

HUMAN LIBERATION

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF NAKBA '48
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

Nakba '48 is a student organization at the University of Florida dedicated to fostering awareness of the plight and struggle of the Palestinian people against Zionist occupation and oppression. For more information, please visit our website at www.nakba48.org.

Human Liberation is an outlet for creative expressions about global struggles for emancipation, like the Palestinian cause. The mission of the journal is to embody hope for the liberation of humanity from inhumane conditions all over the world.

We strongly encourage all those who seek a better tomorrow to submit articles, poetry, and/or visual artwork. Concerned citizens, faculty and students alike are openly invited to submit their work. To submit materials for publication in Human Liberation, please email the editor, David Reznik, at dreznik@ufl.edu.

All articles and poetry should be emailed as Microsoft Word attachments, and all visual art should be converted into either a .gif or .jpg file. For articles, please *footnote* all references using ASA citation format (contact the editor with any questions on how to cite references). All submitted work should include a two to three sentence biography about the submitting author, artist, or poet.

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An Interview with...

Palestinian Author/Journalist/Scholar Ramzy Baroud

Human Liberation: What does human liberation mean to you? What are its main elements?

Ramzy Baroud: Human liberation obviously refers to the state of physical, moral and spiritual emancipation of the individual as well as of the collective. To be understood within a practical context, it must be examined against the backdrop of its opposite: slavery. I don't mean slavery exclusively as an historic nor a theological construct, but slavery in its most relevant and contemporary political meanings.

To make this more relevant, I think that many nations around the world are in dire need of freedom and I don't exclusively refer to the Palestinian people and their definite need for such a quality. I have toured many countries in the Middle East, with flags, national anthems and national soccer teams who lack the most basic elements of human liberation, the right to live in freedom, to express one opinion, to challenge the mainstream concepts of politics, religion or social norms. But it's important to note that human liberation, or the lack thereof, is not entirely a Third World or a Middle Eastern reality, but a global struggle. In the United States for example, I dare say there is a decades-long process of indoctrination where the media shapes public opinion, perception and life style on about everything. There is near consent on many issues, as long as there is a mirroring consent in the media regarding those same issues. The ability to break away from those preset standards shall contribute to liberate the human mind to think freely and to act according to her/his own consciousness, not on the often deceptive and commercially-motivated interpretation of the media.

HL: What does human liberation mean in the context of Palestine? What are the major social forces preventing human liberation in Palestine? How can these forces be overcome?

RB: With regard to Palestine, the Palestinian people inside the Occupied Territories are denied the most basic elements of freedom and liberty. I recall as a child living in a refugee camp, it was illegal to carry a Palestinian flag, to even inscribe the letters of Palestine anywhere, otherwise there is a heavy fine or imprisonment by the Israeli Military Administration. Needless to say that the freedom to work, to study, to travel, to express one's opinion to a neighbor, much less publicly, were confined and required an Israeli army permit. Nothing has changed today, despite over a decade of a "peace process"; Palestinians are still denied the most basic rights. Tens of thousands of West Bank farmers must apply for an Israeli permit to water or harvest their crops; Palestinian school children must wait in line before an Israeli gate (Qalqiliya is a good example) to be allowed to cross to school. The Israeli Separation Wall built illegally on Palestinian land in the West Bank is the greatest attestation to the confinement of human liberation on a physical level. But there is no denial that physical incarceration and collective imprisonment often fail to detain the human will, a person's ability to be defiant, creative, challenging, thus attain mental growth and survival. If you compare Palestinians living inside the Occupied Territories to supposedly sovereign neighboring countries, you would be stunned to see that Palestinians are much more tolerant and progressive free-thinkers. We insist on carrying the Palestinian flag, writing love poetry and inscribing the letters of Palestine in every language on the walls of our prisons. If you read the graffiti written on the Palestinian side of the Israeli wall, you'll be amazed at the audacity and valor of Palestinians. Maybe they have been

somewhat subdued and imprisoned physically, but they have never been morally defeated or detained.

HL: What role can university campuses play in the struggle for human liberation?

RB: University campuses are essential in the struggle for human liberation. True, we earn degrees in part to find good jobs, but also because we value learning and education as concepts. Education and learning are without value if they are not a direct expression of freedoms on social, political and even cultural levels. If a university campus fails to play its role as an edifice of enlightenment and the extension of constructive social and political values all around it, it's frankly meaningless; more of a job training facility than a university. I must admit that despite all attempts, our universities in the United States host some of the most progressive social and political groups all around. It's a comforting notion, considering the sharp decline in our political progression and the uncontested hegemony of the right wing over the decision making on the national level.

HL: In an age when the mainstream news media present images of human tragedy side-by-side with celebrity gossip, is it still possible to foster moral empathy and indignation in the public? If so, how?

RB: This goes back to my earlier claim regarding the media and its setting of social and political agendas. In fact, agenda setting is one of mass communication's most lively and relevant theories. However, I do believe that it's still possible to foster moral empathy in our

communities. We must continue to support and strive to create alternative mechanisms to combat the prevailing apathy fostered by the buck-seeking media. We must take every opportunity to balance social and political deterioration infesting our societies, through embracing positive platforms: alternative and progressive media, social justice groups, churches, mosques, synagogues and temples scattered all around the United States are all platforms that must be exploited to learn and teach about social justice and human liberation.

HL: Your book Searching Jenin documents the atrocities committed by the Israeli army in the Jenin refugee camp in 2002. How would you respond to criticisms that qualitative research (in this case, the use of eyewitness accounts) is biased, subjective, and therefore “politicized”?

RB: There is no such thing as objective media. It never was and never will be. Thus, despite the fact that I did do my best to remain objective in my presentation of my qualitative research in my book Searching Jenin, I don’t claim that I succeeded in completely separating my own bias from the subject at hand. However, I wish to differentiate between bias and mere forgery, intentional and purposeful imbalance. While the first is an imperative human nature, the latter is deceptive and simply unreliable. No matter how personally involved I am in an issue or cause, I try no to allow misinformation, political propaganda or subjective analysis to hamper the usefulness of my final product. I feel very strongly about that.

Ramzy Baroud teaches Mass Communication at Australia’s Curtin University of Technology. He is the editor-in-chief of the Palestine Chronicle and author of the forthcoming book, A Force to be Reckoned With: Writings on the Second Palestinian Uprising, to be published by Pluto Press, London. His email address is editor@palestinechronicle.com.

Excerpts from...

Baroud, Ramzy. 2003. Searching Jenin: Eyewitness Accounts of the Israeli Invasion 2002. Seattle, WA: Cune Press.

From "Introduction":

The Jenin refugee camp is a focal point in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The plight of this small camp with its impoverished refugees is representative of Israeli occupation and of Palestinian resistance. It reflects the victimization of the Palestinian people and also demonstrates their determination to use armed struggle to defy occupation...These testimonies recount Palestinian losses. Yet they also remind the world that the Palestinian voice has not been silenced and continues to long for freedom. (p. 32)

From the testimony of Rund al-Shalabi, a Jenin fifth grader:

I had a great father. No other father was like him. He was a member of the resistance. He defended his land and his children. My father was a very good man. He always murmured Quran and religious sayings. The last time he came to the house, he came to take some clothes to the resistance fighters. That was during the last invasion. He left and came back again to get a lantern. He often came back to the house during the battle to wash and pray. The last time he came, he stayed for a long time. He had us all sit down around him, and he ate with us. On that same day he was killed. He was killed on a Friday, a day that is blessed for Muslims...

[On the eleventh day] the Israeli army moved into our house. They broke the door and stormed in shouting dirty words. We had been sleeping, but we immediately jumped out of our

beds. My brothers were not very scared, but my mom and I were terrified. I was shivering from fear.

The soldiers filled the courtyard, they had all kinds of equipment with them. They shot and killed our sheep. They had a man from the neighborhood who knew some Hebrew translate. Then they used us as shields. They broke our cupboards, our beds, and a coat tree. I was scared but I didn't cry...

The Israeli soldiers made my mom sit on her knees and they pointed a gun to her head, and asked "Where are the *shebab* [resistance fighters]?" They had a female soldier search my mother. She also beat my mom up and took her money.

"God is stronger than you," my mom told them.

The soldiers laughed and asked, "Where is your husband?"

"My husband is dead," she replied.

"No, my father is a martyr!" shouted my brother.

"Your father is a son of a bitch!" shouted the soldiers.

Once they knew that my father was a martyr, they kept coming back to our house, they used the area in front of our house as a base for their tanks. One of the soldiers took his clothes off and started dancing as another took our drum and started playing music. We sat in the corner, they wouldn't let us move for five hours. They wouldn't allow us to drink either.

They came and they asked my mother, "Where are the weapons?"

"We have no weapons," she said. "You should be ashamed of yourselves! You call us terrorists, and you and your Sharon are the real terrorists. You come to our refugee camp, and you destroy it. What crime did our sheep commit to be killed?"

"Shut up!" shouted the soldiers back.

Two soldiers grabbed some sticks and pretended that they were having a sword fight. The soldiers said, "Look at us, we are better than the Arabs at this!"

"You are cowards!" said my brother in a loud voice.

The soldier laughed and hit my brother very hard in the face. My brother did not cry...

They destroyed whatever they hadn't broken already. They stayed until sunset. My mother kept telling them, "What are me and my children doing to you? Don't you have hearts? You are terrifying my children." My mother finally started to weep. "Do whatever you want," she said. "Kill us all if you want, if we die, we will go to Paradise. But what will happen to you when you die?"

"This is the last time I am going to tell you to shut up!" screamed a soldier after running up and putting a gun to my mother's head. They stayed for a few more hours. They would go to the kitchen and would use our pots and pans as a toilet, they cut up our mattresses with knives. They tore up our schoolbooks and they burned our school bags. They got very mad when they saw a picture of a Palestinian flag in one of the books...

When I grow up, I want to be a doctor, to treat the wounded with the will of God. My brother wants to be a teacher, and my older brother also wants to be a doctor. My father was poor, but he would take us to the market and say, "Choose whatever you want." During the invasion, he told us that he was going to build us a swing set and a garden and a special room to do our homework. He used to say, "You will get the chance to play with all the children in the neighborhood." But unfortunately God has chosen him to be a martyr. We are now on our summer vacation, although all of our schools were destroyed by the army.

From the testimony of Trevor Baumgartner, a New York special-education teacher who traveled to Jenin as part of the International Solidarity Movement:

A grandmother in a white head scarf and an elegantly embroidered turquoise gown clutches a case of water and crawls up and over slabs of cinder block and stucco. She's trying to find a place to store this water, supplied by local relief organizations. As she shoves them through a prison bar mesh of snarled rebar, I'm struck by her resolve. Her trembling but unbroken spirit. Her steadfast human will drives her body and keeps her in her home, Palestine...

When the wind picks up just right and washes over my face, I find myself engulfed by the scent of dead bodies. I've never tasted this smell before, but somehow I know. There's nothing like the smell of a rotting heart. Nothing...

This is not simply about counting the dead and displaced. It's about respect for human life. Whereas the US immediately rallied support for a war around the world, as well as a full-scale relief effort in New York, here a piddly UN "fact-finding" team can't even worm their way into this refugee camp, let alone use any machinery to uncover those men, women, and children buried alive. What "facts" they'd be trying to find is another bewildering matter altogether, as everybody—everybody—knows who did what to whom. The treatment of the refugees in Jenin is pathological and utterly despicable. And we all bear some responsibility for it. They've been refugees for over fifty years, and many of them are now doubly displaced. Yet most of us look away in silence...

These are not a pitiable people. They've spent their years building a fierce and proud community. In the face of intense and forced isolation...

The stories of the strength of Mukhayim ("camp" in Arabic) Jenin are gaining legendary status. "The soldiers cry when they come to Jenin," many folks are proud to say. They are clear

about making distinctions between resisting outside aggression/occupation and general terrorism. They are equally clear that everyday they survive terrorism from a state with nuclear capabilities.

Jenin will flower again, Shadi says, because “everybody here has the same goal.” What is that goal, I ask.

“*Hurriya.*” It means freedom.

* * *

Palestine, Refugees, and Transitional Justice

by Rifk Ebeid

The fairly new field and study of transitional justice continues to grow each year at an exponential rate. Whether established or newly formed democracies, more and more countries are trying to use transitional justice mechanisms to address human rights violations of the past. According to the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), the main goal of transitional justice is to promote justice, peace, and reconciliation. Governmental officials and non-governmental players have considered various approaches to achieving this goal, including retributive or restorative responses to human rights abuses.¹ The transitional period is defined as beginning right after political change, for example moving from communism to democracy or dictatorship to democracy. “Thus”, explains Teitel, “the problem of transitional justice arises within a bounded period, spanning two regimes”.²

What happens, however, when a country is not involved in a shift of political orders, yet appears to be involved in some sort of transition? The case of the Palestinians and Israel presents an interesting complication to the study of transitional justice. The region is not experiencing a transition from one regime to another, but it is in a transitional period moving from an unstable situation under Israeli occupation to a seeming settlement.³

Despite claims that this transition has already begun, the facts on the ground do not allow for it to actually succeed. Because the underlying foundation for transitional justice is the

¹ For more information, please see www.ictj.org.

² Teitel, Rudi. 1997. “Transitional Jurisprudence: The Role of Law in Political Transformation.” *Yale Law Journal*, 106:2009-2080, pg. 2013.

³ Zoughbi, Zoughbi. 2005. “Restorative Justice: The Middle East.” *Wi'am: Palestinian Conflict Resolution Center*, www.planet.edu/~alashlah/us/writings/restorative_justice.htm.

restoration of internationally recognized human rights, this paper will attempt to explore the case of the Palestinians and Israel in terms of the real transitional justice that needs to occur: a move to a secular democratic state in the whole area where race, religion, or ethnicity does not determine one's superiority, and human rights are respected and given back to those from whom it was taken away.

Many would argue against the relevance of transitional justice in the Palestinian-Israeli case. In a 2004 BADIL forum hosted by the Emil Touma Institute, a session was dedicated to the examination of new and evolving academic approaches and their relevance for conflict resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and an overview of the discipline of transitional justice was given. Arguments that arose for the irrelevance of the transitional justice model include:

1. Restorative/transitional justice mechanisms are developed mainly to deal with internal conflicts. In these cases the populations in question share the same territory. In the Palestinian-Israeli case, the conflict is “cross-borders” and the trend is towards separation.
2. Transitional justice mechanisms apply better to situations of a former dictatorship. Israel is defined as a democracy.
3. A transitional justice process can be effective only when the beneficiary realizes “something is wrong.” Since most Israelis operate on a “victim psychology,” they won't recognize that “something is wrong.”
4. A transitional justice process is fit for application in post-conflict societies. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is far from being in a post-conflict situation.⁴

⁴ BADIL. 2004. “Models of Transitional Justice and Participatory Process – Tools for Moving Forward in the Case of Palestine-Israel?” *Expert Forum for the Promotion of a Rights-Based Approach to the*

Most of these arguments, however, do not hold sway. The idea that the Israeli and Palestinian populations do not share the same territory is false based on the facts on the ground. The Palestinians who hold citizenship in Israel proper constitute nearly 20 percent of the population. Also, Israel has built more than 400 settlements so far, housing over 403,249 Jewish settlers in the Occupied Territories.⁵ The building of these settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is clearly not indicative of a “trend towards separation.” Furthermore, as occupied territories, there is no semblance of a Palestinian state that would allow for the idea of a “cross-border” dispute to even exist.

Regarding the second point, although Israel is defined as a democracy, it also represents an Occupying Power. The acquisition of territory by force is illegal under international law, and the United Nations passed General Assembly Resolution 242 calling for Israel to withdraw from territories it occupied during the 1967 war. Clearly violating international law, Israel’s continued occupation has resulted in countless human rights abuses against the occupied Palestinians. There is clearly a need, therefore, for transition out of occupation to occur and mechanisms of justice to be applied in order to address the abuses committed during occupation. Additionally, the feeling that “something is wrong” is starting to be found among sectors of Israeli-Jewish civil society, and there are some who have started to search for and speak out about the truth.⁶

Although the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is far from being a post-conflict situation, I would argue that the mechanisms of transitional justice are the exact necessity in order for transition to true democracy and equality to occur. Instead of justice during times of transition,

Palestinian Refugee Question, Emil Touma Institute for Palestinian and Israeli Studies (Haifa), February 7th.

⁵ Please see www.palestinemonitor.org.

⁶ BADIL, *op. cit.*

justice for transition is what is needed. A common theme heard throughout Palestinian circles is “no peace without justice.” Pope Paul VI once said, “If you want peace, work for justice”.⁷ In this case, the Palestinians and Israel could truly benefit from the study of transitional justice. Applying some of the approaches of countries who have actually experienced transitional justice may be the necessary step in the Palestinian-Israeli path to peace. In the forum discussed earlier, contrary to the arguments against the relevance of transitional justice, it was argued that some elements can in fact be employed irrespective of the fact that this is not a traditional post-conflict situation. A model for restorative justice that was discussed included: 1) recognition of the harm perpetrated, 2) restoration of balance and repairing the wrong, 3) and clarification of the future.⁸

The primary objective of transitional justice is to address past abuses of human rights, and in doing so, restoring a sense of justice to the victims. Restorative justice focuses primarily on exposing the truth and inquiring into patterns of past abuses in order to establish an accurate historical record of events. Rouhana contends that justice is introduced to the discussion of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict only in the context of reconciliation.⁹ He outlines four components of reconciliation: justice, historic truth, acknowledgement of historic responsibility, and social and political restructuring. Returning to the idea of “justice for transition,” these four components of reconciliation lead to the appropriate atmosphere and relationship necessary for achieving conflict resolution. In fact, the first three components Rouhana discusses are the key features that allow for the application of the model of restorative justice discussed above.

⁷ Zoughbi, *op. cit.*

⁸ BADIL, *op. cit.*

⁹ Rouhana, Nadim N. 2001. “Reconciliation in Protracted National Conflict: Identity and Power in the Israeli-Palestinian Case.” *Israeli Sociology*, 3:277-295.

In regard to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, no other group would benefit from reconciliation more deservedly than the Palestinian refugees. They are one of the largest mass of people who have experienced the abuses and loss of their fundamental human rights in this whole conflict. Reconciliation is the necessary first step in addressing their plight and restoring their rights. Reconciliation as a process calls for both sides of the conflict that were involved in human rights violations, such as ethnic cleansing and property confiscation, to acknowledge historic truths about these violations and to agree on the perpetrators' responsibility.

To illustrate the idea of justice for transition, the process example is more poignant than reconciliation as an end-state. The reconciliation process leads to a political arrangement guided by a framework that seeks to correct the injustices of the past and guarantee human rights. The importance of correcting the injustices of the past cannot be stressed enough in terms of the long term consequences. Wi'am, a Palestinian Conflict Resolution Center, explains,

“When we talk about justice we are interested in redressing the injustices and correcting wrongs rather than avenging them or taking revenge. This notion of relative justice is the approach to help in the social transformation and strengthening the fiber of the Palestinian people...”¹⁰

The difficulty in starting the reconciliation process lies in Israel's denial of the historic truth about its role in the creation of the refugee problem, and subsequently in its denial of redressing the human rights violations it committed by not allowing the fundamental refugee right of return. The general Israeli narrative of the events of 1948 is that Arab countries waged a war on Israel and encouraged the Palestinians to leave until the war was won, creating the idea that the refugees fled voluntarily. Based on this narrative, Israel refuses to accept responsibility for the refugee problem. Yet, as Rouhana argues,

¹⁰ Zoughbi, *op. cit.*

“The controversy over how many Palestinians were expelled in 1948 and how many left under duress of war, is irrelevant to their basic right to return to their homeland and to Israel’s responsibility for their plight”.¹¹

Israel maintains its own narrative of the events that unfolded in 1948 in order to evade the responsibility for justice that the real truth entails. “Until these truths are faced,” concludes Rouhana, “the current power imbalance between the parties will not allow for reconciliation, simply because the unchallenged narratives that guide each party’s behavior do not allow for compatible political moves”.¹²

Due to the lack of agreement on Israel’s responsibility, the main recourse that the Palestinians have used is international law. Somewhat similar to the idea of retributive justice, Palestinians have applied legal doctrines to impose responsibility on the State of Israel for its crimes under international law; in particular, the application of the right of return. In fact, the Palestinian focus on right of return uses the mechanisms of restorative justice in order to impose responsibility by entailing accountability and compensation.

Some of the Israeli arguments raised in the local and international media against the right of return were examined in a bulletin published by BADIL in April 2001.¹³ Numerous Israeli writers argue that there is no right of return in international law. Yet in practice, many international peace treaties have affirmed the right of return. Many of these treaties were concluded in countries that were, in fact, applying transitional justice mechanisms: Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo. Israeli writers also argue that the UN General Assembly Resolution 194 does not establish a “right” of return. Resolution 194 did not, in fact, establish a new right; it merely re-affirmed a principle of international law which was already

¹¹ Rouhana, *op. cit.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ BADIL. 2004. “The Right of Return – An Analysis of Recent Debate in the Israeli Press.” *April Bulletin*, <http://www.badil.org/Publications/Bulletins/Bulletin-05.htm>.

considered binding upon states in 1948. Another argument raised by the Israeli press is that the right of return is inconsistent with a two-state solution and therefore must be subject to negotiation. As discussed previously, current conditions on the ground already do not allow for a viable two-state solution. Furthermore:

“the applicability of the right of return to the Palestinian refugee case, as with other rights recognized in international law, is not subject to negotiation. The objective of any peace negotiation process, rather, should be to re-affirm the rights of refugees and to establish mechanisms and guarantees for the implementation of their rights.”¹⁴

Implementation of the right of return for Palestinian refugees is the necessary guarantee that Israel accepts the historic truth and its responsibility for the plight of the refugees. Reaffirming the refugees’ rights through the implementation of international law achieves one of the most important objectives of transitional justice, which is to restore fundamental human rights to those from whom it was taken.

As discussed earlier, one of the major goals of restorative justice is to create recognition of the harm perpetrated and to repair the wrongs committed, and the major components involved in achieving this goal are those which lead to reconciliation: justice, historic truth, and acknowledgement of historic responsibility. For the Palestinians, particularly the refugees, justice means recognition of the historic truth through the implementation of international law. The Palestinians will view Israel’s compliance with international law as their aggressor’s acceptance of its historic responsibility. In late 2000, former Israeli Justice Minister Yossi Beilin rejected requests to open files in state and IDF (Israel Defense Forces) archives relating to the displacement and expulsion of Palestinians in 1948 based on claims by senior archivists that the content of these files would damage Israel’s reputation.¹⁵

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

In a book written by Nur Masalha, The Expulsion of the Palestinians, declassified Israeli and Zionist documents prove that the concept of transfer was a central component of Zionism and the creation of the State of Israel.¹⁶ If it is clear that the Israeli government itself has conclusive evidence pointing to its responsibility for the refugee crisis, the question remains why it continues to deny its role and create a deceiving historical narrative. The answer lies in the implications of undoing the injustice that was committed. As Rouhana indicates,

“These implications can be both political and psychological. In cases of ethnic cleansing such as in the former Yugoslavia, the political implications can involve such steps as power sharing, political transformation, and return of refugees; these consequences are usually framed in terms of existential threat to identity and national security.”¹⁷

Despite the claims of a threat to identity and national security, the 1995 Dayton Agreement in Yugoslavia serves as the most prominent example of inclusion in the peace agreement of the refugee right to return. Furthermore, as mentioned before, one of the fundamental goals of restorative justice is to restore human rights. If the perpetrator created the very conditions that led to such destructive implications, it is not the fault of the victims. Those whose human rights were denied or taken away do not lose their right to have them restored just because the passage of time created negative implications.

Many would argue that reconciliation between the Palestinians and Israel is impossible. To argue this point is to destroy any chance for restorative justice. Those who find reconciliation impossible only purport this belief because they want to create a “peace process” that conveniently ignores the injustices of the past and disassociates them from any responsibility to redress these injustices. It is easy for those in a position of power to suggest that we “accept the

¹⁶ Masalha, Nur. 1992. *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of Transfer in Zionist Political Thought, 1882-1948*. Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies.

¹⁷ Rouhana, *op. cit.*

injustices done by both sides,” as a way to give the impression that both sides are on equal playing fields.

However, there is an important and fundamental need for reconciliation. Through reconciliation, historic truth must be exposed and responsibility for past atrocities must be taken. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, many often argue that the idea of a historic truth is non-existent because both sides will never agree on what really happened. This fact was recognized by the Palestinians, so instead they turned to international law as a final hope for their grievances to be acknowledged. Still, people argued with the Palestinians’ reliance on international law and began to question its applicability and authority.

The question then remains: what other recourse is left? Where else can the Palestinians look to have someone, anyone, acknowledge the wrongs done to them and give them back their due rights? Regarding refugees, those same Israelis who would like to disassociate from the past (i.e. pretend the refugee problem does not really exist in order to wash their hands clean from it) would suggest that what is left is to give Palestinians citizenship elsewhere.

But is this really justice? It may give the refugees their due social and economic rights, but does that mean that in the process they should lose their political and legal rights? Does giving them citizenship even address the injustice done to them in the past? Does it apply the mechanisms of transitional justice, or does it continue to ignore past injustices, and in turn impose a new injustice on the host countries that were forced to take in the refugees? More generally, what is justice? Is right of return really the only way to address the injustices of the past, or to achieve justice for Palestinian refugees?

Perhaps those who experienced the injustice, and have continued to experience it for the past 50 years while living in squalid refugee camps, should be asked what they think. Perhaps

when abstract political language that ignores the cries of millions of human beings is replaced with transitional justice, then peace can be achieved not only with “the other” but within oneself. This peace, achieved through the justice that the victims of injustice see fit, is possible only when the dominant population realizes that race, religion, or ethnicity should never be the determinant of one’s superiority, and that human rights should be respected and given back to those from whom it was undoubtedly usurped.

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* * *

The Fateful Cover-Up

by Paul Findley

Israel's war crimes against the USS Liberty and its crew on June 8, 1967—midway through the Six-Day War between Israel and Arab states—provoked a startling, profound U.S. response, a cover-up that marked the beginning of America's 38 years of Israel-centric foreign policies. It became a costly, radical turn for the worse that sent America's prestige and credibility plunging and imposed on the American people ever-growing new burdens—even war—with no end in sight.

The assault remains perplexing to the few Americans aware of its details but no more so than the strange behavior of President Lyndon B. Johnson while the attack was still underway. Most Americans have no knowledge of the assault on Liberty or the cover-up, but these are certain to make indelible pages in future history books.

When attacked, the Liberty, an unarmed reconnaissance ship of the U.S. Navy, was moving slowly in international waters off the coast of Gaza and the Sinai. The day's horrors are detailed in a report filed on behalf of the ship's survivors in a U.S. circuit court in California on the 38th anniversary of the assault. Among the Israeli crimes cited in the lawsuit are the following:

- sustained rocket, cannon and torpedo fire from air and sea that killed U.S. 34 sailors, wounded 173 others, and riddled the defenseless ship with holes, one of them 40 feet wide;
- gun fire that destroyed rubber lifeboats that were put in the water when the ship's captain ordered preparations to abandon ship;

- the firing of napalm on the open deck where defenseless sailors were attempting to protect the ship.

The assault was deliberate. It was committed in broad daylight during a two-hour span in the afternoon that followed a series of close-in aerial surveillance flights by Israeli aircraft hours earlier. The assault did not begin until three hours after Israel's naval command precisely identified the target as an unarmed U.S. Navy reconnaissance vessel. The American flag flew in a brisk breeze at the ship's stern. The large U.S. Navy insignia was clearly visible on the ship's hull.

When General Moshe Dayan issued the order to destroy the Liberty, one of the generals on his staff remonstrated: "This is pure murder." Several Israeli pilots, knowing the target was American, refused to take part. Testimony of survivors leaves no doubt that Israel's military high command intended to sink the ship and kill all personnel aboard, leaving no trace of Israel's responsibility.

It was a monstrous example of ingratitude. At the very moment Israeli forces murdered U.S. sailors, President Lyndon B. Johnson was secretly providing unmarked U.S. military aircraft and personnel to aid Israel in its war against neighboring Arab states.

It is difficult to imagine a goal that would lead the government of Israel, a beleaguered nation whose only substantial international support came from the United States, to attempt to destroy a military vessel and crew of its only benefactor.

Liberty survivors believe Israel's most likely goal was to lure the United States into joining the Jewish state as a fighting partner in its war against Arab states. The goal would be tempting. With America's mighty military forces battling at its side, Israel could reasonably expect that its nation's security would be guaranteed far into the future. Another motivation

might have been the concern that the Liberty crew would learn that Israel planned to invade Syria the next day and transmit that message to Washington. The scheme would work only if Israel could make Egypt, the leading Arab combatant, appear to be responsible for obliterating the Liberty and its crew. That, of course, would require that Israel succeed in destroying all evidence of its own guilt.

Whatever the motivation, the risk of disclosure was immense. If only one U.S. sailor survived to tell the true story or if just one outraged Israeli officer spoke out, the American people would demand severe retribution against Israel.

The scheme might have worked, except for the ingenuity of Liberty radiomen. It failed because, despite Israel's intense jamming of airways and bombardment that wrecked the ship's radio equipment, the crew managed to transmit one lone message--a call for help that was received by a nearby U.S. aircraft carrier, as well as by Israeli intelligence.

The Liberty message spoiled any Israeli plans to blame Egypt. Israel sent diplomats immediately by helicopter offering help to Liberty survivors—an offer scornfully refused by the ship's skipper, Commander William McGonagle, still on the bridge despite severe leg wounds. Israel also sent regrets to the White House, claiming that Israeli forces believed their target was Egyptian.

Just as astounding as the assault itself was the reaction of President Lyndon B. Johnson during that day and those that followed. He acted as if his chief responsibility was to protect Israel from harm and criticism. When he learned that a U.S. carrier had launched fighter aircraft to defend the Liberty, the president ordered the aircraft back to the carrier, the only time in U.S. naval history that rescue aircraft were called back while a Navy vessel was under assault. It was

stark evidence that Johnson considered Israeli sensitivities and the well-being of Israeli attack personnel more important than the lives of Liberty crewmen.

After the assault, Johnson continued to place Israel's interests above Liberty survivors. He immediately took steps to protect Israel from any public protest that might arise. He accepted quickly Israel's excuse of mistaken identity that his administration knew to be false. He ordered an immediate Navy Court of Inquiry but instructed the chairman, Admiral Isaac Kidd, to absolve Israel of guilt. [In a recent sworn statement, retired Navy Captain Ward Boston, Jr., a member of the Court of Inquiry, declared that he and Kidd were convinced all along that the assault was deliberate, not a case of mistaken identity.]

The president also ordered Kidd to keep survivors from talking about their ordeal. As soon as they were brought ashore, Kidd complied with the presidential order by threatening the sailors, some still bedridden, with court martial and imprisonment if they said anything publicly. When the court completed its quick, limited inquiry and prepared a report, Kidd admitted privately to a colleague that he knew it was misleading. Before it was released to the media, its text was further sanitized for Israel's benefit by Department of Defense civilian attorneys. One of the items they deleted was testimony by survivor Lloyd Painter who told the court he witnessed Israeli forces deliberately shooting lifeboats to pieces.

Medals were issued to survivors but in quiet ceremonies far from the White House and the president. Many public documents related to the assault remain classified. Over the years, Liberty survivors have pleaded repeatedly with administration officials, congressional committees, individual Members of Congress and the media for full disclosure of the truth. Only a few periodicals and networks responded. Only a handful of individual Members of Congress, none in a leadership position, dared to speak out.

The court's false and misleading inquiry was the only official one ever held. Johnson's thorough cover-up was maintained by all of his successors in the presidency. Why the cover-up?

Three years ago, Condoleezza Rice, now President George W. Bush's secretary of state and then his national security adviser, unwittingly explained why in a remarkable burst of candor. She said: "We have an Israel-centric foreign policy." Rice's statement was profound and accurate. Although she spoke nearly a half-century after the assault her words explain why the cover-up began and why it continues to this day.

Since 1967, many people in and out of government have learned the truth about the cover-up. Why were they silent? Why did the reporters ignore tips that would surely lead to top news stories?

The sad and simple truth is that most Americans, especially those in public office and even those in the presidency, have a deadly fear of being called anti-Semitic. They will not utter or write criticism of Israel, no matter how well documented, for fear it will draw that unwarranted and unwelcome charge. Former U.S. Ambassador to the UN George W. Ball once stated that the most powerful instrument of intimidation employed by Israel's U.S. lobby is the "reckless charge of anti-Semitism."

The fear is endemic but rarely mentioned. It reaches all government offices and intimidates all levels and sections of our society—business, education, academia, preachers, publishing and other media. Dwight D. Eisenhower was the only president to demand that Israel abide by international law. In 1956, on the eve of his successful bid for reelection, he forced Israel to halt its illegal military assault on Egypt's Suez Canal

Pro-Israel forces long ago successfully redefined anti-Semitism to mean any criticism of the State of Israel. The new definition is false, malicious and damaging to our national interests,

but the Liberty crew and their supporters are among the few willing to risk an anti-Semitic smear.

As a consequence, most citizens are unaware of the startling fact that for years our U.S. Middle East policy has not been crafted by seasoned experts who are committed to America's basic national interests. Instead it is made by lobbies for two politically-powerful religious communities whose goals are narrowly focused. One community is relatively small in number but powerful in influence. It consists mainly of zealous secular Jews, as well as ultra-Orthodox Jews. They are perhaps best described as extreme Zionists. The other community is very large, consisting of many millions of Christians who accept a controversial interpretation of the Bible's Book of Revelations.

Both groups believe present-day Israel is a resurrection of ancient Israel and a preeminent part of God's plan. Both believe the Jewish state must be kept strong and united until the arrival on earth of each group's messiah. They have attained such political power that Congress dutifully appropriates billions to Israel without conditions or serious discussion, much less real debate. Because of this unrestricted aid year after year, Israeli leaders have been able to violate human rights, engage in lawless behavior, abandon the idealism of Judaism, and lure America into damning complicity in this scofflaw conduct.

The complicity reached a fateful peak in 1982 when the U.S. government supplied the arms and material that Israel used in slaughtering 18,000 Beirut civilians, then, adding insult to injury, immediately replenished Israel's supply of weapons and ammunition. Osama bin Laden recently stated publicly that he planned 9/11 as the payback for the U.S. supportive role.

The lobby's grip on our government is unhealthy for both Israel and the United States. It is also unhealthy for both Christianity and Judaism. If our nation is to emerge from today's peril,

we must face openly and critically the role of these religious groups and their passionate, dangerous attachment to a single small scofflaw government. If we keep tip-toeing around reality, we risk still greater peril tomorrow.

The Liberty cover-up will someday be recognized as an historic but wrong turning point for America. It convinced Israeli leaders that they could get by with anything, even mass murder of U.S. sailors, with only a helpful reaction from Washington, because that is what actually happened.

It proved ultimately to be a fateful blunder for both Israel and America. It was the first major example of America's Israel-centric foreign policy that has led our people into ever-deepening trouble. It inaugurated endless, ever-mounting U.S. aid to Israel, all of it unconditional and without accountability required. For Israel, it cleared the path for more aggressive military conquest and abuse. It reinforced its contempt for legal constraints and world opinion.

As I ponder the awful price paid by the Liberty survivors, I marvel—and recoil—at the grip the government of Israel, a small nation of about five million people, maintains over America, a nation of nearly 300 million.

After many years in politics, I am convinced that America's greatest burden today is the quiet but firm domination of our national life by Israel, a phenomenon that reaches far broader and deeper than the fate of the Liberty and its crew, important as their fate is to hundreds of families and in the proud annals of the U.S. Navy. Israel's assault, although an egregious example of this how costly this burden can be, is not the only example, nor the most recent one.

Our longstanding Israel-centric policies are the main reason why America, once revered, is today reviled worldwide. Our war in Iraq and even 9/11 can be traced to the extreme anti-Arab bias in our Israel-centric foreign policies.

The cover-up of the Liberty assault signaled the day that tiny Israel took firm control of mighty America's Middle East policies. This, in turn, provoked rising worldwide Arab/Muslim fury against America as well as Israel.

If the truth about the assault on the Liberty had been officially disclosed in detail at any point since 1967, public outrage would have forced an immediate end to our Israel-centric foreign policy. Unconditional aid to Israel would come to a halt. All future U.S. aid would have been tied to firm conditions and accountability procedures like those demanded of all other recipients. This, I believe, would have protected Israeli from law-breaking. Years ago, I heard Moshe Dayan, then Israel's preeminent political and military leader, state plainly that Israel would have no choice but to obey U.S. requirements if they were conditions of eligibility for U.S. aid.

The report filed in federal court by Liberty survivors could become America's turn for the better. If the Bush administration responds positively, the benefits can be great. A bright new day can dawn for America. Our nation's relationship with powerful religious groups can become rational, as adherents for the first time become aware of Israel's perfidy. People in almost all lands everywhere, including Israel, can reasonably expect a better tomorrow.

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* * *

Who is Pushing Whom into the Sea?

by William James Martin

On 11 October 1961 Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion declared in the Israeli Knesset:

“The Arabs’ exit from Palestine...began immediately after the UN resolution, from the areas earmarked for the Jewish state. And we have explicit documents testifying that they left Palestine following instructions by the Arab leaders, with the Mufti at their head, under the assumption that the invasion of the Arab armies at the expiration of the Mandate will destroy the Jewish state and push all the Jews into the sea, dead or alive.”¹

Thus, Ben Gurion is asserting that: a) there were directions from the neighboring Arab states and the Mufti in Jerusalem for the indigenous Arabs of Palestine to evacuate their homes and lands on the promise that the Arab armies would destroy the nascent Jewish state, and, further, and b) that those armies intended to “push all the Jews into the sea, dead or alive”. The phrase “push all the Jews into the sea, dead or alive” has acquired a life of its own as it is invoked by Zionist supporters on a daily basis in order to justify the aggressive policies of Israel as well as its recalcitrance in continuing the occupation of the Palestinians of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. It is a highly emotive phrase invoking images of the Holocaust, though adapted to a Mediterranean setting.

Ben Gurion gives no attribution for this phrase, nor does he claim that it is a quote from an Arab source. It is expressed here as if it is his personal surmise as to the Arab army’s intentions. The phrase has been variously attributed by Zionist supporters to Yasser Arafat, Gamel Abdul Nasser, or any other of Israel’s enemies, but none whom I have challenged, including U S Congressman Henry Waxman (who made the claim in a letter to me, attributing

¹ Pappé, Ilan. *Were They Expelled?*

the phrase to Nasser), have been able to provide any documentation of support for their claim. This 1961 speech certainly predates Arafat's 1968 ascension to the head of the PLO. The phrase is very much entrenched in the thinking of Israel supporters and is taken as a factual basis for an Arab intent of Genocide and of their own potential for peril.

The speech by Ben Gurion appears to be the origin of the phrase. A search of the speeches of Gamel Abdul Nasser fails to reveal it, nor does it reveal any other than a pragmatics approach to his dealing with Israel. This phrase is sufficiently dramatic and threatening so that if it was in fact uttered by a significant Arab leader, it would be prominent and easily found in any competent historical treatment, which it is not. The phrase, thus, has a Jewish origin and not an Arab origin. Ben Gurion is the originator of the phrase, in all likelihood.

Ben Gurion's first claim that the Arab exodus from Palestine was provoked by directives from the leaders of the surrounding Arab states has been shown by overwhelming historical research to be false.

Since the early 1980's a new generation of professional historians, many, though not all, Israeli, and recognized as professionally competent within their own society, as well as to a wider audience, and aided in no small measure by the opening of many historical and military documents archived by the Israel, and British governments, and to a lesser extent, Arab governments, have provided a revised historical perspective as a challenge to the official Israeli history of the origin of the state of Israel. The newly released documents have been systematically mined by Ben Gurion University Professor of History, Benny Morris, as well as others.

One telling document uncovered by Professor Benny Morris is "The Emigration of the Arabs of Palestine in the Period 1/12/1947 1/6/1948" dated June 30, 1948 and produced by the

Israeli Defense Forces Intelligence Service during the first weeks of the truce (June 11 - July 9) of 1948.² It analyzes the numbers of refugees, the stages of the exodus, the causes, destination and problems of absorption in the host countries. The appendix contains the village by village breakdown in terms of numbers of initial inhabitants, their destinations and the causes of their flight.

On the eve of the UN Partition Plan Resolution of 29 Nov 1947, according to the report, there were 219 Arab villages and four Arab, or partly Arab, towns in the area designated for the Jewish state, with a total Arab population of 340,000 Arab residents. By June 1, 180 of these towns had been evacuated, with 239,000 Arabs fleeing the areas of the Jewish state. A further 152,000 Arabs, from 70 villages and three towns (Jaffa, Jenin, and Acre), had fled their homes in the areas designated for Palestinian Arab statehood in the Partition Resolution. Thus by June 1, according to the report, the refugee total was 391,000, with an error of 10 to 15%.

The UN gives a figure of 750,000 800,000 Palestinian refugees by the end of 1948, so that the period covered by the Intelligence Service Report is one in which roughly one half the refugee population was generated.

The report then outlines eleven (I will list five) of what the IDF Intelligence Service regarded, in June 1948, as the factors which precipitated the exodus, listing them in order of importance as:

1. Direct hostile Jewish [Haganah/IDF] operations against Arab settlements (the Haganah was the army of the Yeshuv, or Jewish community in Palestine, and was the precursor of the Israeli Defense Force, or IDF).
2. The effect of our [Haganah/IDF] hostile operations on nearby Arab settlements (especially the fall of large neighboring centers).

² Morris, Benny. *Middle Eastern Studies*, January 1986.

3. Operations of the Jewish dissidents [Menachem Begin's Irgun and Yitzhak Shamir's Stern Gang, also known as the Irgun Tzvai Leumi and the Lehi, resp.].
4. Jewish whispering operations [psychological warfare] aimed at frightening away Arab inhabitants.
5. Ultimate expulsion orders [by Haganah/IDF].

The Intelligence Service then gives a detailed breakdown and explanation of these factors, stressing that “without doubt, hostile [Haganah/IDF] operations were the main cause of the movement of the population”. The wave of emigration in each district, explains the report, “followed hard upon the increase and expansion of our [Haganah/IDF] operations in that district. The departure of the British of course, helped the Arab evacuation, but it appears that the British withdrawal freed our hands for action more than it influenced the Arab immigration directly.”

The report cites:

“surprise, protracted mortar barrages, and the use of loudspeakers broadcasting threatening messages, factors which had a strong influence in precipitation flight”. An attack on one village or town often affected its neighbors. The evacuation of a certain village because of an attack by us prompted in its wake many neighboring villages to flee...The fall of Tiberias, Safad, Samakh, Jaffa, and Acre engendered in their wake many waves of emigrants.”

The report concludes that:

“it is possible to say that at least 55% of the total of the exodus was caused by our Haganah/IDF operations and by their influence. the effects of the operations of the dissidents Jewish organizations [the Irgun and the Stern Gang] directly caused some 15% of the emigration.”

The Intelligence Service states that the activities of the Irgun and Stern were especially important in the Jaffa-Tel Aviv area, in the coastal plain to the north, and around Jerusalem. The report cites the “special effect” of the Irgun and Stern Gang operations in Deir Yassin.

The action at Deir Yassin, especially greatly affected the thinking of the Arabs; not a little of the immediate flight during our [Haganah/IDF] attacks, especially in the central and southern areas was due to this factor which can be described as a decisive accelerating factor.

Recall that the Deir Yassin massacre, which occurred on April 9 1948, claimed the lives of about 240 men women and children of this peaceful village and included rapes and mutilations.³ There were other massacres, perhaps two to three thousands, essentially defenseless, Palestinians were massacred, according to Haifa University historian Ilan Pappé, however the Deir Yassin massacre was widely publicized and became, in some ways, the signature of the Irgun and the Stern Gang.

Altogether the report states, Jewish [Haganah/IDF, Irgun, Stern] military accounted for 70% if the Arab exodus from Palestine.

In direct contradiction to Ben Gurion, the report states “the Arab institutions attempted to struggle against the phenomenon of flight and evacuation, and to curb the waves of emigration”. The Arab Higher Committee imposed restrictions, and issued threats, punishments, and propaganda in the radio and press to curb the emigration, and also tried to mobilize the governments in the neighboring Arab states to assist in this effort, as both shared the same interest.

“More than once”, the report states, “[Haganah/IDF units were forced] to expel inhabitants [after they had returned to their homes]”.

In short, this document, which is only one of many to have surfaced in consequence of the historical research of the last 20 years, completely refutes Ben Gurion’s claim and reveals it to have no basis in fact. Ben Gurion was lying through his teeth, to put it plainly.

³ Patel, Raphael, ed. *The Complete Diaries of Theodore Herzl, Vol. 1.*

It should be observed that the Jewish agency in Palestine declared itself a state on May 14, 1948. It was the next day, May 15 that the first of five Arab armies or contingents of armies entered Palestine. Thus, approximately half of the 1948 refugees fled or were extirpated before the first foreign Arab soldier set foot in Palestine. The timeline is important: the Deir Yassin Massacre occurred on April 9, the expulsion of Arabs from the cities of Jaffe, Haifa, Tiberias, and Safid occurred at the end of April and in the first days of May. The flight of the Palestinian refugees, thus, was not set in motion by the entrance of the Arab armies as is often claimed.

Nor should we take from Ben Gurion's statement that the concept of Palestinian evacuation was confined to the years 1947-8. The concept of transfer of the indigenous Arab population to make way for a Jewish state was intrinsic to the thinking of the Zionist leaders from its initial inception.

Thus Theodor Herzl, founder of the World Zionist Organization, said in 1892:

“[We shall] spirit the penniless population across the frontier by denying it employment. Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly.”⁴

And in 1937, Ben Gurion stated:

“The compulsory transfer of Arabs from the valleys of the proposed Jewish state could give us something which we never had, even when we stood on our own feet during the days of the First and Second Temple.”⁵

In a letter to his son, also in 1937, Ben Gurion wrote:

“We must expel the Arabs and take their places and if we have to use force, to guarantee our own right to settle in those places then we have force at our disposal.”⁶

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Ben Gurion, David. *Zichronot (Memoirs)*, pg. 297.

⁶ Ben Gurion, David. 1950. *Letters to Pola and Children*, pgs. 133-7.

In early 1948 Ben Gurion wrote in his War Diary, “During the assault we must be ready to strike the decisive blow; that is, either to destroy the towns or expel its inhabitants so our people can replace them.”⁷ And in February 1948, Ben Gurion told Yoseph Weitz, director of the settlement of the Jewish National Fund and head of the official Transfer Committee of 1948: “The war will give us land. The concept of ‘ours’ and ‘not ours’ are peace concepts, only, in war they lose their whole meaning.”⁸

In fact, the concept of transfer, a euphemism for expulsion, was embraced by the entire Jewish leadership from the earliest stages of Zionism until the 1948 extirpation of the indigenous population. Transfer committees were actually set up from 1937 on until 1948 in order to study ways of ridding Palestine of as many Arabs as possible.

By the end of the 1948 War, hundreds of Arab villages had been completely depopulated. Their house and buildings were bulldozed or blown up primarily for the purpose of preventing the return of their owners. Benny Morris lists 369 Palestinian villages and towns destroyed, while Professor Walid Khalidi, leading a team of field researchers, in an exhaustive study, describes the destruction of each of 418 villages or hamlets which are listed on an index of Palestinian cities of 1945.

Quoting from Ilan Pappé’s book, A History of Modern Palestine:

“[W]hen winter was over and the spring of 1949 warmed a particularly frozen Palestine, the land which we have described reconstructing a period stretching over 250 years had changed beyond recognition. The countryside, the rural heart of Palestine, with its colourful and picturesque villages was ruined. Half the villages had been destroyed, flattened by Israeli bulldozers which had been at work since August 1948 when the government had decided to either turn them into cultivated land or to build new Jewish settlements on their remains. A naming committee granted the new settlements Hebraized versions of the original Arab names. David Ben Gurion explained that this was done as part of an attempt to

⁷ Flapan, Simha. 1987. *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Reality*, pg. 90.

⁸ Ben Gurion, David. 1948. *War Diary, Vol. 1*, pg. 211.

prevent future claim to the villages. It was also supported by the Israeli archeologists, who had authorized the names as returning the map to something resembling ‘ancient Israel’.”

Of equal importance, engendering what Arafat called an Israeli “Masada complex”, is the common pro-Zionist interpretation of the 1968 PLO Charter as calling for the destruction of the state of Israel, in which the term “destruction” is interpreted as “pushing all the Jews into the sea, dead or alive.”

Though the document calls for armed struggle, there is nothing in it incompatible with the establishment of a secular democratic state which recognizes and respects the three major religions.

Indeed, article 16 of the document states:

“The liberation of Palestine, from a spiritual viewpoint, will prepare an atmosphere of tranquility and peace for the Holy Land in the shade of which all the Holy Places will be safeguarded, and freedom of worship and visitation to all will be guaranteed, without distinction or discrimination of race, colour, language or religion.”⁹

And article 19 states:

“The partitioning of Palestine in 1947 and the establishment of Israel is fundamentally null and void, because it is contrary to the wish of the people of Palestine and its natural right to a homeland, and contradicts the principles embodied in the Charter of the UN, the first of which is the right of self-determination.”

Under American pressure, Arafat and the PLO eventually amended the PLO Charter so as to accept the reality of a Jewish state on 80% of historical Palestine leaving room for a Palestinian state on the remainder. However, one democratic state based on non-discrimination with equal rights for Jews, Christians and Moslems is closer to American values than a state created specifically for one ethnicity whose laws uphold the superior rights of one race or ethnicity, namely the Jewish one, over that of another, namely the minority Palestinian citizens

⁹ Laqueur, Walter and Barry Rubin, ed. 2001. *The Arab-Israeli Reader*.

of Israel. In amending the PLO Charter so as to accept the two state solution, we have actually moved away from basic American values of non-discrimination based on race. Those liberals who worked for the dissolution of the white supremacists governments of Rhodesia and South Africa need to explain their slavish devotion to the state of Israel which is based on Jewish supremacy.

The Zionists did not drive the Palestinians into the sea, but they did drive them from their homes and villages and ancestral lands and from Palestine and into squalid refugee camps, and in the process massacred two to three thousand. The irony of Ben Gurion's statement should not escape us. Ben Gurion and the Zionists demand deference for a fictitious intention on the part of the Palestinian and Arabs while ignoring or denying the very real expulsion of the Palestinians.

Much of the perception of Israel and much of its popular support rest on the myth of the purity of Israel and much of that can be traced directly to David Ben Gurion's distortions of truth. The unambiguous historical evidence is that the state of Israel was founded upon terrorism and the ethnic cleansing of the indigenous Arab population. There is nothing pure or righteous about that.

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* * *

Critical Theory and Palestine

by David Reznik

The Need for Critical Theory

“I do not know how we can claim that the stage of analysis and discussion is at an end, and that now is the time to begin work...In reality we have not talked up to now, we have not spoken of our sufferings, we have not closely and scientifically analyzed our sufferings.”¹

The continued failure to liberate Palestine² from occupation and oppression owes much to a continued allegiance to the Middle East “peace process”. The global public’s persistent faith in these diplomatic negotiations underscores the growing popularity of political realism. According to realists, the criterion for valid public policy is knowledge that is supposedly divorced from all human contingencies. For this reason, realists quantify social reality, ridding it of what are thought to be the subjective sources of error like human beliefs, convictions, experience, and values. They argue that true social order can only emerge from the realm of supposedly neutral and objective facts.

As a concrete example of political realism, the present-day Middle East “peace process” has increasingly narrowed discussion to the quantifiable “facts on the ground”, including demographics data, economics figures, and GPS (global positioning systems) maps. Since such quantitative data is thought to be immune to critique, a supposedly universal and unquestionable knowledge base for negotiations has been established. Accordingly, critical theoretical reflection has been deemed meaningless and trivial, since now is understood as the time to “get real” and

¹ Shari’ati, Ali. 1979. *On the Sociology of Islam*. Berkeley, CA: Mizan Press, pgs. 39 & 41.

² The terms “Palestine” and “Palestinian” refer to the land and people of both Israel and the Occupied Territories, as well as the refugee diaspora strewn across the Arab world.

“face the facts”. Even history has been dismissed as a “boring” and irrelevant impediment to “moving forward” with practical political action.³

Tragically, this growing allegiance to realism in the “peace process” has coincided with the worsening of the average Palestinian’s living conditions. Despite the supposed recent “steps forward” along the “road map”, the overwhelming majority of people living in Palestine have become more impoverished, hopeless about the future, and powerless than ever before. This is not surprising since qualitative human experience, including pain and suffering, is converted into de-humanized quantitative data according to the logic of realism.

However, realism need not be the governing logic. In fact, contemporary social theorists have demonstrated that realism is a logically untenable theory of knowledge since it suffers from an irresolvable internal contradiction: knowledge cannot be divorced from the knower lest it be unknowable. Even technologies that are thought to allow access to the realm of objective facts are still mediated thoroughly by the human presence. In short, realism is a highly problematic and invalid paradigm since knowledge cannot be separated from human experience.

Therefore, the current “peace process” grounded in realism will not resolve the deeper problems in Palestine. A new theoretical framework must emerge that emphasizes, rather than eschews, rigorous and thorough historical analysis, qualitative interrogation, and philosophical reflection. Now is the time for the application, not abandonment, of comprehensive theoretical critique that produces radical and more effective solutions to the current crisis.

Along these lines, this paper will attempt to provide a critical theoretical analysis of the current situation in Palestine. Specifically, reflection on the “social totality”⁴ will reveal the

³ McGreal, Chris. 2005. “‘The Future Doesn’t Hang on One Man’: Why Peres Could Hold Key to Road Map Success.” *The Guardian (UK)*, April 22.

⁴ Horkheimer, Max. 1972. *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*. New York: Herder and Herder.

mutually reinforcing realms of economy, social psychology, and culture sustaining geopolitical Zionism. Based on this preliminary analysis, an alternative vision for liberation in Palestine will be presented in the hopes of negating and overcoming the fundamental deficiencies of the status quo “peace process”.

The Social Totality

“We cannot understand people by their ideas and ideologies...[Instead] we can understand ideas and ideologies only by understanding the people who created them and believed in them...Thus, in dealing with ideologies, we have to study the social and economic conditions of the people who accept them.”⁵

To understand accurately social phenomena like the current situation in Palestine, critical theorists analyze the social totality. This means that the prevailing economic modes of production, psychological makeup, and cultural framework, as well as their interplay, must be considered and placed within a socio-historical context. Accordingly, this section will examine provisionally transnational capitalism, individualism, and cultural essentialism, the three mutually reinforcing realms of the Palestinian social totality.

The economic system of social relations that has spread across the globe, including Palestine, is capitalism. In its simplest form, capitalism is defined by the zero-sum, inextricable conflict between capitalists, or the class of people who own the means of social production, and the working masses, whose production – and the surplus value that emerges from this production – are appropriated by the capitalists.

The mode of production in capitalism is characterized by a necessarily adversarial struggle between the capitalist and worker. The capitalist usurps and exploits the worker’s labor, buying and selling it like any commodity. Furthermore, the capitalist owns, and seizes

⁵ Fromm, Erich. 1963. *The Dogma of Christ and Other Essays on Religion, Psychology and Culture*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Wilson, pg. ix.

possession of, the materialized product of the worker's labor. Ultimately, for profit (i.e. capital) to emerge, the capitalist must pay the worker a wage that is less than the true value of the worker's labor investment.

The worker is forced to participate in this dehumanizing process, since the wage becomes his/her means for subsistence. As Karl Marx points out, the more that workers produce in a capitalist economy, the more they participate in their own alienation and exploitation.⁶ To sanctify this violent means of social production, capitalists absolve all responsibility to the supposedly neutral and objective "invisible hands" of the market.

Because the laws of profit require that surplus value increase hyperbolically relative to wages, capitalists must constantly seek out new workers and/or natural resources, lest they usurp the same profit-base to death or extinction. In other words, capitalists must expand their scope of exploitation in order to maintain profitability. This incessant drive for economic growth, known as imperialism, has been the historical force behind colonization, including constant attempts to occupy Palestine by Western powers beginning with the Roman empire.

Leveraging unfettered rule, the West has promulgated inherently unequal economic exchange with their colonies, flooding the local colonial markets with highly priced imported goods while usurping colonially produced exports. As dependency theorists have indicated, this exploitive relationship imposed by capitalists from the "center" has promoted the systematic underdevelopment of "periphery" populations.⁷ Disproportionate technological innovation in the central nations, enabled by the fruits of peripheral labor, has only exacerbated this inequality.

⁶ Marx, Karl. 1964. *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. New York: International Publishers.

⁷ Frank, Andre Gunder. 1979. *Dependent Accumulation and Underdevelopment*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

With the rise of transnational corporations, the rate of surplus value extracted from the periphery has increased exponentially. Playing off wage differences, loan debts, and the removal of protective trade barriers, transnational capitalists, beholden to no one but themselves, have established their productive facilities directly within peripheral countries. As such, the profit pipeline leading out of former colonies has actually expanded despite these colonies' supposed independence.

Therefore, it would be wrong to assert that colonialism has truly ended. Instead, a transnational capitalist neo-colonialism has become the sophisticated handmaiden of politico-militaristic rule. Buoyed by pre-existing direct means of national social control (i.e. military bases and troops, police and security forces, international law, etc.), transnational capitalists are now free to exploit the “human resources” (labor), as well as the natural resources, of their neo-colonies.

And, as with all forms of colonialism, transnational capitalist neo-colonialism continues to cultivate a complicit group of homegrown colonials exploiting the labor of their own working masses. These local capitalists recreate the systems of dependency and underdevelopment from inside the periphery. To try and compete with the well-established sources of transnational capital, peripheral capitalists are often even more ruthless and exploitative of their compatriots.

In short, transnational capitalism subjects the working population across the globe to alienating and dehumanizing labor conditions. Because an outside force controls their livelihoods, workers are thus the victims of a neo-colonialism, where production is geared towards fulfilling the needs of exploitive transnational capital rather than local social needs.

Persons tend to adopt a particular subjective and social consciousness – psychology and culture, respectively – as a result of the framework of economic production within which they

live. The capitalist mode of production promotes a social psychology of individualism, or the fundamental distinction and privileging of the “self” over the “other”. Using the “survival of the fittest” logic of social Darwinism, individualism posits that human nature is antagonistic and competitive, with persons engaged in an eternal battle for a finite supply of resources.

Accordingly, boundless consumption and self-gratification are introduced as universal human rationality. “My” existence is absolute, while “you-as-other” are simply an impediment, or an object to be manipulated, in my private accumulation and usurpation of these resources. Society becomes fragmented into fundamentally disconnected and self-interested atoms. According to this logic, the “other” can be legitimately exploited and/or eradicated, since he/she is not seen as intrinsically tied to the existence of the “self”.

To reconcile individualism with social living, persons begin to adopt shared cultural norms and traits that are supposed to rise above the ruthless battle of all against all. Specifically, identity markers (like national citizenship, race, and religion) which appear to have absolute, natural, and timeless properties are seen as stabilizing forces amidst the social turmoil of individualism. This search for abstract, guiding cultural ideals in the hopes of maintaining social order is known as “cultural essentialism”.⁸

Cultural essentialism occludes the active involvement and self-interest of capitalist elites in the social construction of these supposedly “essential” cultural ideals. Leveraging the positions of power they derive from the capitalist mode of production, these elites define and prescribe culture in a way that reinforces their privilege in society. Ultimately, the working masses, fundamentally divided by a social psychology of individualism, end up conforming to

⁸ Choi, Jung Min, Karen A. Callaghan, and John W. Murphy. 1995. *The Politics of Culture: Race, Violence, and Democracy*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

abstracted cultural norms without realizing that these are the cultural rules defined by, and benefiting, the already powerful.

This logical contradiction between individualism and cultural essentialism thus exacerbates the fundamental class conflict characterizing capitalism. In this manner, the three realms of the social totality reinforce one another to produce what Pierre Bourdieu calls a society of “misrecognition”.⁹ His point is that the working masses actually become perpetrators of their own exploitation by conforming to the cultural ideology propagated by their exploiters.

To summarize, capitalist productive relations promote, while being simultaneously reinforced by, a social psychology of individualism that encourages self-gratification and legitimates exploitive mistreatment of the “other”. In order to maintain social order within this framework, the masses have conformed increasingly to supposedly “essential” cultural ideals that are defined and prescribed by capitalist elites. Therefore, cultural essentialism and individualism reinforce one another to perpetuate the power inequalities intrinsic to capitalism.

Geopolitical Zionism

“By forming a state in order to become like all the other nations, Israel has resigned itself to the world as it is... This produces sadness due to the historical resistance and hope for something other that has been sacrificed through such a worldly victory.”¹⁰

Geopolitical Zionism is at the fulcrum of the fundamental antagonisms plaguing the current social totality. This ideology embodies and propagates the mutually reinforcing social contradictions inherent in transnational capitalism, individualism, and cultural essentialism. The

⁹ Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. *In Other Words: Essays toward a Reflexive Sociology*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

¹⁰ Ott, Michael. 2001. *Max Horkheimer's Critical Theory of Religion*. Lanham, MA: University Press of America, pg. 119.

creation, expansion, and persistence of Israel are thus manifestations of the symmetry between geopolitical Zionism and the prevailing economy, social psychology, and culture.

Historically speaking, the rise of capitalism in Europe brought about a new class distinction between the bourgeoisie and proletariat. Over time, this fundamental economic antagonism manifested in the fragmentation of European society. The hyper-competitive social psychology of individualism took hold, particularly among the working masses that fought “tooth and claw” to stay alive within a necessarily disadvantageous economic framework.

As a result, essentialist cultural ideals developed across Europe that exacerbated these rifts amongst the exploited masses, and thus reinforced capitalists’ power in society. An important example is the anti-Semitism that European elites cultivated among the working class. As a form of “divide and rule”, these essentialist sentiments occluded the class conflict truly responsible for the misery of the majority. Climaxing in the rise of Nazism and the Jewish Holocaust of World War II, this racist ideology ultimately masked the imperialist struggle for Europe characterized by German military conquest.

Two Jewish cultural ideologies – spiritual and geopolitical Zionism – emerged alongside European anti-Semitism. Both were derived from the same general Judaic principle, namely that the Jews were God’s “chosen people” with a messianic mission. However, the two ideologies diverged fundamentally with regard to the meaning of this principle.

Propagated by radical philosophers and theologians, spiritual Zionism sought to inspire the Jewish masses to resist the injustices of European anti-Semitism in order to construct a utopian society of equality:

“To be Jewish...means to be a representative of all people to whom injustice, suffering, oppression has occurred, as well as to represent the accusation of all

people against such injustice... ‘The good is good, not because it is victorious but because it resists victory.’”¹¹

This doctrine called for the deliverance of Zion, the Kingdom of God, in religious terms. The creation of Israel was thus less a matter of statehood in the physical sense than a complete transcendence of the contemporary world of domination and oppression.

On the contrary, geopolitical Zionism developed out of Jewish fundamentalism, a reactionary counterpart to European anti-Semitism. In an effort to divert the attention of the Jewish masses away from the structural inequalities pervading society, the founders of geopolitical Zionism – predominantly secular Jewish economic and political elites – began to emphasize heavily the supposedly inherent cultural superiority of the Jewish “race”:

“The tribe of Israel...[became] the first-class citizens of the kingdom of David...with special privileges and rights; and the rest of humanity [became] second-class citizens with the responsibility of respecting the rights of the first-class citizens.”¹²

Working within, rather than transcending, the logic of the social totality, geopolitical Zionism was preoccupied with imperialist expansion. The establishment of Israel as a geopolitical nation-state in Palestine, rather than universal human liberation, thus became the end of all means.

The Jewish working masses rallied around geopolitical Zionism, failing to recognize the interests of elites and their imperialist allies (most notably, the United States) embodied in this essentialist ideology. This bad faith has manifested in present-day Israel. More than ever, today’s working class Jews militantly defend their “homeland by birthright”, risking their lives and perpetrating inhuman atrocities without realizing their own self-exploitation in the process.¹³

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pg. 119.

¹² Ezzati, A. 2002. *Islam and Natural Law*. London: ICAS Press, pgs. 72-3.

¹³ Rising unemployment in Israel due to elites’ active recruitment of exploitable gentile labor from abroad is just one example. Another is the disproportionate representation of working-class Israelis in the IDF, serving as bodyguards for the United States’ “beachfront” of capitalism in the Middle East.

In this manner, the descendants of Nazi Holocaust victims have become the active agents of their own Holocaust. International observers have described repeatedly the plight of Arab gentiles in Palestine under Israeli occupation as frighteningly similar to the Jewish suffering in Nazi concentration camps and ghettos.¹⁴

At the same time, geopolitical Zionists have erased successfully all remnants of spiritual Zionism from the collective memory of the Jewish masses. As a result, fascistic ideological uniformity has emerged. Jewish identity now precludes critique of Israel, and anti-Israeli sentiments, even if expressed by a Jew, are interpreted as necessarily anti-Semitic.

To summarize, geopolitical Zionism is a reflection of today's social totality, rooted in capitalist economic relations, individualist disrespect of the Arab gentile "other", and culturally essentialist claims to the physical land of Palestine. The symmetry between geopolitical Zionism and the power relations reinforcing the status quo social totality have resulted in a duplicitous "international peace process industry"¹⁵ serving Israeli interests.

To start with, the global economic and military influence of Israel's imperialist benefactor, the United States, translates into unmatched geopolitical influence on the international political stage. This clout has allowed the counterpart geopolitical Zionists to exert monopoly control over the "negotiations" with Palestinian Arabs.

Israeli leaders leverage this monopoly to frame all discussion within the paradigm of realism, since an "obsession with technical and procedural issues"¹⁶ precludes any critical

¹⁴ Baroud, Ramzy, ed. 2003. *Searching Jenin: Eyewitness Accounts of the Israeli Invasion 2002*. Seattle, WA: Cune Press.

¹⁵ Abu Nimah, Hasan and Ali Abunimah. 2005. "Mass Hypnosis in the Middle East." *The Electronic Intifada*, January 19.

¹⁶ Ashrawi, Hanan. 1992. "The Intifada: Political Analysis." In *Faith and the Intifada: Palestinian Christian Voices*, edited by N. S. Ateek, M. H. Ellis, and R. R. Ruether. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, pg. 16.

reflection on lived human experience. In this manner, a de-humanized indifference to the pain and suffering of everyday occupation has become a prerequisite for negotiations.

Furthermore, the post-Arafat Palestinian Authority has emerged as a compliant and willing partner in this process. By failing to address the prevailing social totality responsible for the inhuman and untenable lived experience of its people, this new Palestinian leadership characterizes what French philosopher Jean Baudrillard calls “the breakdown of democracy”:

“Representative institutions no longer function in the “democratic” direction—from the people and the citizens towards the authorities—but in reverse: from the authorities down, by means of a booby-trapped consultation and the circular game of questions and answers, where the question only answers Yes to itself.”¹⁷

Despite being “democratically” elected, the Abbas administration has chosen to reinforce the tautology of imperialist-Zionist authority rather than represent the will of the people at every opportunity. Concrete examples of this anti-democratic capitulation include the highly unpopular “truce” with Israel, draconian “internal security” measures, and election postponements for fear of a Hamas victory.¹⁸

Along these lines, both sides in the Middle East “peace process” have now agreed to create an Arab clone of Israel. The economy of this budding nation-state is to be infused with “entrepreneurial spirit” and “private sector job creation”, both of which promote local capitalist exploitation as well as transnational dependency on Western imperialists, particularly the US.¹⁹ At the same time, individualist squabbles between Arab elites over control of the fruits of Israeli disengagement have increasingly taken precedence over concern for the social common weal of

¹⁷ Baudrillard, Jean. 2005. “Holy Europe.” *New Left Review*, May-June, 33, pg. 25.

¹⁸ Abu Nimah, Hasan. 2005. “A Truce or a Fig Leaf?” *The Electronic Intifada*, July 20.

¹⁹ El Fassed, Arjan. 2005. “G8 and Disengagement: Palestine Needs Justice Not Charity.” *The Electronic Intifada*, July 4.

the Palestinian masses.²⁰ Even the idea itself of creating a separate Arab state tacitly reinforces the legitimacy of Israel and thus perpetuates the logic of geopolitical Zionism.

Hence, upon closer examination the “two-state solution” emerging from the current Middle East “peace process” is not truly liberating. Although the Arab masses might achieve formal independence from Israel, they will still be subjected to exploitation at the hands of Western and local elites. At the same time, the Israeli masses will continue subjecting themselves to geopolitical Zionist rule. Ultimately then, real liberation in Palestine can only emerge through a collective struggle among all Palestinians against the current social totality of capitalism, individualism, and cultural essentialism.

Palestinian Liberation

“The revolutionary character is the one who...transcends the narrow limits of his own society, and who is able, because of this, to criticize his or any other society from the standpoint of reason and humanity. He is not caught in the parochial worship of that culture which he happens to be born in, which is nothing but an accident of time and geography. He is able to look at his environment with the open eyes of a man who is awake and who...[embodies] the norms which exist in and for the human race.”²¹

The recommendations that follow are not a practical “how-to” guide for the liberation of the Palestinian people from the oppression of geopolitical Zionism. Practical prescriptions would fall into the trap of realism, since they would presume an objective knowledge base unaffected by context and historical developments. Instead, a critical theoretical framework is needed from which Palestinian emancipation can emerge dynamically. In that vein, the following suggestions are oriented toward praxis, or the simultaneity of concrete action and theoretical reflection.

²⁰ Regular, Arnon. 2005. “Senior Hamas Official: We Have Lost Faith in Abbas.” *Ha’aretz*, July 7.

²¹ Fromm, *op. cit.*, pg. 158.

Critical theorists in the Marxist tradition have outlined a method for transcending the fundamental deficiencies of the status quo called “negative dialectics”.²² Using this theoretical method, “essential limits”, or those fundamental deficiencies in the current social totality, must be identified across the three realms of social living: economy, social psychology, and culture. A more positive and valuable society is then attained by overcoming these limits, a process commonly referred to as “the negation of the negation”.

The essential limits of the current social totality (the mutually reinforcing social forces of capitalism, individualism, and cultural essentialism) have already been discussed. To repeat and summarize, an exploitive class conflict that negates the humanity of, and deprives material sustenance to, the working masses defines the capitalist mode of economic relations. And a negation of the “other” on the bases of narcissism and false consciousness characterize the prevailing individualist psyche and cultural essentialism. These fundamental antagonisms reinforce one another to produce social structures of domination, like geopolitical Zionism in Palestine.

Geopolitical Zionist oppression of the Palestinian masses is further legitimated by a ‘peace process’ framed within the faulty logic of political realism. The increasing reliance on supposedly objective “facts on the ground” precludes the theoretical critique, historical reflection, and qualitative analysis that are necessary to challenge the current social totality.

Therefore, those seeking Palestinian liberation must realize that working within the status quo paradigm will not work. True emancipation can only occur by constructing a new social totality that negates the inherent flaws plaguing the three realms of social living today. In short,

²² See Adorno, Theodor. 1972. *Negative Dialectics*. New York: The Seabury Press; Marković, Mihailo. 1974. *From Affluence to Praxis: Philosophy and Social Criticism*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press; and Petrović, Gajo. 1967. *Marx in the Mid-Twentieth Century*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.

only by negating and transcending all the structural inequalities produced by geopolitical Zionism can the Palestinian struggle embody the true spirit of human liberation.

The point here is that human liberation in Palestine must be multidimensional. The creation of a separate Palestinian Arab state alongside Israel or the unilateral withdrawal of Israeli defense forces from currently occupied territory does not, in and of itself, guarantee emancipation. Instead, Palestinian liberation must be a conscious, comprehensive, and permanent revolution against geopolitical Zionism and the current social totality.

First and foremost, capitalist economic relations can no longer be tolerated and must be openly fought by all the working masses living in Palestine, whether Arab or Israeli. The “two-state solution” will only result in two forms of nationally sponsored capitalist exploitation. Furthermore, the West will have won another imperialist victory, having divided the Middle East in order to more easily conquer the surplus value of the region for transnational capitalist purposes. As liberation theologian Enrique Dussel writes from the Latin American experience, “a peripheral nation enjoys authentic national liberation only when it is effectuated in tandem with...liberation from the social relationship of capital and labor.”²³

In other words, a meaningful Palestinian emancipation must include a battle against capitalism. Arabs and Israelis must thus struggle for a unified economy based on the principles of worker’s self-management, collective ownership of the means of production, and democratized economic planning. To this end, a de-racialized version of *kibbutz* socialism can be invoked to fight off transnational capitalist imperialism and suit the needs of all the people across the whole of Palestine.

However, egalitarian modes of production in Palestine cannot emerge without fighting simultaneously the social psychology of individualism. Jewish philosopher and spiritual Zionist

²³ Dussel, Enrique. 1988. *Ethics and Community*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, pg. 144.

Martin Buber wrote extensively on the inherent contradictions of the individualist psyche.²⁴ He demonstrated logically that individual existence is necessarily intersubjective, or dependent upon recognition by the “other”. Individuals in society thus do not simply interact with one another optionally, but are rather inextricably intertwined in what Buber calls an “I and Thou” relationship. Mistreatment of the “other” can therefore no longer be tolerated, since caring for the “other” is necessarily caring for the existence of oneself.

Additionally, the veil of cultural essentialism obscuring the Israeli masses must be lifted. For this to happen, cultural identity must be thoroughly re-conceptualized. Rather than adhering to supposedly absolute cultural ideals that are divorced from history and human agency, identity must be understood as actively constructed, dynamic, and fluid.

Armed with this radicalized notion of culture, Jews can begin to re-define their identity, rather than allowing elites to imprison them in geopolitical Zionism. Instead of conforming to an alienating essentialist ideology, Jews worldwide can begin to renew the humanist ethics of spiritual Zionism. The concept of “solidarity” as described by Dussel is perhaps one of the clearest examples of this infinite respect for the other:

“[Solidarity is] a more positive, affirmative moment than that of the mere tolerance before a victim, who is powerless to defend his or her own rights. Tolerance is in this way subsumed in a responsibility for the other. Tolerance is surpassed, insofar as, in accordance with one’s will and desire, one takes as one’s task the fulfillment of the desire of the life-project the other cannot actualize.”²⁵

Hence the Jewish masses can embody a more liberating and meaningful cultural identity when acting for the exploited Arab masses and against geopolitical Zionism, rather than vice versa.

²⁴ Buber, Martin. 1970. *I and Thou*. New York: Touchstone.

²⁵ Dussel, Enrique. 2004. “Deconstruction of the Concept of ‘Tolerance’: From Intolerance to Solidarity.” *Consellations*, 11(3), pg. 330.

Ultimately, Jews around the world, particularly the Israeli masses, must realize that “the enemy of the Palestinian people is the Zionist structure of Israel, and not the Jewish people themselves.”²⁶ With this realization, Jews can begin to relate to Palestinian Arabs not as second-class citizens in the eyes of God or irrational perpetrators of Jewish genocide. It is only by helping rid Palestine of the inhumanity of geopolitical Zionism that Jews can affirm their humanity.

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²⁶ Trabulsi, Fawwaz. 1969. “The Palestine Problem: Zionism and Imperialism in the Middle East.” *New Left Review*, Sept.-Oct., 1/57, pg. 88.

Immortal Beloved

by Nora Bassiouni

You are my mother, a mother I never knew existed.
I feel like an orphaned child, left out in the dark.
And still some believe they will bury you in silence
Without me ever knowing you were alive.

But let them know that an orphan never forgets.

I see my brothers and sisters massacred daily.
The blood, the carnage, the suffering has never ceased.
You have been neglected, left alone, unaided.
They have raped you, not once, not twice, but everyday.

But let them know that an orphan never forgets.

What is peace when violence now has the same meaning?
Where is hope when justice and equality are nonexistent?
Why are 181, 242, and 338 now only ordinary numbers?
Why are we arguing about 20% when you are whole?

But let them know that an orphan never forgets.

I will come to you. This is a promise. For I have a vision.
You will live again to provide, nourish, and protect
All peoples living together as equals in your presence.
You will return.

Nora Bassiouni is a student at Boston University's School of Medicine. Her email address is norabassiouni@gmail.com.

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Mohamed

by Mahmoud Darwish

Mohamed,
nestles in the bosom of his father, a bird afraid
of the infernal sky: father protect me
from the upward flight! My wing is
slight for the wind ... and the light is black

Mohamed,
wants to return home, with no
bicycle ... or new shirt
yearns for the school bench ...
the notebook of grammar and conjugation, take me
to our home, father, to prepare for my lessons
to continue being, little by little ...
on the seashore, under the palms ...
and nothing further, nothing further

Mohamed,
faces an army, with no stone or shrapnel
of stars, does not notice the wall to write: my freedom
will not die, for he has no freedom yet
to defend. No perspective for the dove of Pablo
Picasso. He continues to be born, continues
to be born in a name bearing him the curse of the name. How
many times will his self give birth to a child
with no home ... with no time for childhood?
Where will he dream if the dream would come ...
and land is a wound ... and a temple?

Mohamed,
sees his inescapable death approaching. But then
remembers, a leopard he has seen on the tv screen,
a fierce one besieging a suckling fawn. When it

came near and smelt the milk, it would not pounce.
As if the milk tames the wild beast.
Hence, I will survive - says the boy -
and weeps: for my life is there hidden
in my mother's chest. I will survive ... and witness

Mohamed,
a destitute angel, within a stone's throw from
the gun of his cold blooded hunter. For
an hour the camera traces the movements of the boy
who is merging with his shadow:
his face, clear, like dawn
his heart, clear, like an apple
his ten fingers, clear, like candles
the dew clear on his trousers ...
His hunter could have reflected
twice, and say: I will spare him till when he spells
his Palestine without mistakes ...
I will spare him now subject to my conscience
and kill him the day he rebels!

Mohamed,
an infant Jesus, sleeps and dreams in
the heart of an icon
made of copper
an olive branch
and the soul of a people renewed

Mohamed,
blood beyond the need of the prophets
for what they seek, so ascend
to the Ultimate Tree
Mohamed !

Mahmoud Darwish is considered to be the most important contemporary Arab poet alive. The translation of this poem into English was performed by Amr Khadr.

* * *

O Palestine

by Mazin Qumsiyeh

Your sisters stayed in their palaces
With golden chains and shameless lies
Some grinned and aided criminals...
Others chose to veil their eyes
Some justify rape and expulsions
Others prayed to their silent gods.

When you thought they had their fills
In that dry June of decays,
They climbed over the hills
To finish the ghastly deeds

Sickening became the violations...
Dark masses on your strong arms
arms that gently lifted orphans
Armenian, Circasian, Hebrew and Druze
Fractures on your white breasts
That gave milk to hungry babies
Bruises on your gentle fingers
That wiped the tears from so many eyes
Your sad eyes bear their marks
on a kind face that gave millions hopes

Maddening deafening sounds
Of violent bloody rapes
Of countless lengthy reports
Of motions, plans, and resolutions
that sacrificed justice and truths
at the altar of greedy egos

Where goes the hope of children dreams?
In awakening consciences?
In olive trees or returning cactuses?

In time, distance, or struggles?
In awakening heart deep in majestic mountains?
Beating beneath silent deserts?
Occasionally erupting ... intifadas?
1936..1956..1987...2000...

The lost men hopelessly lust for power crumbs
endlessly argue about keys
While she struggles to break the doors
And tear down the suffocating walls
Clans and Tribes follow mirages
and weaklings imagine strength in lies

But in the end no one denies
Your ancient spirit survives
To help heal all bruises
yours and ours
When the sun again shines
O Palestine

Dr. Mazin Qumsiyeh is an author and activist. His latest book is entitled Sharing the Land of Canaan: Human Rights and the Israeli/Palestinian Struggle. For more information about his work, please visit his website at www.qumsiyeh.org.

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