations and achieve a just and lasting solution to the conflict. Moreover, we are not seeking to clash with anyone. Our tools are legitimate and non-violent. We base our actions on international law and the right of our people to exercise its overdue and inalienable rights. We will pursue this non-violent track, including all possible diplomatic avenues in a way that serves the best interests of our people and the cause of a just peace.

53 What measures did the State of Palestine take to ensure security in the region and beyond?

Palestine has engaged in a state-building exercise that included the reform of its security sector. The Palestinians have also met their obligations under

bilateral treaties signed with Israel, including the resumption of security coordination. Nonetheless, this coordination has not been two-directional and Israel continually fails to cooperate with the Palestinians on various security concerns, including the trafficking of drugs, criminal networks, and homicides. Moreover, the Palestinian Security Forces have played an integral role in regional security assistance. This entails the exchange of information and direct operational support in various theatres.

Nonetheless, the best way to achieve security is through peace. Currently there is a military occupation that threatens the security of the State of Palestine and Israel. Both Israeli occupying forces and Israeli settlers regularly attack Palestinians. It is ironic that the security of the aggressor is to be guaranteed by the victim. In fact, as Dr. Hanan Ashrawi says, "We are the only people on earth asked to guarantee the security of our occupier, while Israel is the only country that calls for defense from its victims." History has shown in recent years that hostilities end once rights are returned back to their owners and when the concerns of the victims are properly addressed – once an independent State of Palestine is established. A centralized government will be the sole legitimate power to enforce security and protect its borders. No faction or party will be, or should, be above the law.

54 Is the BDS movement helping negotiations and achieving the two states solution?

The BDS movement is a civil society led initiative that at its heart adopts international law as its organizing framework. We believe that the international community should not participate nor recognize or aid the continuous violations of Palestinian human rights. This should translate into actions and not mere declarations. The pressure that the BDS movement is able to mount could lead Israel down the road to peace. We support any peaceful initiative that utilizes non-violence and peaceful means to pressure Israel to change its conduct and stop its abuses of human rights. We believe that cooperation should be the dominant paradigm in our drive towards peace. Nonetheless, BDS and other forms of civil and non-violent disobedience help change the calculus of current Israeli leaders bent on maintaining the status-quo.

55 What is the Palestinian peace initiative as proposed by President Mahmoud Abbas at the United Nations Security Council in early 2018?

Driven by our conviction in a just, lasting and comprehensive peace, and our belief that peace

is a strategic choice that will secure our region for both Palestinians and Israelis, President Mahmoud Abbas proposed a peace plan that meets the needs of both Palestinian and Israelis. The Palestinian Peace Initiative calls for the convening of a peace conference that is solidly based on international law and with broad international participation by actors from the region and beyond. The conference will set the following agenda: recognizing the State of Palestine as a full member of the United Nations; ingraining mutual recognition of the State of Palestine and the State of Israel on the basis of the 1967 borders; and the formation of an international multilateral mechanism that is designed to assist both parties to realize an end of conflict agreement on final status issues including borders, refugees, water and Jerusalem. Moreover, the peace plan inscribes the principle that all parties must refrain from unilateral actions, particularly those that would prejudice the outcome of a final solution, as set forth in Article 31 of the Oslo Accords of 1993. The Plan also calls for:

1. Respect for international law and the relevant resolutions, including Security Council Resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) through to Resolution 2334 (2016), and the Arab Peace Initiative, and the signed agreements.
2. Preservation of the principle of the two-states, i.e. the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with the State of Israel in peace and security on the basis of the 4 June 1967 borders, and rejection of partial solutions and a state of provisional borders.
3. Acceptance of minimal border modifications, in equal value and ratio, with the agreement between the two parties.
4. East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine and an open city for the faithful of the three monotheistic religions.
5. Ensuring the security of the two states without undermining the independence and sovereignty of either of them through the existence of an international third party.
6. A just and agreed solution for the Palestine refugees on the basis of resolution 194 (III) and in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and, pending a just solution, continuation of the international commitment and support to UNRWA.

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Why is the role of the international community key for the realization of peace?

The international community is responsible for the beginning of the Palestinian Nakba, catastrophe;

first through the Balfour Declaration, that negated the political rights of the people of Palestine, and then through the UN Partition Resolution, the international community was keen in the creation of Israel while doing very little for the protection and implementation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Therefore it is not only a legal obligation, but a moral responsibility for the international community to honor its obligations in Palestine.

The role of the international community, specifically of states that consider Israel a strategic ally, is integral to the full implementation of international law and UN resolutions, leading to ending any conflict between Israel and Palestine. The international community must recognize that Israel will not be incentivized to pursue peace without actual and real consequences that end its near-total impunity. In this sense, the international community holds significant leverage that it historically failed or was unwilling to utilize vis-à-vis Israel.

In fact, in many instances powerful states engage in acts of complicity with Israel's occupation by allowing trade with illegal settlements, by moving embassies to Jerusalem, and by continuing financial ties and aid to Israel without any caveats attached. It is clear that Israel relies on such backing and is not willing to forgo the deep economic, political, and military ties it has with many countries across the globe. We also believe that only if such ties are subjected to real review by these states, including by imposing sanctions, that Israel will be forced to change its political calculus and end its prolonged occupation.





CONCLUSION

The answers to the questions highlight the nature of conflict, not as a conflict of equals, but as one between a strong, powerful and highly militarized state and an unarmed Palestinian population yearning for peace and justice.

The story of Israel's prolonged military occupation is a story of family life disrupted, of people dispossessed, and of a state that is willing to enact policies of racialized violence against an unarmed population. It is in this spirit that we Palestinians have the most to lose from the failure of the international community and Israel to realize the promise of peace. For us, peace is the establishment of a state that opens up the possibility of life and that ends undue suffering.

It is in this spirit that we believe in peace, and yearn for an end of conflict agreement. Nonetheless, it is clear to us that the international community, specifically under the current U.S. Administration is interested more in the politics of the status-quo, rather than in the politics of peace. In fact, the recent measures by the U.S. Administration only underscore the reality of international culpability in Israel's crimes against the Palestinian people and the tacit and public support of grave violation of international law. It is in this sense, that we urge you to inspect the facts, to visit and learn about Palestinian life under a brutal and violent military occupation, and to understand how this occupation impacts the day-to-day life of every Palestinian. It is also in this spirit that we urge you to take a position.

We continue to be committed to tenants of non-violence and a peaceful end of the conflict. We will pursue every possible diplomatic and non-violent means to realize our right to self-determination, equality and return. Our vision is a vision of peace and justice for all, a vision of life for all, a vision for new hope and possibilities in a turbulent region. We believe that standing on the side of Palestinian human rights is also standing on the side of peace and security for all. It is only by ending the occupation that Palestinians and Israelis can dream of a different future.



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