

# Justice for Palestine, Palestine for Global Justice: A Contribution to the Discussion on Zionism

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“Why must we deal with Zionism? Zionism is history, mere ideology, and one should focus on the real political reality, not on ideologies.” Such a statement is not unusual in the Palestine solidarity movement, and definitely needs to be answered, for Zionism is neither a mere ideology nor a matter of the past, but a living political movement, embodied by the State of Israel and its policy.

Without a clear analysis of the nature of Zionism, one cannot understand the failure of the “peace process” and its systematic sabotage by the State of Israel. Without understanding Zionism, it is almost impossible to try to predict the next moves of the Israeli leadership.

## Zionism—A Relevant Question

Those who question the relevance of Zionism in the present political discourse often describe the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a “national conflict,” similar to the conflicts between Serbs and Croats in former Yugoslavia, or the conflicts in Caucasus. No doubt there is a national dimension in the Israeli-Arab conflict, and both Israelis and Arabs are motivated by national feelings too. ***The core of the conflict, however, is not national but colonial.***

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Zionism aimed to provide an answer to the Jewish question in Eastern and Central Europe and a solution to anti-Semitism through a combination of two tools that were at the heart of the political culture of that era: the nation state and colonialism. The building of a Jewish nation state was the goal of Zionism, and colonization of the Western part of the Arab-East (Palestine) was the means. Nothing very special at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the crisis of the Empires—Tsarist, Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian—brought about the development of national movements aimed at creating nation-states. “Civilizing the un-civilized countries” through colonialism was also a common feature of foreign policy in these times. Zionism is, therefore, a mere product of its time, the aspiration for an ethnic Jewish state realized through colonialist methods.

Despite the “post-Zionist” claim, the colonialist drive of Zionism did not end with the creation of the State of Israel, the borders of which (the ceasefire lines of 1948) were perceived by a majority of Zionist leaders as provisional. In 1967, Israel extended its borders to the Jordan River, thereby expanding its sovereignty over the whole of Mandatory Palestine. Speaking of “normal Israel” in its pre-1967 borders, and the “provisional occupied territories,” whilst aspiring to a “return to the

normal borders of Israel” is utter nonsense: the so-call “normal Israel” lasted less than 30 percent of the total existence of Israel up until today.

### **Irreversibility of the Israeli occupation?**

Does such a factual assessment mean that the occupation of the West Bank is, in the words of Israeli analyst Meron Benvenisti, “irreversible,” and a partition of Palestine into two states impossible? Not necessarily: the realization of the “historical compromise” proposed by the Palestinian National Council in 1988 and the creation of a Palestinian state alongside an Israeli one depends on the relation of forces reflecting an equilibrium between the Zionist ability to maintain the existence of the colonial State of Israel, and the Palestinian ability to impose an Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in June 1967. Such relation of forces existed between 1990 and 2000; perhaps they will again in the future, but such is not the current reality.

The “two states solution” was based on the assumption that the balance of forces created by the Palestinian resistance throughout the 1970s and the 1980s, and the international context of these decades, can force the State of Israel not only to halt its colonial expansion, but even to partially reverse it. Such a compromise was able to provide to the Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza an end to Israeli military rule and the de-colonization of their lands.

With the global war of re-colonization initiated by the US and the Israeli neo-conservatives at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the successful Israeli attempt to retract the limited Palestinian achievements obtained through the Oslo process, the perspective of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza has lost, for the time being, its probability as ***a relatively short-term project*** .

### **Solutions and Rights**

Does this mean that one must drop the demand for a Palestinian state and replace it with the perspective of a single (bi-national) state? The debate—especially outside of the Palestinian national movement—between those advocating a “two states solution” and the “one state solution” is often absurd, as if we are confronted with a personal choice between two parallel options, to be selected in accordance with one’s own taste! “I like two, but I prefer one.”

What is missing in this supposed “choice” is the time factor, which was essential in Yasser Arafat’s strategy and the alternative options he placed in front of his people: an unjust compromise that can offer to the present generation relative freedom and limited sovereignty, or many more years of colonization, hard struggle and suffering until obtaining Palestinian comprehensive rights. The 1988 PNC in Algiers endorsed the first option.

Whether it was the correct choice or not is a matter to be discussed by the Palestinian national movement. As for the international solidarity movement, including Israeli anti-colonialists—rather than debating solutions, it must concentrate efforts on the issue of rights: national rights (right of self-determination), human rights (Geneva Conventions), social rights and individual rights (right of return).

Part and parcel of our struggle for the rights of Palestinians and the Palestinian people is the campaign for international sanctions on the State of Israel, for its innumerable violations of international law and UN resolutions. The campaign for BDS (boycott, divestments, sanctions)

against Israel is not only a way to tell the Palestinian people that the world cares for the Palestinians, but a matter of global public hygiene: a state that violates the law must be sanctioned, otherwise our world becomes a jungle in which might is right and there are no rules and ethical boundaries.

Since the victory over Fascism, in 1945, the peoples of our planet have identified war crimes and crimes against humanity, and, in the last decades, international tribunals have been convened in order to judge alleged war criminals. There is no reason why the Israeli leaders should not be accountable to international law be allowed shocking impunity.

The demand for an international procedure against the Israeli leaders suspected of war crimes, as suggested by UN Rapporteur Judge Goldstone, is part and parcel of our joint international struggle for justice for Palestine, and, no less important, for a global order based on rights, international law and respect for all human beings.

Palestine is the barometer of the state of the world, as well as a frontline of the global confrontation between domination and freedom.

**Michel Warschawski**

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[http://www.alternativenews.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2357:justice-for-palestine-palestine-for-global-justice-a-contribution-to-the-discussion-on-zionism&catid=143:michael-warschawski&Itemid=916](http://www.alternativenews.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2357:justice-for-palestine-palestine-for-global-justice-a-contribution-to-the-discussion-on-zionism&catid=143:michael-warschawski&Itemid=916)