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Rethinking the Palestinian Problem and 'The Right Strategy' for Palestinian Liberation

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ABSTRACT *The Palestinian tragedy is not simply a matter of one nation-state suppressing another nation that has been deprived of its legitimate right to establish its own state. It is also an 'international problem' granting that it has regional, international and global dimensions which implicate the hegemonic world system. An emancipatory approach to the Palestinian problem requires that the narrative about the 'two-state solution' be abandoned given that it has become a rhetorical shield for international society's silence in the face of the Israeli fait accomplis in occupied territories. The Arab and the Muslim world, alongside the rest of international society, should no longer view Israel as a 'normal' state. Rather, the world ought to consider acting collectively to impose economic, financial, military, political/diplomatic, and cultural embargo against this aggressive, expansionist, and racist state through the United Nations and a host of other international and regional organizations, as was the case vis-à-vis the Apartheid South Africa during the Cold War.*

Keywords: Palestinian Problem, Israel, Zionism, Colonial Settler State, War Crimes, Palestinian Self-Determination, International Sanctions

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Introduction

The forced eviction of Palestinians from Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood and the ensuing mass protests that started in East Jerusalem in May 2021 immediately saw the assault by Israeli security forces on worshippers in and outside of al-Aqsa Mosque. Many Palestinians were killed, and hundreds were injured in the carnage. The wave of protests also spread into Gaza, other parts of the West Bank, and to areas of Israel populated mostly by Palestinians. In response to the Israeli refusal to remove its security forces from the al-Aqsa Mosque, Hamas forces began launching rockets into Israel on May 10, 2021. The Zionist state, in other words, Israel, as founded on Zionist nationalism with the goal of creating a Jewish state in Palestine, retaliated by launching a campaign of massive airstrikes that continued for 11 days causing enormous damage, mostly, to civilian targets. The human and physical devastation resulting from this latest episode of Zionist aggression against Gaza, consisting of a stream of war crimes, was appalling; more than 250 Palestinians, including 66 children, were killed, about 2000 were wounded and more than 72,000 inhabitants were displaced.

This commentary begins with a sketch of the Palestinian ordeal as an ‘international’ problem. It is noted that the Palestinian problem is not only a matter for ‘Palestinians,’ but the direct or indirect victims of Zionists should also encompass various peoples in the Arab world. This essay,

then, takes issue with the mantra of the ‘two-state solution’ and asserts that this narrative is a *cul-de-sac* for Palestinian aspirations. After this, the paper probes into the anomaly of Israel’s treatment by international society as a ‘normal’ state. Based on evidence, it concludes that, *inter alia*, the Zionist state’s colonial-settler nature and the system of apartheid which it has officialized, requires that it should be treated as a *pariah* state. This essay, next, endeavors to indicate how, as is manifest in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation’s (OIC) general posture and resolutions, the Muslim world’s failure to stand against the Zionist aggressor through *concrete action*, has been a major facet of the deepening occupation and ethnic cleansing in Palestine. The commentary ends with some concluding remarks that identify the urgency of the need for imperative international action against Israel, such as embargos and political alienation, within and without the United Nations (UN), as was the case against Apartheid South Africa during the Cold War.

The Palestinian Tragedy as an ‘International’ Problem

The Palestinian problem is, before anything, a tragedy that has befallen on the people whom we identify as ‘Palestinians.’ Doubtless, the emergence and aggravation of the Palestinian problem is closely linked to the malaise within the international system; and to the onset and endurance of neo-colonial and imperialistic onslaught on the Middle East after

the demise of the Ottoman Empire. Palestinians are, first of all, a part of the broader Arab nation. In the light of the unceasing Zionist aggression against the Arab states, such as Syria and Lebanon, right from the genesis of Israel in 1948 and of its devious strategy of sowing the seeds of disunity among various Arab states, the Zionist state poses a major threat to the Arab world. Therefore, making emancipatory headways towards the solution of the Palestinian problem is very much dependent on petering out the imperialist penetration in the area (and, in fact, in much of the non-western world). Therefore, Palestinian liberation can only be achieved if the Palestinians and the Arab world threw away the persistent patterns of domination and exploitation by outside hegemonic powers which arrest the economic and political emancipation of Arab societies.

An occupied Palestine is not only a Palestinian and Arab problem but is also a 'Muslim' problem. The fact that al-Quds, which, *inter alia*, hosts al-Aqsa Mosque, is held in sanctity by the Islamic faith, that most of the Palestinians are Muslims, and that Israel is situated at the very core of the Muslim geography, add additional impetus to the existing Muslim grievances about the horror of injustices committed against the Palestinian people. This explains why the Palestinian problem was the mainframe of reference that ignited the founding of the Islamic Conference Organization in 1969.

The Palestinian tragedy is also a problem of the global South. Israel

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has always acted as a stooge of imperialism that has relentlessly sought to subvert anti-imperialistic political movements in Asia and Africa. The attitude that different states adopt in regard to the Palestinian problem is a major indicator of their posture vis-à-vis the global hegemonic system and the role that they play in this system. The Palestinian problem is the very epitome of global injustice, and any state that supports the Zionist state against the Palestinians is in fact purchasing evil in exchange for goodness. Unless the Palestinians are 'decolonized,' one could not convincingly speak about the real 'decolonization' of the formerly colonized countries and peoples across the world. The mechanisms of colonialism and racism which link many non-western societies into the fold of a white supremacist hegemonic world system, decree the former's subjugation to the system. Therefore, the liberation of Palestine, as the mother of all contemporary injustices and a product of the international systemic malaise, is also a key ingredient of the global South's age-old struggle for freedom from the imperial yoke.

Even the Biden Administration has very little hope of breaking the deadlock over the two-state solution

Finally, the Palestinian problem is the kind of tragedy with which the whole world/entire humanity can identify. This is because, granting that this long-lasting and deep-seated tragedy encapsulates almost all forms of human suffering that oppressors could possibly inflict on their victim communities, and, therefore, is a sort of textbook written in blood. These crimes range from settler-colonialism, military occupation, racism, egregious human rights violations, uprooting of the indigenous population, war crimes, and crimes against humanity through to the denial of indigenous identity and culture, as well as daily humiliation of individual Palestinians, which together evoke the natural human revulsion against injustice and oppression. In comparison to western societies, the Palestinian ordeal has possibly deeper emotional connotations with societies in the global South, simply because the tragic colonial subjugation of most Asian and African societies in the past centuries allows non-western peoples to greatly sympathize with the unmistakable suffering of the Palestinians at the hands of Zionist settler-colonialism. Such subjugated societies, like the Palestinians of the recent past and today, were dehumanized in the narrative of European

colonialism on account of their ‘inferior’ ethnic and cultural identity. Edward Said notes that the European rush for grabbing new territories as part of their colonial enterprise in the second part of the 19th century largely coincided with the beginning of the Zionist immigration into Palestine.¹

The Mantra of the ‘Two-State Solution’

Leading international actors, such as the U.S., the European Union, and the United Nations, that pay lip service to the two-state solution are not ‘in fact’ sufficiently committed to the resolution of the Palestinian problem. The Oslo Peace Process that kick-started in 1993 has laid bare before our eyes that Israel has no intention to accept the existence of a sovereign and sustainable Palestinian state. The key global actors who could potentially have some bearing on the solution of the Palestinian conundrum are precisely the ones that pursue ‘conciliation’ towards this aggressor state. While they repeat the mantra of a ‘two-state solution,’ the leading international actors have never seriously considered the possibility of imposing any embargoes against the Zionist state. In the 1990s, following the onset of the Oslo Process, the two-state solution was considered by many, including the bulk of the Muslim world, as a sensible non-military route to the solution of the Palestinian problem. However, since the process collapsed in 2000, because of Israel’s constant breach of the terms of bilateral legal agreements signed as part



of the Oslo Process so as to subvert the possibility of a Palestinian state, the vocabulary of a two-state solution

has long become anachronistic. The prominent international actors that continue to play to the tune of Zion-

ist ambitions have not been wary of doggedly seeking conciliation with the Zionist victimizer *à la* Israel.

Furthermore, the same set of actors steers clear of conceiving the possibility of a Palestinian state whose frontiers are beyond the 1967 borders. After all, even if one assumes that the UN General Assembly resolution 181 of November 29, 1947, that partitioned Palestine between Jews and Arabs (Palestinians) is legally valid under international law,² Israel's forcible seizure, between 1947-1949, of nearly half of the territory apportioned for Palestinians in the partition resolution, does not give Israel any legal entitlement to territories that go beyond the original 56.5 percent of mandatory Palestine awarded to the Jews in the UN resolution. Yet, based on effective control, Israel claimed sovereignty over the newly occupied territories that covered 21.5 percent of (the historic land of) Palestine which meant that, in 1949, territories under the Israeli control came to encompass 78 percent of Palestine. Israel's gradual recognition as a state by a growing number of states did not in any way imply the recognition of its claim over the newly captured territories in 1947-1949, which included some crucial centers of Palestinian life such as West Jerusalem, Haifa, Safed, and Tiberias.

The Six Days War of 1967, which started off with Israel's massive airstrikes against the Egyptian airbases, ended with the Zionist state gaining possession of the remaining bits of Palestine, namely the West Bank,

East Jerusalem, and Gaza. The Zionist authorities did not wait long before extending the state's laws to East Jerusalem, building Jewish settlements in the West Bank, and destroying the Arab physical, socio-economic, cultural, and demographic structures, all of which constituted grave violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. Israel's occupation (1967) and, later, annexation (1980) of East Jerusalem was consistently condemned by both the UN Security Council and General Assembly. Both of these UN organs declared that the Israeli *fait accompli* was null and void. The Zionist expansion through the forcible seizure of territories that went beyond the Partition Plan of 1947 is no doubt illegal under international law. Suffice to note that, according to the Friendly Relations Declaration of 1970, which was adopted by the consensus of all states, "No territorial acquisition resulting from the threat or use of force shall be recognized as legal."³

The much-hyped aforementioned Oslo Peace Process (1993-2000) was supposed to be crowned eventually by a final treaty between Israel and Palestinians, paving the way for the founding of a Palestinian state side by side with Israel. This process, while bringing almost nothing tangible to the Palestinians, was exceedingly rewarding for Israel as it skillfully 'used' the peace process to enhance its international standing.

All along, Israel wanted the Palestinian side to accept the reality on the ground, brought about by Israel's never-ending *fait accompli*, by recog-

nizing the Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, and the annexation of East Jerusalem. Such negotiation strategies were an affront to just and sustainable peace. Such strategies of domination and abuse of one's dominant position at the expense of another negotiating party are indications of 'bad faith' and a lack of respect for international rules and principles concerning peace, treaty law, rules of conciliation, and the right to self-determination. Throughout Oslo, the Zionist state constantly played down the pertinent norms of international law and UN resolutions, while, with the U.S. connivance, it sought to bring about the total capitulation of the Palestinian side on all the major issues of contention. The peace process collapsed due to the Israeli intransigence on the key ingredients of Palestinian rights: right of sovereignty; right of return for Palestinian refugees; status of al-Quds (Jerusalem); borders; the presence of illegal Jewish settlements in the West Bank, to name a few. The Zionist state, in short, rejected the Palestinian right to self-determination if this meant the formation of a sustainable and sovereign Palestinian state. Should the Palestinian negotiators accept a virtual surrender on all key issues, the eventual treaty emanating from the 'Peace Process' would have to be more properly labeled as an 'unequal treaty' which is a painful reminder of treaties imposed on subjugated countries and peoples during the colonial era.

It is also worthy of note that, leading international actors, such as the U.S., the European powers, and the UN

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(particularly the Security Council) have, for decades, kept silent or failed to protest ceaseless Israeli land-grabs, illegal settlements, egregious violations of human rights, and ruthless assaults on Gaza which has remained an open prison because of the Israeli all-out siege and blockade since 2007.

Currently, most of the territories in the West Bank are under Israeli control. Besides, the lands that belong to the Palestinians are frequently confiscated and turned into public land by the Israeli state. The pace of land-grab is such that, today, a Palestinian state could not possibly come about because of the porous nature of the Palestinian territories in the West Bank, surrounded heavily by Jewish settlements, Israeli security zones, and highways. These pockets of territory, which are reminiscent of the detested Bantustans of the Apartheid South Africa, are indications of Israeli war crimes. In fact, those who repeat the mantra of the 'two-state solution' are inevitably aligning themselves with the U.S. posture which remains rock-solid behind Israel's racist and unyielding policies, strategies, and ambitions. The irony is that even the Biden Administration has very little hope of breaking the deadlock over

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the two-state solution. The day before Joe Biden took office as the President of the U.S. early this year, his Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, bluntly disclosed his pessimism about what future holds for Palestinian aspirations: "The only way to ensure Israel's future as a Jewish, democratic state and to give the Palestinians a state to which they are entitled is through the so-called two-state solution... I think realistically it's hard to see near-term prospects for moving forward on that."⁴ This U.S. posture reveals how the Democratic Party is not very different from the Republican Party, at least on two fronts on the issue of Israel-Palestinian problems: first, the U.S. does not question the 'Jewish' supremacy in Israel; secondly, while the U.S. will continue to pay lip service to the two-state solution, it is not intent on exerting pressure on Israel in order to move forward.

The two-state solution, therefore, has become a catchphrase for the admission of the Israeli *fait accompli* in the occupied territories as something that is irreversible. The idiosyncrasy of this situation could be best expressed on the basis of the following questions that enable us to make a comparison between the Palestinian case and previous cases of colonial

subjugation that ended with decolonization after the Second World War: Is it legally fair that, after gaining independence, while formerly colonized nations almost always succeeded to their entire territorial possessions without facing significant territorial fragmentation, the international debate about the Palestinian independence is confined only to the 22 percent of mandatory Palestine? Does it make sense to imagine that the post-independence Algeria was apportioned merely a small part of the Algerian territory, or post-independence India allowed to establish a sovereign state only in Northern India? These are precisely the sort of questions that ought to be thought of in order to gain insight into the true nature of the Palestinian struggle for independence from the colonial-settler occupation of the Zionist state.

Treating Israel as a 'Normal' State?

A major anomaly about the treatment of the Zionist state by members of international society is its acceptance as a 'normal' state. Those that sympathized with and supported Israel, at least until recently, viewed it unquestioningly as a 'liberal enlightened paradise' in the midst of authoritarian, unruly, and insufficiently civilized societies. Western states have mostly viewed Israel's mistreatment of Palestinians as a 'minor deviation' from an otherwise 'civilized' state, a case simply of 'human rights violations' and, in instances of excessive civilian deaths caused by Israel in Gaza and



Palestinians stage a protest against the Israeli court's decision to evacuate the homes of Palestinian families in the town of Silvan, on June 10, 2021.

EYAD TAWIL / AA

other parts of occupied territories, an 'unfortunate' consequence of 'collateral damage' caused by otherwise justifiable 'wars.' For such 'friends' of the Zionist state, Israel's frequent 'delinquencies' do not in any way warrant international pressure on the Zionist state through international intervention or embargo. Israel is also considered as a 'normal' state by major non-western powers, such as China, Russia, and India, none of which wishes to risk its long-term economic and geopolitical interests by advocating a comprehensive and just solution to the Palestinian problem. Such a posture would be at variance with that of the U.S. and European states, and global institutions that are built on the western perception of international society that reflects western priorities and long-term interests. The third group of international actors, consisting mostly of the global South in Asia,

Africa, and Latin America, are mostly unwilling to go against the dominant current that insists on seeing Israel as a 'normal' state. They therefore generally confine the narrative about the Palestinian problem to the territories, constituting only 22 percent of historic Palestine (West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza), occupied by the Zionist state in 1967, mostly for fear of retaliation by the U.S. and a myriad of international actors supportive of Israel. Even actors within the Muslim world, as we shall see below, have mostly failed to construct an alternative narrative in place of the dominant one that rests on a different paradigm with regard to the definition and resolution of the Palestinian problem.

However, the truth of the matter is that Zionism is not simply a case of territorial occupation by nationalist Jews of a fraction of the territory of Pales-

The two-state narrative has become an appropriate pretext for the OIC and a majority of Muslim states to avoid taking responsibility and thus confront and challenge the Zionist state and its international backers

tine as designated by the mandatory (British) power about a century ago. It is in fact an instance of ever-penetrating colonialism that has laid claim to the entirety of historic Palestine. As a sign of its anachronism, Zionism sought to achieve its colonial ambitions at a time when the last remnants of European colonialism, as in the case of Portuguese possessions in Africa, were being dismantled and the settler-colonial regimes in South Africa and Rhodesia were crumbling.⁵ The Zionists have pursued this objective of colonial subjugation of the whole of Palestine and the uprooting of the indigenous population. Israel also illegally captured parts of the territory belonging to some neighboring Arab states. Besides, and linked to this, unlike other states in the world, the boundaries of Israel are unknown.

Israel is also a racist state. Indeed, the nationality bill, which the Israeli parliament enacted in July 2018, as a Basic Law, defined Israel as a 'Jewish' state, while consigning a secondary status to the Arab minority and the

Arabic language. Granting that Israel has since 2018 'officially,' and not only de facto, become an Apartheid state, its 'liberal' credentials have become ever less convincing to its international 'friends.' Indeed, today, the racist character of the Zionist state has come to be accepted by a growing number of scholars within the western academic establishment, as the following quote testifies:

Under Trump and Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the situation seemed to be nearing a '1948 moment' –referring not to the end of the British Mandate in Palestine but to the victory of the National Party in South Africa and its adoption of apartheid as an ideology and policy– one designed to systematize, deepen, and render into a comprehensive legal form the unequal arrangements that had arisen over time. While Israel drew back from any full formal move, the term 'apartheid' is used increasingly seriously as a description for what had only been called occupation.⁶

Contrary to its UN membership obligations, Israel is among the least 'peace-loving' states in the world. Indeed, the history of the Zionist state is not only full of an uninterrupted series of aggression, massive human rights violations, and overall hostilities towards the Palestinian people, but also is witness to military occupations and armed aggressions of all sorts. Its history is also replete with cases of illicit Israeli operations against Arab and non-Arab states in the Middle East, engagement in state

terrorism, involvement in acts of sabotage, conspiracy to overthrow patriotic governments in the surrounding regions, the use of terrorist groups to destabilize 'unfriendly' states, and alignment with the most mischievous and murderous regimes around the world. *Al Jazeera* exposes how this heinous alignment between Israel and a host of brutal regimes occurred in the context of Latin America:

Where Israel has excelled is in advising, training, and running intelligence and counter-insurgency operations in the Latin American 'dirty war' civil conflicts of Argentina, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and now Colombia... Israel's military relations with right-wing groups and regimes spans Latin America from Mexico to the southernmost tip of Chile, starting just a few years after the Israeli state came into existence.⁷

Therefore, it is reasonable to claim that the Zionist state is among the key actors that sustain the global hegemonic system and *Pax Americana* as its outgrowth.

Palestinian Problem and the Muslim World

The Palestinian tragedy is still at the very core of Muslim consciousness in the contemporary world. The Palestinian problem still arouses Muslim passions and is possibly the foremost symbol of the existence of Muslim *ummah* and Muslims' collective yearning for Pan-Islamic solidarity. The apparent failure of the Muslim

world to come out as a major player and put forward alternative policies and strategies for international action as part of solidarity with Palestinians is a major factor behind the current Palestinian ordeal. We should not forget that the absence of 'effective' collective action by Muslim actors for the liberation of Palestine continues to impair the credibility of numerous regimes, particularly in the Arab world. As observed by Abdulrazak:

[The] Arab and Islamic indolence and lethargy... will ultimately result in alternative political movements rising that will claim to stand up for the rights of the oppressed in Muslim lands. If governments continue to sidestep their obligations to their fellow Muslims, they may well end up inadvertently engineering their own demises.⁸

The endurance of the Palestinian problem which is, *inter alia*, a painful reminder of Arab humiliation by Israel and its chief sponsors the U.S. and its western cohorts, is among a host of other factors, likely to unleash another series of Arab revolts for freedom, justice, as well as better social and economic conditions. Contrary to the submissive attitude of most Arab governments that no longer consider the Palestinian tragedy as a 'major problem,' Arab people mostly view Israel as the major threat and the 'Palestinian problem' as the most pivotal and urgent challenge that requires a joint Arab struggle against the Zionist state. They are aware of the connection between the non-representative and repressive minority regimes, that

betray their expectations, and the capitulation of these regimes before imperialist and Zionist forces. This has at least three implications for the foreseeable future of the Arab world: first, ordinary Arabs are overwhelmingly opposed to the normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel; second, their struggle for democracy ‘internally’ is part of their commitment, ‘externally,’ to the liberation of Palestine; finally, they advocate a wholesale struggle of Arab actors *en masse* against the Zionist enemy and the system that sustains it, for the liberation of Palestine. This should be viewed in combination with the Arab peoples’ joint aspirations for a united Arab front displaying dignity and valiance in international politics and acting in solidarity with their oppressed brethren, including first and foremost, the Palestinians.

The overall inertia and timidity that feature the Muslim world’s handling of the Palestinian problem have had direct repercussions for the general posture and policies adopted by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which is the largest gathering of Muslim countries with 57 member states. Conversely, the OIC posturing on the Palestinian issue, in turn, exerts a major influence on the policies pursued by individual Muslim states. During the course of the latest spate of Israeli assaults in May 2021, on Palestinians in al-Quds, the West Bank, and Gaza, the OIC held an emergency meeting of foreign ministers. The meeting ended with a resolution, adopted on May 16, 2021, which registered the members’ revulsion about

the still ongoing Israeli operations. It was said, of the OIC, that it

Condemns in the strongest terms the barbaric attacks launched by Israel, the occupying authority, against the Palestinian people and their land and holy sites; demands complete and immediate stop of these attacks that have affected innocent civilians and their properties, in gross violation of international law and United Nations resolutions on the question of Palestine.⁹

Although the OIC’s rhetoric about the condemnation of Israeli actions was quite fiery and displayed an awareness of the deviousness and the depth of the Zionist occupation and the accompanying crimes, it did not come up with any plans that would commit the member states to a stream of punitive actions against the Zionist state. Instead, the resolution, paragraph after paragraph, asked ‘other’ international actors, such as the UN, to do whatever is necessary in order to stop the Israeli aggression: “Warns, in particular, against the dangerous effects of Israel’s continued and deliberate inflammation and provocation...”; “Demands a stop to all violations being carried out by Israel...”; “Reiterates its rejection and condemnation of the ongoing Israeli settlement colonization...”; “Underscores the responsibility of the Security Council to act swiftly to end the Israeli occupation’s barbaric attacks on the Palestinian people...”; “Calls upon the international community ...to... take measures and steps to compel Israel, the occupying authority, to fulfill its obligation as occupying authority...”

Not unsurprisingly, this resolution also confirmed the OIC's commitment to the two-state solution, a possibility which has long become defunct: "[OIC] Reiterates its readiness for engagement in all efforts to support the just Palestinian cause and guarantee the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and subsequent just and comprehensive solution on the basis of *the two-state solution*..." (emphasis mine).¹⁰

This Muslim strategy, consisting only of rhetoric and devoid of *action*, has undeniably run its course. The two-state narrative has become an appropriate pretext for the OIC and a majority of Muslim states to avoid taking responsibility and thus confront and challenge the Zionist state and its international backers. Instead, the Muslim group should brace itself for a long-pronged struggle and commitment to alienate and punish Israel, fully support the Palestinian resistance on all fronts and go beyond the parochial legal discourse about self-determination (and statehood) of Palestinians in only a very small fraction of historical Palestine.

Concluding Remarks

Israel is a racist and expansionist state that is intending on destroying the possibility of a sustainable Palestinian state. There is an abundance of legal arguments indicating that the Zionists are usurpers of lands that rightfully belonged to the Palestinians. Today, as before, resorting to brutal force, and a

Muslim states that are on the side of the Palestinians should begin considering the possibility of 'punishing' the U.S. on account of its limitless support for the Zionist state

strategy of deception, and a refusal to settle for a meaningful peace with Palestinians and surrounding states are the hallmarks of Israeli foreign policy. It is also beyond doubt that the so-called 'two-state solution' is premised on the very denial of the political aspirations of the Palestinian people as the collapse of the Oslo 'peace process' tragically unveiled. All this suggests that granting international support for the Palestinian resistance against Israel is, without a shred of doubt, both legal and legitimate. In addition, considering that, under international law, Palestine has been a state at least since 1988,¹¹ other international actors should provide it with all kinds of economic, political, and military support. During the Cold War, the collective struggle and international solidarity of a myriad of actors characterized the long-term and taxing international efforts to bring down the racist apartheid system in South Africa. A similar modality of international action, combining the forces of anti-Zionist movements, from The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS) –launched in 2005– campaign to the indigenous resistance through to the advocates of the UN-led embargo, should be brought

to bear on Israel. Apartheid South Africa and the Zionist state were, to no one's surprise, close friends during the Cold War based on their systematic racism, state terrorism, aggression towards neighboring states, and refusal to abide by international law. If anything, in the words of Ronnie Kasrils, a South African Jew who actively fought against apartheid from the 1960s onwards, the plight of Palestinians has been 'far worse' than the conditions of the Black inhabitants during the apartheid era.¹² The Zionist state is not only a colonial-settler and criminal state but has constantly violated regional and international peace and security.

Therefore, 'resistance' appears to be the sole workable strategy for the liberation of Palestine. The two main poles of resistance are states and non-state actors. 'People power' consists of the routine Palestinian resistance to the Zionist occupation as well as the Arab and Muslim boycotts (e.g., of Israeli goods), and protests, as civilian initiatives, targeting the Zionist regime and its international backers. The BDS movement, for its part, inspired by the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, has become a worldwide movement that seeks to inflict economic harm on Israel through boycotts, divestments, and economic sanctions. By virtue of its campaigns and various other initiatives, the BDS movement also endeavors to intellectually and culturally isolate Israel and Israelis from the outside world so long as the military occupation persists, and the Palestinian refugees are denied the right of return.

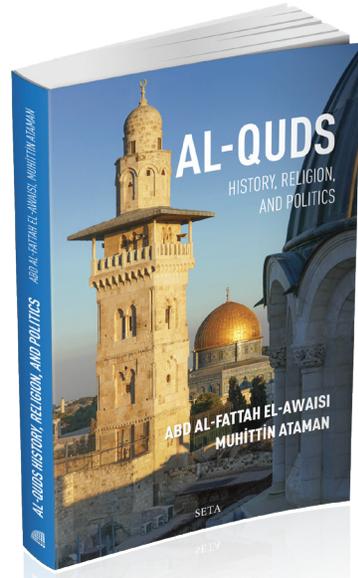
At the state or quasi-state level, it could be argued that, as the internationally recognized political representative of the Palestinian people since the 1970s, the PLO's abandonment of armed resistance and opting for negotiations for peace with Israel has proven disastrous on account of Israel's failure to fulfill its obligations under the Oslo arrangements. The Zionist state is unyielding about devouring most of the occupied territories (even the ones it had seized after the Six Days War of 1967) for itself. It seems that there are three avenues, permissible under international law, which could possibly be followed by the Palestinians and other actors that truthfully support the Palestinian cause: First, Palestinians should resist (and, in fact, are resisting as May 2021 events bore witness) the Israeli occupation by all means, including a resort to the armed struggle as a state and people under military occupation; second, international society ought to impose comprehensive sanctions against Israel, which suggests that the international organizations such as the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the Arab League should immediately act to punish Israel; third, considering that Palestine is a state (although under military occupation), the 'friends' of Palestine, first and foremost, various Muslim states, should provide extensive political, economic, and military support to the Palestinians. In the meantime, different Palestinian factions ought to get over their disunity and embark on a joint struggle against the enemy. As a complementary to such measures, Muslim states that are on the side of

the Palestinians should begin considering the possibility of 'punishing' the U.S. on account of its limitless support for the Zionist state. The suspension of the activities of some American military bases in Muslim countries and the partial reduction of the sale of essential energy sources like petroleum and natural gas to the U.S. could be a useful starting point.

We must never forget that, if Palestine ever dies, it would also be the death of our humanity! ■

Endnotes

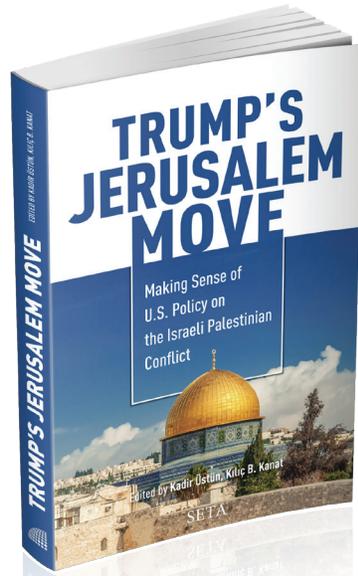
1. Edward Said, "Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims," *Social Text*, No. 1 (Winter 1979), pp. 22-23.
2. I have argued elsewhere that the UN General Assembly Resolution No. 181 of 1947, is legally suspect on a number of accounts: First, the General Assembly is not given requisite in the Charter of the UN (1945) competence to create states; second, General Assembly resolutions are only recommendatory; thus they are not binding; third, on the eve of the voting, the U.S. had exerted pressure and threatened some members of the Assembly in order to insure that they voted in favour of the resolution, which is contrary to the Charter of the UN (Article 2/4); last, but not least, the partition plan apportioned the greater part of Palestine territory to the Jews (56,5 percent), although they only constituted one third of the population, against the Palestinian Arabs who were allocated only 43 percent of Palestine, although they were two thirds of the overall population in the area. This was, no doubt, a serious breach of the right of self-determination that rested on majority rule. On the legal uncertainties surrounding the emergence and territorial expansion of the Zionist state, see, Berdal Aral, *Bitmeyen İhanet: Emperyalizmin Gölgesinde Filistin Sorunu ve Uluslararası Hukuk*, (İstanbul: Çıra Yayınları, 2019).
3. "2625 (XXV). Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in Accordance With the Charter of the United Nations," *United Nations*, (October 24, 1970), retrieved from <http://www.un-documents.net/a25r2625.htm>.
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11. That Palestine was admitted to the United Nations as an 'observer state' in 2012, should not detract us from the fact that, although its desire to become a UN 'member state' was aborted by the U.S. which indicated its intention to veto Palestine's bid for membership in the Security Council, the UN considers Palestine as a 'state.' After all, the state of Palestine is currently recognized by nearly 140 states in the world.
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Al-Quds | History, Religion and Politics

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Considering the transformation process in the Middle East and the global transition, it is clear that the Palestinian-Israeli question and the issue of al-Quds will continue to dominate the agenda of the Middle East and global system. Recent regional developments such as Trump's decision regarding the future of Jerusalem and the solution proposal called the "Deal of Century" by the Trump Administration demonstrate that the holy city of al-Quds will continue.



Trump's Jerusalem Move

April 2020 | Kadir Üstün, Kılıç Buğra Kanat

This critically important book includes chapters both contextualizing and discussing the U.S. administration's Jerusalem declaration in great detail. Various sections authored by American, Latin American, European, and Turkish authors examine the international responses to the U.S. President Trump's declaration.