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Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

[The letter below is a response to an invitation from Academics Act for Palestine to Spivak to join the Nuclear Futures roundtable; see this issue.]

I will be in rural Bangladesh and rural India during that time [of the Academics Act for Palestine global webinar “Nuclear Futures: From Hiroshima and Nagasaki to Palestine and Beyond” of 29 October 2025]. Do mention my name, however. I want to be counted. And here's this:

-- We must congratulate Keir Starmer and the 150 other states that have recognized the State of Palestine today, of course. But we must also recognize that this is an overdue act of reparation, as Starmer himself acknowledged it was the British mandate that allowed the establishment of the state of Israel 75 years ago. We must remember the Sykes-Picot documents, easily available online, whereby, on January 3, 1916, designated the Holy Land as the only area allowed to bear arms, by the very European nations that are involved in today's recognition. We must place this within a broad geopolitical rhythm that has existed millennially. What the Sykes-Picot Agreement merely organized was the resettlement of the map of West Asia (Middle East) after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire at the conclusion of the First World War. That story of power reshuffling is broader than Israel and has not come to an end. We must all strive to preserve the possibilities opened by Britain, Canada, Australia, and the European nations today, and recognize that it is not Palestine that wishes destruction of the state of Israel, but rather the policy of Prime Minister Netanyahu in Gaza that makes it clear that it is the other way around: in his view, Palestine must not exist for Israel to survive. We must undo this. There is of course a great deal written on specifically on the history and tradition of Palestine, but for the best impartial account we go to the work of Rashid Khalidi.¹

My best,

Gayatri.

Biography

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is a University Professor at Columbia University. She has written many books and holds honorary degrees from the Universities of Toronto, London, Rovira i Virgili, Rabindra Bharati, San Martín, St. Andrews, Chile, Vincennes-Saint-Denis, Yale, Ghana-Legon, Presidency University, and Oberlin College. Humanities for social justice is her obsession.

Notes

1. For a quick catch-up for those who need it, I recommend Khalidi's "The Neck and the Sword."

References

Khalidi, Rashid. 2024. "The Neck and The Sword." *New Left Review*, 5–38.
<https://doi.org/10.64590/ptn>.