

Palestinian Resistance

Against The

Israeli Occupation

The Legacy Of Ziad Abu Ein





Introduction

Every day, millions of Palestinians all over the world struggle to regain their internationally recognized inalienable rights. Sixty-seven years after the beginning of the Palestinian exile at the 1948 Nakba and 48 years after the Israeli occupation of 1967, Israel continues to control the lives of the entire Palestinian nation. The systematic violation of Palestinian rights by Israel has been strengthened by the culture of impunity granted to the Israeli government by the international community.

The Palestinian people have pursued various methods to resist the onslaught of settler-colonialism and its associated regime of control. Palestinian popular resistance has been a key feature of Palestinian political action since the beginning of Palestine's struggle against colonialism throughout the British Mandate period until today. This year, we mark 10 years since the beginning of a new form of popular resistance created as a result of the build-up of an apartheid wall in villages across the West Bank. Palestinians today are creating new tools to confront the challenges that the illegal Israeli take-over of their land presents. These range from the planting of trees, to events (soccer matches, demonstrations, improvised villages etc...) and meant to grab headlines and send a clear message to international public opinion and to the policymakers in Brussels, Washington D.C. and across other world capitals: enough complicity, enough impunity, the occupation must end.

The Palestinian Resistance against the Israeli Occupation

As a response to the construction of the illegal Israeli Annexation Wall and settlements, Palestinian communities began to organize peaceful demonstrations across villages in the West Bank. From Burin, Bil'in and Nil'in to Sheikh Jarrah, Al Ma'sara and Cremisan, local movements began to challenge Israel's occupation with non-violent tactics that soon attracted the attention of many foreign, including Israeli, activists who would later join the movements.

The roots of the Palestinian popular resistance movement can be found during the British Mandate of Palestine, when Palestinians organized peaceful sit-ins, boycotts and marches against the infamous Balfour declaration and British occupation of Palestine. However, the most memorable popular resistance movement dates back to the First Intifada (uprising) (1987-1993), which Israel met with brutality, adopting what Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said "break the bones" policy – in other words, mass confinement, murder and a host of other policies meant to break the Palestinian people.

Israel does not tolerate, nor does it view any type of resistance as legitimate. A prominent example took place on December 10th 2014, when Mr. Ziad Abu Ein, the Palestinian Minister in charge of the Israeli Settlements and the Annexation Wall portfolio was leading a peaceful demonstration on the threatened lands of Turmusaya, a village north-east of Ramallah. The goal of the protest was to plant olive trees on Palestinian lands that Israeli settlers, supported by the Israeli military, have illegally prevented Palestinians from reaching. Israeli forces provoked the peaceful crowd. Minister Abu Ein was beaten and was forced to breathe a large volume of tear gas while an Israeli officer grabbed him from his neck. H.E. Zaid Abu Ein collapsed on the scene and was pronounced dead hours later. He left behind a grief-stricken wife and four children. Neither his position in the Palestinian government, nor the peaceful nature of his protest, spared him from the irrational brutality of the Israeli occupation and its forces.

Minister Abu Ein's martyrdom, just like the martyrdom of all Palestinians killed in peaceful resistance, is not only an example of Israeli ruthlessness, but of the impunity that Israel enjoys and which helps it to perpetuate its occupation of Palestine and oppression of the Palestinian people.

The Palestinian people are advancing their rights through a well-developed and effective diplomatic offensive, that includes accessing courts, accession to international treaties, popular nonviolent demonstrations and civil society initiatives such as the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. These initiatives have created a political momentum that has significantly empowered the Palestinian people and their supporters. By supporting peaceful Palestinian pursuits that aim to hold Israel to account for its systematic violation of international law and denial of Palestinian human rights, the international community will be investing in peace. Ending the culture of impunity afforded to Israel by policymakers worldwide is a necessary requirement for ending Israel's occupation and for the attainment of peace based on the two-state formula.

The International Community and Popular Resistance

One of the most basic rights that is codified in international law is the right to self-determination. The right to be free is inalienable and non-negotiable as outlined in the UN charter and other international human rights treaties. In this context, the international community as a matter of consensus has rejected colonialism.

Israel's colonial settlement project does not only consist of residential units built on occupied Palestinian land. It also includes, among other things: (i) an extensive road network linking settlements to each other and to the state of Israel; (ii) the Wall, which incorporates 9 percent of the West Bank to Israel, including all of East Jerusalem, where 85 percent of the Israeli settlers live; and (iii) a legal regime that offers Israeli settlers living in the West Bank protections and privileges they enjoy as Israeli citizens living inside Israel while denying those same rights to the Palestinians living in the same territory. To intensify the movement of settlers into occupied Palestine, Israel has offered its citizens financial incentives and has removed the physical and legal barriers that would otherwise restrict Israeli movement and settlement in the Occupied State of Palestine. Israel has been largely effective in achieving its objectives: the average growth rate of the settler population excluding that in East Jerusalem over the past decade is 5.3 per cent while the growth rate of the Israeli population in Israel is approximately 1.8 per cent.

The Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination continues to be violated by Israel as it continues to further expand its illegal colonization within the Occupied State of Palestine. Several UN resolutions have reaffirmed the Palestinian people's right to self-determination such as UNGA 2535 of 1969, which "Reaffirms the inalienable rights of the people of Palestine." UNGA 2649 resolution of 1970 reaffirms the importance of the right to self-determination by stating that the UN "Affirms the legitimacy of the struggle of peoples under colonial and alien domination recognized as being entitled to the right of self-determination to restore to themselves that right by any means at their disposal."

[1] http://eu-un.europa.eu/articles/en/article_10587_en.htm

[2] <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09>





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The right of all oppressed people to resist a colonial power has been recognized by the international community as an inalienable right. This includes UN resolution 3236 that "Further recognizes the right of the Palestinian people to regain its rights by all means in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations."

The European Union has reiterated in several occasions "the legitimate right of the Palestinians to engage in peaceful demonstrations." In general the international community supports the right of the Palestinian people to popular nonviolent resistance.

The International civil society has also joined the chorus of support for Palestinian struggle comparing it with the global struggle against Apartheid in South Africa. In a statement marking 25 years since the release of Nelson Mandela, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Adolfo Perez Esquivel and anti-Apartheid figure Ahmad Kathrada issued the following statement: "What conflict can today symbolize the struggle for freedom against oppression, of right over might, of justice against impunity, more than the Palestinian struggle? Israel's colonial and discriminatory policies, both in the occupied territory, and within its own borders, are a clear demonstration that we are witnessing the rebirth of Apartheid, a prospect none of us should tolerate." This has been the same message shared by several political parties, parliaments, religious groups and various civil society organizations.

Regardless of the legitimacy of Palestinian popular resistance, the international community still must take clear action in order to hold Israel accountable for its brutal repression of Palestinian peaceful demonstrators and for its continued flagrant violation of international law. Several diplomats have attended demonstrations and military trials against Palestinian civilians who have participated in popular resistance. Although this is important, nonetheless, it is not enough. It is time for their countries to stop treating Israel as a state above the law.

Ein Hijleh CASE STUDY

By the end of January 2014, the Popular Committees that lead and coordinate popular resistance activities across the Occupied State of Palestine, declared the establishment of the village of “Ein Hijleh”, after the name of an old Canaanite village located in the Jordan Valley in what today belongs to the Greek Orthodox Church. The church authorized the establishment of the village in support of Palestinian rightful aspirations and as a way to protect land threatened by surrounding illegal settlements.

When “Ein Hijleh” was established, organizers issued an official statement saying that “we, the daughters and sons of Palestine, announce today the revival of Ein Hijleh as part of Melh Al-Ard (Salt of the earth) campaign in the Jordan Valley.” The activity attracted hundreds of Palestinian women and men and activists from across the West Bank. The name of the campaign, “Salt of the earth”, was inspired from the Bible, Matthew 13:5 “you are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.”

Just like in the village of Bab Al Shams (established on lands threatened by Israeli settlement expansion in the East Jerusalem area), Ein Hijleh was a popular response to Israeli settlements encroaching on the Jordan Valley. Its establishment was made possible through the full coordination and cooperation between various the Popular Committees, Palestinian activists and the PLO.

Israeli forces besieged the village and prevented food supplies and medical crews from reaching the area, while cutting off the water supply. Israeli forces raided the area on a number of occasions, injuring several citizens. The village was finally destroyed by February 6th, with Israeli forces attacking villagers, medical teams and a cameraman from Palestine TV.

For almost a week Ein Hijleh existed as a functioning village - participants planted trees, installed solar panels, and hosted diplomats as well as political and religious leaders. Several cultural activities took place during the week before Israeli Forces destroyed the village and arrested the activists, violating the property rights of the Greek Orthodox Church that had allowed the peaceful protesters to make use of its premises.



Bil'in CASE STUDY

The number of Bil'in village residents is approximately 2000. The village is located 16kms to the west of the city of Ramallah and has an area of 4000 dunums (approximately 1000 acres). Israel has confiscated hundreds of dunums in order to expand nearby settlements and to make way for the apartheid wall. Bil'in is surrounded by several illegal settlements including Modi'in, Metatyahu, and Kiryat Sefer.

On 20 April 2004, the Bil'in village council received a military order stating that the Separation and Annexation Wall would confiscate at least half of the village lands. In less than a week, the village council convened a meeting with the families and owners of plots of lands in the area designated to be confiscated to discuss what action might be taken to resist the military order. A popular anti-Wall and anti-settlement committee was formed consisting of 13 members and was mandated to follow up both at the legal level and through organizing peaceful popular resistance actions that included demonstrations, sit-ins and other similar activities.

Israel sent in bulldozers and began its destruction of the village on 20 February 2005. On this day, scores of village residents gathered for one goal: to stop the bulldozers from working. The residents succeeded to stop the bulldozers. As a result of this success, Israel bolstered its military presence by sending additional units into the area and thus the success was short-lived. Rallies in the village continued against the backdrop of destruction. Nevertheless, this pushed the members of the popular resistance committee to realize the importance of resorting to creativity and innovation to attract local and international media. Among the most prominent moments of resistance is the image of the demonstrators sitting on the ground tied to olive trees to prevent the Israeli bulldozers from uprooting them.

On 4/9/2007, after almost three years of ongoing resistance, the village of Bil'in succeeded in obtaining a ruling from the Israeli High Court ordering that the path of the Wall be changed away from Bil'in lands and returning 1200 dunums of land to the village. To achieve that, the village lost two martyrs: Basem Abu Rahmeh and Jawaher Abu Rahmeh. More than 200 Palestinians were arrested and the number of wounded exceeded 1500. Residents of Bil'in confronted Israeli oppression and terror with determination and unity - too strong to be beaten. Bil'in has become a model to be emulated not only in Palestine, but throughout the world.

It is important to note that this year marks the tenth anniversary of the start of anti-Wall and anti-Settlement popular resistance in the village of Bil'in.

Short Biography of the Martyred Leader Ziyad Abu Ein:

Ziyad Mohammad Ahmad Abu Ein, left behind him a wife and four children. Born on 22 November 1959 and raised in Qaddoura refugee camp, Abu Ein belonged to a refugee family which was forced to flee the village of Deir Tareef near the city of Lod. The martyr Ziyad Abu Ein is considered one of the symbols of the Palestinian national struggle having been arrested several times for extended durations. Abu Ein was first arrested on 4/11/1977 when he was only 18 years old while heading the "Palestine youth" group that was responsible for organizing national events and activities in Ramallah and Al Bireh. He was arrested for the second time on 21/8/1979 while in the U.S. after being pursued by the Israeli Mossad in coordination with the American Intelligence Services for allegedly carrying out armed operations inside occupied Palestine, and particularly the Tiberias operation that took place on 14/5/1979. He was detained in American prisons for three years despite that the UN issued seven resolutions in Abu Ein's favor demanding the U.S. to release him. One such resolution, UNGA Res. 36/171, was issued on 16 December 1981. In 1982, Israel sentenced him to life in prison. Several international, Arab, and Palestinian lawyers volunteered to represent him and the team was headed by Ramsey Clark.

Ziyad Abu Ein's name was on top of the list of prisoners who were freed in 1983 through a prisoners' swap deal. However, during the process of prisoners' release, Abu Ein was kidnapped by the Israeli intelligence services at Lod airport where the freed prisoners were supposed to be transported to Cairo and from there to Algeria. Abu Ein was released on 20/5/1985 in the context of a prisoners' swap deal struck under the auspices of the Austrian envoy, but was again arrested by Israel and held



in administrative detention for two months. He was arrested and held in administrative detention again in 2002 during the second Intifada alongside the leaders Marwan Al Barghouthi and Ahmad Al Barghouthi and was later released in 2003.

Ziyad Abu Ein held several positions, the most important of which included: elected member of Fatah movement Revolutionary Council, head of the Commission against the Wall and Settlements with the rank of a minister in 2014, and deputy Minister of the Ministry of Prisoners and former prisoners in 2006. He also served as a member of the Mobilization and Organization Commission (as chairperson of the Prisoners' Committee) at the mobilization council 2003-2007, head of the association of veteran revolution fighters in 1996, member of the Higher Fatah Movement Committee in 1995, director of the internal oversight commission within Fatah movement in the West Bank in 1993 and member of the Palestinian Union of Industrialists in 1991.

Abu Ein was killed on 10 December 2014 when Israeli occupation soldiers beat him with their guns on the head and the chest and attacked him with tear gas while participating in a peaceful rally in the village of Turmus Aya near Ramallah.



The legacy of Ziad Abu Ein

A few days after Israel occupied my hometown of Jericho in 1967, I was arrested by Israeli soldiers while writing graffiti: "down with the occupation, free Palestine." This act of peaceful resistance sent a 13-years old boy to prison. From the very beginning of Israel's occupation, a zero tolerance policy was adopted by the new conquerors and the love that an armless teenager had for his country had no place under Israel's military control. Our message was too much for the occupying army to handle or fathom.

Since 1967, around 900,000 Palestinians have been imprisoned and confined including a large number of children, while thousands have been killed by Israel.

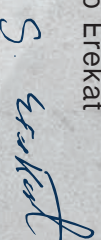
Our people have been collectively punished as illegal Israeli settlements continue to grow in our midst. Popular resistance is a natural response of a people under occupation against their occupier. A defenseless people under a brutal occupation have to confront soldiers and gangs of settler-terrorists that spread their hatred by burning trees, mosques, churches, and by killing and injuring defenseless civilians. For almost half a century the Palestinian people have struggled for freedom and independence while the world has watched, rarely lifting a finger in face of one of the ugliest forms of colonial control in the 21st century, Israel's occupation.

The Palestinian leadership has endorsed a non-violent agenda to end the Israeli occupation. While support for our peaceful popular resistance continues, including the BDS movement, we have been involved in a diplomatic offensive to protect and advance the rights of the Palestinian people. From recognition of the State of Palestine to its impending membership in the Assembly of States Parties of the International Criminal Court, today Palestine is in a much stronger position than in years past.

As part of this peaceful national program, our brother and Minister Ziad Abu Ein was killed by Israeli forces while attempting to plant olive trees in the threatened lands of Turmusaya, a village between Ramallah and Nablus. The image of soldiers grabbing his neck and brutally repressing a peaceful demonstration attended by Palestinian, Israeli and international activists epitomized the brutality and banality of Israel's occupation, that punishes the Palestinian people regardless of the methods of struggle, peaceful or not. Ziad was one of many civilians who have been killed by the Israeli occupation for peacefully demonstrating against the occupation and colonization of our land and country.

The Palestinian people will continue to struggle for freedom and independence. Just as I was imprisoned for simply writing "down with the occupation, free Palestine", thousands of administrative detainees, punitive home demolitions, forced displacement, land confiscation, terror attacks and killings like the one of Ziad Abu Ein have done nothing but to make our determination stronger. A foreign occupier has never defeated an occupied, and the peaceful popular resistance movement is a reminder of that fact.

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