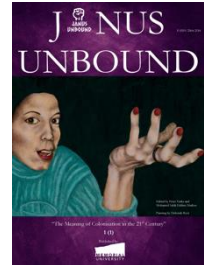


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The Nakba Continues: The Palestinian Crisis from the Past to the Present

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Introduction

Since 1948, which marks the birth of the expulsion of Palestinians from their native land, Palestinians have been cut from their roots, and displaced inside and outside their country. The 1948 exodus occurred when more than 700,000 Palestinian Arabs were uprooted from their homes and expelled outside Palestine and others were relocated inside it. The exodus has been a central element of the displacement and dispossession of Palestinians known as the Nakba, during which hundreds of Palestinian villages have been destroyed and others subjected to the ongoing process of ethnic cleansing. The bitter trauma of the Nakba remains raw and is a pivotal component in the shaping of Palestinian identity, collective memory, and resistance to the efforts of Israeli settler-colonialism to silence the Nakba for the past seven decades (Qabaha 2018). This article illustrates the resilience of the Nakba as a memory and experience in the life of Palestinians. Like the authors of *An Oral History of the Palestinian Nakba* (Abdo and Masalha 2019), we see the Nakba not only as an event, but as a process. Today's Israeli war against Palestinians takes the same shape that it took when it established itself in 1948. As this article shows, Israel continues its practices of expelling Palestinians and destroying their homes.

This article further argues that the Zionist domination over Palestine and Palestinians is reinforced by the Palestinian Authority (PA), which adopts the defeatist strategy of normalizing relations with the Israelis. In other words, Palestinians are facing double colonial systems—the Israeli occupation and the PA—which reinforce each other's dynamics. Double colonization is a phrase used by postcolonial and feminist theories to refer to the oppression of women in the postcolonial world by both the colonial power and patriarchy (Ashcroft et al. 1989). In this article, we use this phrase to argue that people, not only women, in the colonial/postcolonial world are oppressed by both the imperial/colonial power and the ruling system of their nation or quasi-nation. Drawing on Frantz Fanon's insights into the subtle similarities between nationalism and colonialism and Maurizio Viroli's discussion of nationalism and patriotism, we contend that nationalism, which is a duplication of colonialism, is employed by the PA to nurture factional conflict and political turmoil. In other words, Palestinians are

subjected to an internal mode of colonization practiced by the PA, which enables the Zionists to fulfill their plans of annexing the West Bank.

Academics have debated for decades whether Israel should be considered a settler-colonial state. Leading scholars, including Ilan Pappé, Joseph Massad, Rashid Khalidi, Noura Erakat, and Anna Ball, have convincingly argued that Israel is a manifestation of a national settler-colonial project. Ball, for example, points out that Zionism can be seen as a “new form of colonialism” (2012, 4). Ball explains how the aims of Zionism resemble those of the “settler colonies” established in various regions in the world like North and South America and South Africa. Therefore, “Palestinian scholars,” Ball notes, “have long advocated the colonial paradigm as a means” to understanding the Israeli rule of the Palestinian territories (Ball 2012, 4). Similarly, Erakat maintains that Palestinian intellectuals and organizations “have understood Zionism as a settler-colonial project predicated on Palestinian elimination” (2021, para.1). Israel is a settler-colonial state because it practices land annexation, removing native inhabitants, and accommodating Jewish Israelis in their place.

In his allegorical novel, *Theodor Herzl*, the founding father of Zionism, shows that colonialism is based on destruction and replacement: “If I wish to substitute a new building for an old one, I must demolish before I construct” (1902, 38). Zionist leaders told narratives that negated the existence of Arab Palestinians on their native land and described Jewish emigration to Palestine as a civilizing mission. Edward Said argues that “the early Jewish settlers in Palestine ignored the Arabs in exactly the same way that white Europeans in Africa, Asia, and the Americas believed the natives of these places to be non-existent and their lands uninhabited, ‘neglected’ and barren” (1980, 150). Although Said represses the nuances between various colonial powers, he is right to think that Israel is the heir of the legacy of colonialism. While other colonial countries, such as Britain and France, have ended some of their military occupations and kept their colonial structures of domination and human exploitation intact, Israel continues its sovereignty by immediate subjugation of the natives, that is, Palestinians, and control of Palestinians’ resources, entrenching and institutionalizing Israel’s direct military yoke, while blighting Palestinian lives and eradicating Palestinians’ dreams and aspirations of an independent state.

Colonialism never ends; it instead reproduces itself and finds new methods to sustain its presence. Israeli settler-colonialism reproduces itself by subverting Palestinians’ sovereignty over their land. Daniel Avelar and Bianca Ferrari argue that “the foundations of Israel are rooted in a colonial project that has modernized its face but continues to subject Palestinians to military occupation, land dispossession and unequal rights” (2018, para. 5). The establishment of Israel was at the expense of depopulating and destroying Palestinian villages and towns (and renaming others). In other words, the presence and the establishment of Israeli settlements are based on the absence and eradication of Palestinian existence. The wounds of the Nakba are still open, and they are getting deeper, not only because Israel is not allowing refugees to return, but because the Israeli military occupation continues to expel and relocate Palestinians to build its own settlements and populate them with Jewish migrants and settlers. Israeli domination obliges Palestinians to dwell in their memories of loss and to “re-live and re-imagine the *Nakba*, a memory that is more than a memory as it is lived and

re-lived in the daily nakbas of the Palestinian people” (Hamdi 2021, 33). The Palestinian Nakba is a living presence that is communicated and enacted through the ongoing Israeli displacement and expulsion of Palestinians who share the scars of collective trauma.

The Palestinian story is a story of forced displacement and uprootedness. As the Israeli historian Ilan Pappé argues, “the tale of Palestine from the beginning until today is a simple story of colonialism and dispossession, yet the world treats it as a multifaceted and complex story—hard to understand and even harder to solve” (Chomsky and Pappé 2015, 12). Zionism won the rhetorical battle over Palestine in the international community thanks to the rhetoric, images, and presentation attached to the conditions of European Jews. The physical displacement of Palestinians is punctuated by the annihilation of Palestinian wills and voices. The Israeli military occupation has been striving to wrest control from Palestinians over Palestine physically and linguistically. Israel has the advantage of controlling narratives, narratives which cast Palestinians outside public discourse and history.

Israel increasingly and ruthlessly confiscates Palestinian land to achieve its primary goal: annexing Palestine entirely and establishing a Jewish state. As Benny Morris puts it in his famous book *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, “Zionist leader David Ben-Gurion, a pragmatist, from 1937 on, was willing (at least outwardly) to accept partition and the establishment of a Jewish state in only part of the country” (2004, 15). Morris continues, “in effect, he remained committed to a vision of Jewish sovereignty over all of Palestine as the ultimate goal of Zionism, to be attained by stages.” Since the beginning, Israel’s ultimate goal has been the destruction and eradication of a viable Palestinian state. Israel would, accordingly, become entirely populated by Jewish citizens: a state only for Jewish people. Benjamin Netanyahu, the previous prime minister of Israel, said it best when he explained that Israel is “the national state, not of all its citizens, but only of the Jewish people” (ctd in Chappell and Estrin 2019, para. 1). These words reflect the core of the Zionist project: it strives to suppress the Palestinian-ness of Palestine and impose on it a Jewish identity.

The strategic plan of ethnic cleansing is demonstrated in Israel’s insistent refusal to allow the Palestinian refugees (scattered all over the world) to return to Palestine and in its continuous practices of arresting and expelling Palestinians and demolishing Palestinians’ houses and properties. While Israel casts Palestinians to a permanent exile without any possibility of physical return, it has long implemented The Law of Return (1950), which grants exclusive rights to those born of a Jewish mother or converted to Judaism to obtain Israeli citizenship and settle anywhere within Israel’s jurisdiction, including the Israeli settlements in the West Bank. In other words, the affirmation of the Jewish identity and home is based on the negation of the Palestinian identity, an identity deemed the other to the Israeli and Jewish one. This Zionist law has therefore given rights of residence in Palestine to Jewish people while depriving indigenous inhabitants, who had lived on this land long before the establishment of the state of Israel, of these rights. As Noura Erakat argues, “it [Israel] wants the land without the people and seeks to remain the sole source of authority from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea” (2021, para. 1). This law was further supported

by the Nationality Law (1952), or the Citizenship Law, which affords automatic citizenship to Jewish nationals, and denies citizenship and residency rights to Palestinians who were driven out and were rendered stateless after the 1948 War. In contrast to these laws which grant Jews the right of return and citizenship, the Israel Absentee Property Law of 1950 brands Palestinians who were absent from their villages after the establishment of Israel in 1948 as “present-absentees.” This ambivalent state of presence and absence resonates with Giorgio Agamben’s description of the state of exception: “Being outside, and yet belonging” (2005, 35). Israeli illegal practices have suspended the rights of Palestinian individuals, especially those living in refugee camps, to live on their land and granted Jewish immigrants full rights of belonging to the land of Palestine. The Israeli practices of dehumanization and humiliation of Palestinians can be explained by way of Agamben’s state of exception. Israelis are negating the Palestinian identity as it poses a threat to the Zionist one (Hamamra et al. 2021). Israel violates basic human laws while attempting to secure the Jewish character of its state. In *Journal of an Ordinary Grief*, Mahmoud Darwish is perplexed by the fact that he was no longer a citizen upon his return to his village Barwa in 1948:

You find out you’re not a resident of Israel because you have no certificate of residence. You think it’s a joke and rush to tell it to your lawyer friend: “Here I’m not a citizen, and I’m not a resident. Then where and who am I?” You’re surprised to find the law is on their side, and you must prove you exist. You ask the Ministry of the Interior, “Am I here, or am I absent? Give me an expert in philosophy, so that I can prove to him I exist.” Then you realize that philosophically you exist but legally you do not. (ctd in Muhawi 2010, xiii)

In brief, the Israeli state privileges Jewish citizens, especially European Jews, and discriminates against Palestinians. Those Palestinians who stayed in Israel in 1948 are referred to as “1948 Arabs” and “Arabs of the Green Line,” terms of address that suppress the belonging of Palestinians to their homeland and their Palestinian-ness. Furthermore, such terms of address show that Palestinians living in what now is Israel have been racialized by the Zionists so as to reflect their exclusion from Israeli society. To maintain Jewish privileges, the Israeli military occupation has dispossessed, incarcerated, separated, and subjugated Palestinians, shattering their right to self-determination and their dreams of return and independence.

Israel as a Racist and an Apartheid State

Israel’s practices in the 21st century illustrate its apartheid nature, which is best evidenced by its repeated refusal to withdraw to the 1967 borders and its building of the Separation Wall in 2002. Israel has built an annexation wall that runs primarily through the West Bank and confiscates another 13% of Palestinian territory. The Separation Wall can be explained by Said’s conception of identity as a complex structure that depends on the other that it negates for its definition and assertion. Said points out that the “Orient” is the other to the Anglo-European world:

The construction of identity—for identity, whether of Orient or Occident, France or Britain, while obviously a repository of distinct collective experiences, is finally a construction in my opinion—involves the construction of opposites and ‘others’ whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from ‘us.’ Each age and society re-creates its ‘Others.’ (Said 1978, 332)

Israeli settler-colonialism has conceived the Palestinians as the other to be negated. This mechanism of othering is illuminated in the construction of the Separation Wall which separates us from them, the humans, Israelis, from the animals, Palestinians (Hamamra et al. 2021).

Dehumanization is a literary trope Palestinian authors employ often to emphasize the Israeli humiliation. For example, Raja Shehadeh, a Palestinian lawyer and novelist, highlights the Israeli dehumanization of Palestinians in his memoir *When the Bulbul Stopped Singing* (2002), documenting the Israeli siege of Ramallah in 2002. Shehadeh documents the words of a Palestinian man who asks an Israeli soldier demolishing his house: “do you consider me a human being? If not, then I crawl on all fours and lick your boots” (2020, 134). The rhetorical question posed here reveals the dehumanization of the Palestinian man and by extension all Palestinians who are pushed down to the level of crawling animals to be restrained, expelled, displaced, and killed.

Palestinian writers often reflect on the repetitive dehumanizing rhetoric used by Israeli politicians and leaders. For example, the Israeli orthodox rabbi and politician Eliyahu Michael Ben-Dahan, who served as a member of the Knesset and as deputy minister of defense, said about the Palestinians, “to me, they are like animals, they aren’t human” (ctd in Pileggi 2015, para. 3). The examples could easily be multiplied, with various contexts and for various motives. Ben-Dahan was showing his disagreement with the resumption of peace talks with the Palestinians. Such statements negate the humanity of Palestinians. Israeli political discourse dehumanizes Palestinians and suppresses their identity and presence.

The erection of the Separation Wall signifies the racist ideology of Zionism, which is based on the elimination of Palestinian identity. Erakat argues that “Israel now oversees a discriminatory regime tantamount to apartheid,” an attitude that has propelled Palestinian intellectuals and organizations to understand “Zionism as a settler-colonial project predicated on Palestinian elimination, and thus as a racist structure since its inception” (2021, para. 2). Palestinian scholar Fayez Sayegh argued that Zionist settler-colonization is a racist regime that aims to erase the Palestinian people on a racial basis. He argued that while European colonial projects aimed at racial domination, Zionist settler-colonialism aimed at “racial elimination” (1965). The presence of Palestinians inside Israel is perceived by Zionist Israelis as a threat to the sovereignty of the state of Israel. It acts as a constant reminder of how Israel has come into existence: an illegitimate state built on the illegitimate expulsion and oppression of the natives. The legitimate presence of Palestinians inside Israel functions as a lurking threat to the illegitimate existence of what is now Israel.

Israel stands alongside apartheid states around the world, most notably South Africa. The term apartheid was originally applied in the South African context.

However, it is applied nowadays to “all forms of segregation in all countries” (Erakat 2021, para. 10). As demonstrated throughout this article, Palestinians are subjected to segregations based on racial identity in perhaps even more severe and brutal ways than what happened in South Africa. The current political reality in Palestine amounts to apartheid (Thrall 2021). Palestine has recently been exposed to colonial atrocities that have further illustrated the apartheid nature of the State of Israel. Fox and Qabaha argue that “underpinned by the historical socio-political paradigms of settler-colonialism [...] the post-millennial period has given rise to continuing, increasingly visible, violence by the Israeli occupation” (2021, 17). They give the example of the West Bank Separation Wall, which aims to restrict Palestinian movement, displace the Palestinian population, and annex a large amount of what remains of the Palestinian land. This wall illustrates how “the mundane elements of planning and architecture have become tactical tools and the means of dispossession” (Weizman 2007, 5). The Separation Wall has been a site of dispossession: Palestinians living near it are threatened with dislocation for security reasons; it is also a site of racial segregation in the sense that it has restricted the Palestinians’, but not Jews’, access to their land, and their right to move and build houses. The Separation Wall mirrors the discriminatory nature of the state of Israel: “from the demarcation of the Green Line to the construction of the Separation Wall, the map of Palestine has been continually re-drawn and the country does not resemble what it was at the eve of the *Nakba* in 1948” (Fox and Qabaha 2021, 18). The apartheid practices of Israel seek to turn Palestine irrevocably into a new state called Israel.

This (re-)construction of space and architecture in Palestine constitutes what Derek Gregory calls a “landscape of colonial modernity” (2004, 101). Such colonial modernity manifests itself in Israel’s recent construction of new roads and highways, and the widening of the existing ones in the West Bank, which have the goal of annexation and expansion of the settlements. While Israel claims this expansion of roads will benefit both Palestinian and Jewish residents of the West Bank, it will turn the West Bank into an integral part of the state of Israel. The ultimate result will be that the number of settlers will double, and the West Bank will be of more Jewish character, which, in turn, will further limit the development of Palestinian communities (Qabaha 2019). For example, Israel is now involved in constructing projects that bypass many Palestinian regions in the West Bank such as the refugee camp Al-Aroub located in the north of Hebron and Hawara village located in the south of Nablus. These projects will expropriate native inhabitants of large portions of their land, causing substantial economic loss, to begin with. While Israel publicizes the fact that these roads will be used by both Palestinians and Israelis, Israel’s real aim is to find alternative roads for its settlers that will be used by them exclusively; thus, it provides security for its settlers and saves them from potential Palestinian attacks.

“If I don’t steal your house, somebody else is going to steal it”: Israeli Settlers’ Rhetoric and the State Apparatus

The Palestinian political cause proves that colonialism is a powerful force that seeks to legalize its illegality through its illegal power and narrative. The settlers of the colonizing state, protected by the army, reveal the hidden intentions of

this colonial state. As Mark Ayyash argues, such discourse shows that these settlers are “a mirror for the foundation of the Israeli state revealed in its naked form” (2020, para. 15). In spite of the efforts of the colonial state to inform their settlers ideologically with rhetoric that justifies their illegal practices, “these settlers act without the sophisticated rhetoric that hides and conceals the violence of the settler colony. They do not hide their intention to remove Palestinians and expand the state that is to come, the state of Greater Israel” (Ayyash 2020, para. 16). Such rhetoric covers a brutal colonial imagination, which aims to claim its sovereignty over what has already been claimed as its own again and again. Israel facilitates the annexation of homes through its military force. Settlers’ atrocities nurture the state’s colonial project, and the state then imposes its own authority and initiative, claiming its right to protect its citizens.

The epigraph above was spoken by one of the Israeli settlers who sought to steal a home in Sheikh Jarrah, a famous Palestinian neighbourhood in East Jerusalem. While Zionism employs legal power to protect Jews by bringing them to the state established on the ruins of Palestine, the discourse of theft employed shows that the enactment and implementation of such illegal laws are possible only through the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. The Israeli government, to demonstrate its settler-colonial power, has supported far-right settlers taking over Palestinian homes in this neighbourhood and issued a court eviction decision. This action further violates international law and reveals that Israel is an illegitimate entity that sustains its existence with illegal practices. Independent journalist, filmmaker, and author Antony Loewenstein states that “what’s happening there [Palestine] fits the exact definition of settler-colonialism” (ctd in Sofuoglu 2021, para. 7). A far-right Jewish campaign to forcibly replace Palestinian citizens with Jewish settlers shows that Israel is a settler-colonial state. Loewenstein continues, “simply put: all settler colonies constitute a continuous process of land annexation, whereby native inhabitants are removed and settlers from elsewhere are brought to occupy the land” (ctd in Sofuoglu 2021, para. 8). Although many colonial states have expropriated lands from others in various contexts, “the settler-colonial state’s distinguishing feature is that it does not come into being and cannot continue to exist without claiming sovereignty over land that is forcefully taken from its native inhabitants” (Ayyash 2020, para. 8). The survival of Israel’s colonial structure is directly related to its continuous encroachment over the land to reinforce its existence as a sovereign state.

Israel attempted to annex Sheikh Jarrah, and to suppress its Muslim character, a character which is taken from a 12th century Arab physician Saladin, the Muslim conqueror of Jerusalem and the Holy Land; Israel so seeks to eradicate the Palestinian identity and impose its Jewish character. Herzl proposed in his book *The Jewish State* that Jewish emigration to Palestine should be organized in a gradual way that culminates with the replacement of the Palestinian population. Mainstream Zionism advocates that Jews should settle the entirety of Palestine and that Israel should cleanse Palestinians or render Palestinian lives unbearable. Colonialism thus becomes a tale of annexation and expropriation, manifested in a history of a state extended over 70 years.

In Jerusalem, the capital of Palestine and the birthplace of religions, Palestinians are facing a systematic annexation that threatens to eradicate the Palestinian identity of the city, a holy site for three monotheistic religions. Israel developed

a master plan for the holy and ancient city of Jerusalem, employing tactics and laws that serve its settler-colonial practices. After the 1967 War, Israel occupied East Jerusalem, and used all its means to change Jerusalem's Palestinian character. What is happening now in Sheikh Jarrah is the result of this master plan, which, in essence, aims at decreasing the number of Palestinians by replacing them with Jewish settlers, making the majority Jewish inhabitants. "We firmly reject the pressure not to build in Jerusalem. To my regret, this pressure has been increasing of late," said the right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, openly giving his support to the settler movement (ctd in Sofuoglu 2021, para. 20). In this statement, Netanyahu underscores the Zionist plan to irrevocably transform Jerusalem from the capital of Palestine into the capital of Israel; he undermines the sovereignty of the PA over Jerusalem in particular. He aims to destroy the national aspirations of Palestinians because Jerusalem denotes for them their future state. This support of Israeli political leadership for settlers "signals an acceptance of the legitimacy of the settler efforts to push for further ethnic cleansing of the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem through eviction notices based on discriminatory Israeli laws as to Palestinian residency and property rights," says Richard Falk, a prominent international law professor (ctd in Sofuoglu 2021, para. 22).

Palestinian Choices after the Oslo Accords Failure

Many of these Israeli practices have been institutionalized by the Oslo Accords, proving the failure of these Accords. The failure of the apparent "peace process" served as one of the underlying roots for the recent escalation of colonial violence. The concessions made by the Palestinian leadership via the Oslo Accords have postponed ending the Israeli occupation, and thus resulted in a prolonged occupation. As Sara Roy argues:

The Oslo process, therefore, did not represent the end of Israeli occupation but its continuation, albeit in a less direct form. The structural relationship between occupier and occupied, and the gross asymmetries in power that attend it, were not dismantled by the accords but reinforced and strengthened. The Oslo agreements formalized and institutionalized the occupation in a manner that was altogether new. (2002, 9)

The Oslo Accords meet the Israeli plan of dividing, fragmenting, and mutilating Palestine and Palestinians. In dividing Palestinians and Palestine into new categories and zones, the Accords reinforced the division and displacement of Palestinians in the catastrophes of 1948 and 1967. Instead of putting an end to the bitter suffering of the Palestinians, the Oslo agreement formalized and normalized the Israeli occupation of Palestine. The PA has proved to be powerless and ineffective against the enforcement of increasingly encroaching borders and checkpoints by Israel; it has instructed Palestinians, especially in the West Bank, that they have no power to resist the atrocities of the Israeli army, and that it would be less harmful if they submit to its military power. The current political discourse of the PA leadership subscribes to passive resistance, and even defeatism. The Oslo Accords have acted as a nullifying force for the Palestinian national struggle for self-determination and autonomy. Indeed, the Palestinian

demonstrations against the PA show that many Palestinians have become disillusioned with this dysfunctional authority. The PA is viewed as misrepresenting Palestinian national aspirations and the interests of independence and liberation. The leaders of the PA cling to the role of security liaison and hence hinder Palestinian armed resistance against the Israeli occupation. While patriotism promotes liberty, solidarity, and the realization of the common good, nationalism creates aggression, exclusion, and violence. In his book *For Love of Country: An Essay on Patriotism and Nationalism*, Viroli links patriotism to “claims for liberty based on respect for the rights of other peoples,” while he represents nationalism as the “politics of aggrandizement pursued by reactionary regimes” (1995, 162). Viroli’s distinction between patriotism and nationalism reflects the pre and post Oslo Accords. While pre-Oslo can be perceived as the era of patriotism, where all Palestinians, regardless of their political affiliations, stood together against the Israeli occupation, the post-Oslo era is one of nationalism where Palestine is plagued by factional conflicts (Hamamra 2021). The PA, lacking autonomy, is a servant to the Israeli occupation. The Israeli State consolidates the existence of the PA, which, turning against the interests of Palestinians, becomes a replica of colonialism, that is, the Israeli occupation.

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon highlights subtle similarities between colonialism and nationalism, which, we propose, cut deep to the bone within the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. Fanon explains how the nation could turn into a “masque of neo-colonialism” by privileging the interests of nationalist leaders and the “national bourgeoisie” over the majority of the citizens (1961, 122). The PA is a reworking of the colonialist politics of “divide and rule,” which puts Palestinians into conflicts and clashes amongst themselves while the PA maintains its own interests. Writing about Arab nationalism, Said points out that:

Lodged at its heart, so to speak, is a complex of hope, betrayal, and bitter disappointment; the discourse of Arab nationalism today carries this complex along with it. The result is an unfulfilled and incomplete culture, expressing itself in a fragmented language of torment, angry resistance, of uncritical condemnation of outside (usually Western) enemies. (1994, 252)

Lack of critical awareness, absolute authority, and the inability to connect with the citizens except through the language of violence are symptomatic of Palestinian nationalism post-Oslo. The PA controls every aspect of Palestinians’ lives: employment, political activism, education, and social media. It also threatens punishment for those who oppose its policy.

Post-Oslo and “The Deal of the Century”

Palestinians have continually struggled against the injustices that have befallen them since 1948. However, their attempts to reclaim their national rights have repeatedly been thwarted by misleading, ambiguous “peace” interventions. The First Intifada, an uprising by the Palestinians against Israeli occupation that began in 1987, was concluded in 1993 with the signing of the Oslo Accords. The Oslo Accords created the PA and granted it the limited responsibility of self-governing some areas of Gaza and the West Bank. Issues such as sovereignty,

the rights of refugees, and the status of Jerusalem were, however, postponed. Joseph Massad argues that the signing of the Oslo Accords served to make the different interests of the Palestinians—living, variously, in what is now Israel, Gaza, the West Bank, and the diaspora—incompatible, if not contradictory: “Although the Palestinian people remain one spiritually, their material interests are different” (2006, 114; 127-28). In the lead-up to the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian leadership began preparations to establish an independent state, promised as part of the peace process, while marginalizing their main national and collective rights, including the rights of refugees to return to their homeland. By only agreeing to negotiate with the Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza in Madrid in 1991, Israel effectively “succeeded in destroying the political unity of the Palestinian people,” leaving Palestinian refugees living in the diaspora “bereft of leadership and with no identifiable goals” (Massad 2006, 114; 127). The supposed “peace process” instigated by the Oslo Accords, proved to be a false promise for an unrealized future; it totally failed to realize the national aspirations of Palestinian people, and it increased the disunity between their various communities.

The 21st century has witnessed Donald Trump’s “Deal of the Century,” which is no more than a replica of the Oslo Accords or, worse, creates post-Oslo conditions that facilitate the annexation of what remains of Palestine. The pressure on the PA is to concede what remains of Palestinian national rights. Massad argues that the Oslo agreement “amounted to the final legitimation of the Jewish state as having the ‘right’ to be a racist apartheid state by the very people against whom its racist policies have been/are practiced, with the Israelis committing to nothing substantively new” (2018, para. 5). Instead of fighting against the deterioration of the political situation in Palestine and resisting the process of the ethnic cleansing of Palestine, the PA retreats behind defeatist rhetoric that causes further harm to Palestinian rights. Massad is right to argue that

Now that Israel’s right to be a racist state was guaranteed by the Palestinian leadership, wherein its racist demographic concerns would no longer be threatened either by the demand for equality for Palestinian citizens or by the return of the Palestinian refugees it expelled, attention was focused on East Jerusalem and West Bank colonization, as precursors to the final liquidation of the Palestinian national struggle. (2018, para. 15)

The new US-led peace initiative increased the disappointments of Palestinians. While Oslo made them have high expectations, this new initiative destroyed their ambitions. This initiative seems like a call for the Palestinians to mourn the loss of the rights of the refugees to return home, and to accept the reality of the expansion of settlements on their land and their lack of sovereignty over borders and Jerusalem. This initiative undermines the rights of Palestinians to live in peace and security, and it further destabilizes the already fragile situation.

Supported by the US, Israel invests in every crisis to further dominate and expropriate Palestinian land. Hamamra et al., drawing on Judith Butler’s concepts of precarity, precariousness, and vulnerability, point out that the Israeli military occupation uses the outbreak of the pandemic as a cover to fulfill its

plan of annexing parts of the West Bank: “the occupation mobilizes the lockdown as one way to advance the mission of ghettoizing Palestinians” (2021, 9). Hamamra et al. bring to the fore the Israeli dehumanization of Palestinian workers, their mistreatment of prisoners, their attack on health centers, and their arresting of Palestinians and demolishing and confiscating their properties during the outbreak of the pandemic (2021). Prime Minister Shtayyeh asserts that: “The formation of an Israeli annexation government means ending the two-state solution and the dismantling of the rights of the people of Palestine as established under international law and resolutions” (@DrShtayyeh, 20 April 2020). The prime minister views this annexing of Palestinian land as an “existential threat” to the international efforts to achieve a two-state solution (Holms 2020). However, as pointed out earlier, such a discourse of patriotism is not compatible with the lived experience of Palestinians, oppressed by the PA and its violent discourse and actions channeled towards their citizens.

Conclusion

The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 was on the verge of an apparent decolonization in some countries around the world. Israel continued the tradition of other colonial powers, and it demonstrated unethical domination and exploitation of Palestinian land and resources. Israel has modernized the face of colonialism, pledging to make its atrocities everlasting. Israel is a colonialist state that understands its existence on the Palestinian land as the antithesis of the presence of Palestinians on this land. Israeli practices since the Nakba until now aim to eliminate Palestinians and take over their land. The recent construction of the Separation Wall, the expansion of Israeli settlements, and the construction of roads exclusively used by Israeli settlers, as well as the continuation of the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes, such as what is happening now in Sheikh Jarrah, illustrates not only the racist face of this settler-colonial state, but also its criminality.

Palestinians have long struggled to end the Israeli military occupation. The PA has compromised many Palestinian rights, hoping that the world will sympathize with the victim’s surrender and plea for justice. However, this compromise has further increased the suffering of Palestinians and the vanishing of their landscape and imagined state. Instead of securing Palestinian national rights, the PA has granted Israel full sovereignty over Palestinian territory; it publicly declared its inability, and to a certain extent its unwillingness, to resist Israeli criminality. Although it publicizes the success of its international endeavors to unmask the seemingly civilized face of Israeli settler-colonialism, the PA’s policy facilitates the Israeli annexation of all of Palestine.

Biography

Ahmad Qabaha is an Assistant Professor in Postcolonial, Comparative, and American Studies and the head of the English department at An-Najah National University in Palestine. He is highly interested in teaching and conducting research on literature and art as well as examining the various modes and paradigms of literary, historical, socio-political, and cultural displacements in the 21st century. He is the author of *Exile and Expatriation in Modern American and Palestinian Writing* (Palgrave, 2018), and the co-editor of *Post-millennial Palestine: Memory, Writing, Resistance* (Liverpool University Press, 2021). He has also published several articles and book chapters in highly reputable publication companies and journals.

Bilal Hamamra has a PhD in Early Modern Drama from the University of Lancaster, UK and is currently an Associate Professor of English literature in the Department of English Language and Literature, An-Najah National University, Nablus, Palestine. His research interests are in Early Modern Drama, Shakespeare, Palestinian literature, women's writing and gender studies. His articles on language, gender politics, martyrdom, and diaspora have appeared in *Early Modern Literary Studies*, *Critical Survey*, *ANQ*, *The Explicator*, *Journal for Cultural Research*, *Journal of Gender Studies*, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *Anglia*, *Middle East Critique*, *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, *Interventions*, *Psychodynamic Practice*, and *Changing English*, among others.

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