

The Zionist-Palestinian Conflict: An Alternative Story.

By Haidar Eid

I know that history will have its say some day, but it will not be history as written in Brussels, Paris or Washington, it will be our own. Patrice Lumumba *The New African*. http://www.africasia.com/archive/na/00_02/nacs0201.htm

But they are not human beings, they are not people, they are Arabs. David Hacoen. (Qtd. in Ribhi Halloum, 1988:37)

*For Europe we shall be a part of the wall against Asia...the vanguard of culture against barbarism...*Theodor Herzl. (Qtd. in Tom Segev, 1999:150)

A combination of Edward Said's *The Question of Palestine* (1980) and Norman Finkelstein's *Image And Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict* (1995) offer a very good starting point in formulating some of the questions (and answers) this article attempts to redress in its drawing of the (cognitive) political map of post-Oslo Palestine. Addressing the question of the (post) colonial, in this particular context, is a complex issue in that one seems to be dealing with a colonist who denies his colonialism and argues to the contrary, and with a victim whose victimization has been denied for decades. To understand the intertwined complex relationship between Israelis and Palestinians in a (post) colonial context, I will revisit the classical Zionist-colonial narrative, and try to fill the 'ideological gaps' that have always, deliberately, been concealed. My reading of this narrative is consciously Palestinian, namely, a victim's interpretation. Dialectically, this reading will lead to what Said has consistently been calling for: a 'Palestinian Story' (1980; 1994; 1995).

The difficulty, and necessity, of addressing the current situation in Palestine emanates from the euphoria of the mainstream media accompanying the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 and their inability to contextualize these accords.¹ That is to say, the mainstream media's intentional avoidance of the agreement's total denial of Palestinian historical, political and national rights, and its endorsement of the establishment of an apartheid state, is a distortion of

history by means of ideological misrepresentation. I will, therefore, juxtapose, the media coverage of the so-called ‘peace process’ and its aftermath against the political reality on the ground (i.e. in the occupied territories). My purpose is not to expose the mainstream media as means of Zionist-American propaganda—an issue that has been dealt with very convincingly by Noam Chomsky (1983), Edward Said (1980, 1994, 1995), Norman Finkelstein (1987), Robert Fisk (various articles in *The Sunday Independent*), David Hirst (1997; various articles in *The Guardian*) and Graham Usher (1995; *Al-Ahram Weekly*)—to mention but a few. Rather, it is because the fragile nature of the mainstream media misrepresentation, which has become a conventional political wisdom, needs a very careful reading. In other words, the myth of the ‘peace process’ is what is at stake in my reading.

I also make use of the new scholarship arising in Israel itself, which provides a history of the conflict that is influenced by the recent historiographical debates taking place around the academic and intellectual world, and which, ironically, legitimizes the works of the Palestinian historians. As Ilan Pappé maintains, this ‘post-Zionist research’ provides us with a more skeptical view: it shows how the conflict is between a colonial Party, Israel, and a weaker, colonized one, the Palestinians. The problem with what has been presented to us by conventional scholarship is that it is done under the claim of ‘striking a balance.’ But a ‘balance of power’ which dominates this discourse ignores the fact that Israelis have colonized the land and history altogether (see Pappé, 1999:1-10). In his introduction to *The Israel/Palestine Question*, Pappé convincingly argues that “the stronger party has the power to write the history in a more effective way. Israel, the powerful party, is a state whose apparatus has been employed successfully to propagate its narrative in front of external public. The weaker party, the Palestinians, is engaged in a national liberation struggle.” (9)

Within the context of my re-reading of the events that have been going on since the accords, including the current *Intifada*, I will argue that what urgently needs to be addressed is an alternative program that is necessarily dialectical and secular in its treatment of the Palestinian and Jewish questions—an alternative that never denies the rights of a people, one that guarantees equality, and that abolishes apartheid, Bantustans and separation in Palestine altogether.² Thus in contrast with the mainstream media’s ahistorical (mis)representation, my

argument is a historical one. It is a reading which maintains that any attempt to understand the Oslo Accords, their disastrous consequences and the power mechanisms that had led to them, needs a critical rereading of classical Zionism. My argument is that Zionism, like apartheid and Nazism³, had been based on the idea of separation, rejection of difference, and racial-religious supremacy⁴. I will, therefore, proceed in my argument by dealing with a modern historical background of the conflict and relate it to ideology and representation within the power-resistance binary.

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“There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism”(Walter Benjamin 1992:258).

A close (re) reading of classical Zionist literature reveals a dogma which proclaims that Jews all over the world constitute one nation (see Herzl, *The Jewish State*; Jabotinsky, "The Iron Wall" in Avi Shlaim's *The Iron Wall, 2000*; Ben Gurion in Shabtai Teveth's *Ben Gurion and The Palestinian Arabs, 1985*) . Therefore, by virtue of being one nation, Jews are entitled to a territory, a territory that grants them unity against the ‘anti-Semitic world.’ The territory chosen was Palestine in which the Jewish state as the embodiment of ‘justice and liberty’ would be guaranteed for all Jews. Palestine therefore must become a Jewish state for *all* Jews--only by Jews. Ironically, the horror of the inhuman Nazism in Germany in the 1930s gave boost to the immigration of Ashkenazi Jews to Palestine in search of a safe haven.

However, the idea of moving from a space that had ‘othered’ them to one where the ‘authentic self’ can flourish, was confronted with the reality that the ‘Promised Land’ was inhabited by its natives. In Zionist consciousness, the native Palestinians, exactly like Native Americans, became a surplus population that had to be gotten rid of (see Hertzl, *The Jewish State*; Jabotinsky, "The Iron Wall" in Avi Shlaim *The Iron Wall, 2000*; Ben Gurion in Shabtai Teveth's *Ben Gurion and The Palestinian Arabs, 1985*). Those who remained would be considered a minority without political or national rights. That is, the native Palestinian was viewed by hegemonic Zionism as an obstacle to realizing the Zionist dream by his/her mere existence and presence.⁵

Like any other colonial-settler power, Zionism denied the existence of Palestinians, hence the 'rationale' of the Zionist slogan 'A land without people for people without land.' In order to concretize this slogan, the Palestinians had to be eliminated whether through massacres or dispossession. Further, the Zionist goal of engineering a population shift from being the 'Other'/Slave to being the Master/ majority required not only massive Jewish immigration but also expulsion of those Palestinians who decided to remain in Palestine.⁶

'A land without people for people without land' is a Zionist slogan that has always expressed the way Zionists looked at Palestinians: invisible if not absent, or rather 'present absentees.' The Zionist rationale was 'since the land was empty, what is the ground of the moral opposition to the creation of a 'land without people' for 'us', i.e. 'people without land'? In an extreme contempt for the Palestinian people, Golda Meir--the former Israeli prime minister--said: "There was no such thing as Palestinians... They did not exist." (qtd. in Ribhi Halloum, 1988:37). In order to concretize this idea, the Palestinians had to be eliminated. Hence, Deir Yassin massacre (1948), which forced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to flee their homes.

Thus, the implementation of Herzlian Zionism led to the inevitable, a confrontation between natives and colonialists, between legitimate resistance and illegitimate power. Like any settler-colonial power, especially the founders of America, Zionism viewed natives as an 'other' element of nature to be fought against. Palestinian resistance was, therefore, viewed by Zionists--as it still is --as 'criminal violence,' 'illegitimate,' 'terrorism'...etc; these are the same terms that were used by the white supremacists of Apartheid South Africa against Black resistance. Palestinian inhabitants were considered anti-Semitic gentiles engaging in a war against the peaceful Jews.

To create Jewish sovereignty in Palestine, not only had land been taken away by force from the native Palestinians, their aspirations for independence had to be squashed since they were the greatest threat to the success of Zionism. Obviously, the creation of an independent sovereign state ruled by parliamentary elections and majority rule before 1948 could have meant the end of Zionism because it would have meant the rule of the majority. It becomes clear, then, why Zionism has fought against the creation of a representative, legislative assembly in historic

Palestine. This assembly would have represented the Arab majority, which was a mortal danger for Zionism.

The political goal of Zionism was to engineer a population shift from being a minority to being a majority. Massive Jewish immigration and the expulsion of the Palestinians was the means by which this goal was achieved. Inevitably, the expropriation of land went hand in hand with the denial of the rights of Palestinian majority. Basic human and political rights of Palestinians were completely denied since Zionism, in principle, could not allow them to exercise their rights because it would mean the end of the Zionist enterprise.

On November 29, 1947, the United Nation General Assembly adopted Resolution 181 which called for the partition of Palestine with Jews, 30% of the population, getting 55% of the land ("The Origin and Evolution of the Palestine Problem 1917-1947"; <http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/561c6ee353d740fb8525607d00581829/aeac80e740c782e4852561150071fdb0!OpenDocument>) . In fact, this resolution laid the 'legal' basis for the legitimization of racism and separation, the denial of the majority rights, and the establishment of a theocratic state based upon mythological justifications without taking the democratic rights of the original inhabitants into account. By 1949 more than 600.000 Palestinians became homeless with Israel occupying 77% of historic Palestine (Pappe, 2007). The *Nakba*, catastrophe in Palestinian collective consciousness, in 1948 led to the total destruction and disintegration of Palestinian society. In Zionist literature, the Israeli acceptance of the partition resolution was a 'tactical move.'⁷ Thus the greatest achievement of 1948 war was the prevention of the independence of Arab Palestine, which had been all along the major political goal of Zionism in Palestine.

The name Palestine, which existed as a well-defined unit between 1922 and 1948, had to be eliminated, together with the elimination of the natives from Jewish consciousness. From its inception, Israel never accepted the idea of negotiations with the native Palestinians, until 1990--albeit under different conditions. In Zionist consciousness, Palestinians have no political rights in Palestine and even have no existence.

The realization of the Zionist dream has meant redemption for some Jews, but what is pushed back to the 'unconscious' is its other half, namely the crime against and dispossession of the natives of historical Palestine. Thus, from the Palestinian perspective, the crystallization of the Zionist dream has meant dispossession and *Ghurba* (exile). Zionism wanted them to be forgotten forever in the 'political unconscious.' However, massacres, humiliation, dispossession, defeat, expropriation, invasion, denial of existence... etc, have not led to the 'disappearance' of Palestinians. They have been robbed of their land, deprived of their identity and history; even their future has been stolen. The Zionist response to these atrocities is that the Palestinians should not have existed in the first place and should not have been a part of the Story. Thus they must remain invisible; or rather 'hidden victims' like Native Americans. The Palestinian 'guilt' is that they were passive, peaceful and disorganized--no match for the well-organized active Ashkenazi Zionists.

Every victory on the part of Israel has always meant disaster for the Palestinians, who have become the victims of the victims. The goal of Zionism has always been to make the Palestinians invisible, faceless and voiceless refugees from nowhere, removed from the world's active consciousness. They had no history, no consciousness, and thus no story to tell. Hence the extreme importance of Edward Said's insistence on rewriting the Palestinian Story, neither from an 'official' perspective, nor from a Zionist Robinson Crusoe's perspective, but rather from that of the victim's, namely that of the dispossessed refugee.

The story to be told cannot but use the so-called western grand narrative of universal rights in order to deconstruct the basis upon which a myth is used to legitimize the denial of the rights of a people to exist. This 'story' cannot but use the universal slogans of the enlightenment--freedom, liberty, equality...etc--in order to clarify the 'other' side of the powerful story.

Such story should, then, re-address the relationship between Israel, as a political entity, and the Palestinians. What needs to be emphasized in this narrative is that, contrary to what has been central in modern liberal thinking, the idea of the citizen in Israel is totally missing. Israel is the only state in the 'modern' world in which citizenship and nationality are two separate, independent concepts. In other words, Israel is not the state of its citizens, but the state of the

Jewish People. Moreover, the story to be told must address the fact that Israel does not have a constitution. Further, since Judaism is a religion and since it is the basis of the existence of a "modern State," why can Islam, Christianity or Hinduism not be so? (Israel Shahak) Thus, if one is to follow the logic of Zionism, one should ignore the achievements of humanity and the ideals of the enlightenment since what is acceptable for some (.i.e. Jews) is not acceptable for others (.i.e. Palestinians). The story thus will deal with what 'the powerful story' ignores, with what Walter Benjamin would call 'allegories of absence.' (1977:172) The reign of the 'Other of Reason' cannot prevent Reason from participating--if not completing--the Story.

The provocative questions in the Palestinian story will, then, deal with the 'universal' liberal slogans and ask why they have never applied when it comes to Israel? Can one imagine the USA being the state of Protestant Christians? This question sounds like a joke, but, again, it is a fundamental theme of the story.

Thus the 'Palestinian story' will ask questions and help readers to answer. A picture of Palestinians in Israel will be drawn, a picture of foreigners in their own homeland, because Israel is defined by its Basic Laws as "the state of the Jewish people" i.e. not the state of all of its citizens. This is the direct result of Zionism and its ideology of separatism. In other words, there is no place for integration in Israel. In apartheid South Africa, blacks were not expected to share political rights and cultural heritage with whites. Similarly, Palestinians are 'native aliens', who became foreigners by birth. But they are also the enemy by their mere presence. Every Palestinian is by definition a threat because of the mere fact that she is a part of the Palestinian people. The contradiction between professed ideals and actual behaviors, which has been the engine of political change in many places, does not exist for many Israelis because the democratic creed, or civic democracy, is absent. There is no promise of equality for all citizens in Israeli political culture and praxis. In short, there is no tradition of civil liberties in Israel because such a tradition would mean the end of Zionism. True equality means the dismantling of the state. If Israel belongs to all its citizens, it would mean the end of the Zionist state. Hence, one can understand the antagonism of the establishment to Azmi Bishara, the Palestinian member of Knesset whose programme calls for the creation of a secular democratic

institution. When South Africa was declared the state of all its citizens, political apartheid came to an end.

Thus there is clear contradiction between the Zionist ethos and democratic ideals. The Zionist system is quite clearly incompatible with democracy, which stems from the colonialist problem and the presence of the Palestinians. The story, then, does not only deal with the Palestinians but also with Zionism as the essence of the political system in Israel, which is based upon discrimination against Palestinians and a preference for Jews.(Shahak) Our story will therefore be a mirror for real liberals: a liberal cannot be Zionist. She is supposed to admit the injustice done to the Palestinians and the responsibility, or rather guilt, towards such injustices involved in Zionism.

The story will show how the Palestinian position, on the other hand, in its consensus form, has been principled, albeit flexible--a position that takes a broad historical, and human, stand. The Palestinian Covenant of the PLO calls for the establishment of a 'secular democratic republic' in Palestine, which is (mis)interpreted by Zionists as a call for the destruction of Israel. To repeat, the establishment of a real secular democratic state means the end of Zionism and its theocratic justifications for the establishment of Israel. Further, in the 1970s, the Palestinian National Council adopted a more flexible resolution that calls for the establishment of a sovereign, independent state in the West bank and the Gaza Strip as soon as they are liberated, with the emphasis on the right of all Palestinian refugees to return to their homes.

Thus what we have is two contradictory positions, one that is democratic with secular demand, and another that lends itself to religious and mythical interpretations.

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The Oslo Accords in 'The Story'

What about the current situation in Palestine? Has Israel, under the previous Ashkenazi Zionist Labour government, decided to recognize the Palestinian people as a people when it signed the Oslo accords? Are the Oslo accords a radical change in Zionist ideology with regard to gentile

Palestinian? Do the accords guarantee the restoration of a long lasting comprehensive peace? And does the current leadership of the PLO represent the political and national aspirations of the Palestinian people?

The Oslo accord was claimed to be the first step towards self-determination and an independent state. But it is clear now that no state in the short run will be established because of the fact that Oslo simply ignored the existence of the Palestinian people as a people. In other words, these accords have offered Zionism what it has always been striving for. And if any Palestinian speaks out about this great injustice, s/he will be accused of 'terrorism' and 'incitement'.

And yet, to claim that 'Oslo' and 'Camp David' were great missed opportunities and breakthroughs, and that the so-called 'peace process' was on track until the Palestinians (i.e. colonized victims) blew it is a deliberate ideological distortion of reality, and a misreading of the story, claimed in order to prepare Palestinians for more concessions. And to claim that the Palestinian reaction to aggression (the *Intifada*) is 'terrorism' and 'incitement' is a deliberate misinterpretation of the whole dilemma. Real comprehensive peace was not created in Oslo and Washington; rather what was created is an American/Israeli plan to resolve the conflict after the destruction of Iraq and the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Oslo accord was born dead because it did not guarantee the minimum national and political rights of 6 million Palestinians. As long as there are refugees, unemployment, cantons, detainees, blockade, settlements, 'legal torture' of prisoners, dispossession, assassinations and occupation, comprehensive peace cannot be achieved. It is an illusion in the minds of those who signed the Oslo accords— and it is a fundamental section of the story.

Everything in the West Bank and Gaza Strip mirrors V.S Naipaul's novel *A Bend in the River* (1979)--a novel set in post-independent Zaire⁸. But is Gaza independent? Even if the Palestinians boast that they, for the first time in history, have a 'national authority,' Gaza and the West Bank are still occupied.

What makes the PNA (Palestinian National Authority) beyond questioning? What is the 'legitimate' ground upon which it was established? Very simple: The Oslo Accords. It has now

become very obvious that despite the famous hand shake on the White house lawn, and the optimistic talk of the ‘New Middle East,’ these accords, in contradistinction with UN and Security Council resolutions, have not guaranteed the establishment of a sovereign, independent Palestinian state, or the return of the refugees, nor even the demolition of the Jewish settlements, and compensation for those Palestinians who have lost—and are still losing—their homes, lands and properties. Nor has it guaranteed the release of all political prisoners, or the opening of all checkpoints, which have become daily nightmares for residents of the WB and GS; ...etc. This is the political reality that Palestinian officials who signed the agreement do not like to be reminded of. In fact, what has been created in parts of Gaza and the West Bank is a very strange entity—an apartheid-type Bantustan endorsed by the international community.

A short trip from Gaza refugee camps to Gaza beach, where the villas of the PA chiefs and ministers intrude natural view, draws a very gloomy picture.³ When we bear in mind that 70% of Gazans are refugees (<http://www.un.org/unrwa/refugees/gaza.html>), the current *Intifada* becomes more comprehensible not only in its anti-colonial context, but also in socio-political terms. What Oslo has created in Gaza is literally two different worlds, both of which have been led by undemocratic institutions, eleven security apparatus (the figure might be higher), a Third Worldish military court (commended by the former American vice President Al Gore during his visit to Jericho), corruption, mismanagement, inefficiency and nepotism—to mention but few neo-colonial qualities. Ali Jarbawi’s diagnosis is worth quoting in its entirety (2001):

On the political level, the Authority did not perform as was expected from it – at least from a Palestinian perspective, in terms of enforcing the rule of law, and the separation of authorities. Thus it did not perform adequately in reinforcing the independence of the judiciary or its effectiveness, or guaranteeing legal, practical and respectable leeway for a fundamental assortment of public and individual rights and liberties, in order to guarantee that the executive authority does not act arbitrarily against the society and the citizen. Adding to this setback in the political situation was the calcification of the political life of Palestinian [political] movements or parties that no longer had any real ability to affect the political decision-making process, which had become manifest in practical terms, within the executive authority, whose center and decision maker has been one person – the President [Arafat].

As for the economic level, the popular maxim of transforming the country in the era of ‘peace’ into ‘the next Singapore’ failed. Instead, rumor after rumor and fact after fact

about the abuse of official positions for financial and illegitimate gains, flowed – the spread of corruption, monopolies and agencies. A new class of the rich from the “PA era” [*Ahd El Sulta*] began to appear, which was perceived either with envy or contempt. This led to the creation of a gap that began to widen between the minority of beneficiaries of these economic resources and privileges, and the growing number of the poor and people deprived of these benefits. Despite the fact that criticism began to grow concerning these issues, this criticism was always responded to with indifference and resistance by the political-leadership.

As to the societal level, the Authority relied upon the revival of tribal and familial affiliations in the country, in order to unravel the societal fabric and make it easier to politically infiltrate. The polarization of economic classes led to instability in the status and effectiveness of the middle class, which began to shrink in terms of its status and influence as well as in imposing its values and ethics on society. As a result, the society began to vacillate between the values and ethics of the “new opportunism” on the one hand, and “traditional conservatism” on the other. Between these two poles, many values of liberalism and tolerance were lost as was accountability, and the vivacity to participate and be open for criticism. In their place was either greedy chaotic disorder, which calls only for concern for the self, or a predestined resignation to the prevailing reality, expressed through criticism and accusations, but only behind closed doors.

Similarities with the ‘fictional’ world of *A Bend* are striking. Naipaul’s officials do not know the meanings of the slogans they repeat, nor do they understand the extent of corruption and rotteness their state has embraced. In their newly independent state, i.e. Zaire, the political equation that runs the foreign policy of their state is reflected on the state itself. All the people are entirely dependent on ‘Big Man’, the president. But that relationship is unrealistic: it is a relationship that can never lead to real independence, sovereignty and democracy. The state the ‘Big Man’ tries to construct has nothing to do with the real Africa. Are the Palestinian Bantustans different? Are they really ‘the first step towards an independent state?’

Although it seems that Naipaul is of the opinion that that ‘Third World’ peoples can get anywhere in their struggle to achieve prosperity, and despite his reactionary, pessimistic views in that National Liberation Movements move from one cycle of destruction to another, one cannot avoid the comparison, though the conclusion need not be the same. That is, Naipaul’s conclusion is that neither nationalism nor traditionalism succeeds. However, what I have a problem with, within this context, is the kind of nationalism he (mis)represents, and the kind of nationalism that has been in control in the Palestinian cantons. In the absence of historical and

social consciousness, this kind of corrupt, feudo-bourgeoise nationalism has flourished and has become a fundamental constituent of the general political and social disorder.

Naipaul's Zaire is left stranded between a heritage to which it cannot return and a world it is not permitted to enter. Hence the question of what the withdrawal (or redeployment) of the colonial powers has left the colonies with. According to Naipaul, decolonization, fundamentally, brought corruption, poverty and chaos. However, that is not to say that this paper follows a strict binary between 'organic nationalism' and occupation. On the contrary, what we have in Gaza and the West Bank now is the direct outcome of occupation, even though it is one in disguise.

In order to make myself clear, I need to elaborate more on this issue. By winning the 1948, 1956 and 1967 wars, and by getting international, Arab and Palestinian recognition, Israel--as a settler-colonial state—has moved into a more blatant economic war; a war that requires 'new individuals' through the formation of 'new consciousness' among colonized Palestinians. This is what I call a 'moral war'; one that through which you wash out the consciousness of your supposed enemy—the 'Other'—and replaces it with a one-dimensional mentality.¹⁰ This is what the whole issue of Shimon Perez's 'New Middle East' is all about.

Put differently, to aim at creating the one-dimensional Palestinian is to aim at creating artificial needs represented in consumerism and the irrationality of goals that Palestinian people are prepared to accept. That is, it is a kind of false consciousness led by assimilated intelligentsia that has a revolutionary past. The enforcement of consumer desire, regardless of production, is intended to guarantee the subordination and conformity of the Palestinians, especially those with revolutionary ideas.

This goal, however, never sees the antithesis it creates as a result of economic exploitation and the logic of the surplus underlying the occupation as a capitalist system. What is ruled out is the fact that the majority of the Palestinians in the occupied territories, whether in area A, B or C, are not economically qualified to consume. Moreover, this outlook sees the Gaza Strip and the West Bank only as an extension of the Israeli market, and a source of cheap labour

regardless of the oppositional, revolutionary consciousness that has been formulated throughout the different phases of the Palestinian struggle. Nor does it take political resistance into account. Hence the necessity of the formulation of Palestinian alternative politics. To be conscious of the corruption of the Palestinian Authority, and of the huge class gape that the Oslo Accords have created has definitely been the beginning of action represented in the current *Intifada* (uprising). This is an oppositional consciousness that the signatories of Oslo did not take into account. If 'true needs' under Oslo agreement were not met, since 70% of Gaza's were jobless, how could 'false needs' be satisfied? And if the promoted 'false needs' are not met, questioning the logic behind them begins. Hence the extreme significance of the 'Petition of the Twenty,' which called upon the Palestinian people to reject the Oslo Accords and their consequences, and resort to resistance instead. This is exactly what happened less than a year after the publication of the petition.⁴

The Gaza Strip, however, is seen by the PA as one of three building blocks of an independent state, although it is geographically separated from the second block, i.e. the West Bank. The third block, Jerusalem, is under total Israeli control. None of the Palestinians in the occupied territories believe that the 'semi-autonomous' zones in the GS and the WB—that is, the ones that fall under category A—can lay the foundation for an independent state. What Oslo has led to is, in fact, a kind of conditions resembling those in South Africa under Apartheid. When black South Africans needed to move from their townships to big 'white' cities, they needed to get a 'pass'. During 'peace time,' Palestinians, not only those who work in Israel, but also those who wanted to visit the WB from Gaza, or vice versa, needed to apply for a 'permit'. Beside the permit, Palestinians needed a so-called 'magnetic card,' which is a computer card that has a password to its holder's security file. No one could work in Israel, or visit the WB, or even go to a hospital inside the 'green line' without a 'permit' and a 'magnetic card'. If one was granted such invaluable cards, one was still not allowed to visit any other area except the one s/he was entitled to visit. If one was 'caught' at another area, one's permit and card were confiscated immediately, not to mention the torture one was exposed to. Nowadays, no one is even given such luxurious 'permits' and cards. How was apartheid South Africa different?

The tribal chiefs of the South African Bantustans used to believe that they were the heads of independent states. Luckily, the ANC, despite its many compromises with the National Party, had never accepted the idea of separation and Bantustans. The official Palestinian leadership on the other hand, at the end of the millennium, boasts of having laid the foundation for a Bantustan, claiming it to be an independent state on the make. Undoubtedly, this is the ultimate prize Zionism can offer to its 'Other' after having denied her existence for a century, and after that same 'other' has proved that she is human. For Zionism's continued presence in Palestine, the 'Other' must be assimilated and enslaved without her/ him being conscious of her/his enslavement. Hence the granting of 'semi-autonomous' rule over the most crowded Palestinian cities, which shares the logic of the Oslo Accords.

Post-Oslo Palestine is surely as different from pre-Oslo Gaza and the West Bank as the Democratic Republic of Congo is different from Mobutu's Zaire. However, 'out of great catastrophes come great solutions.'

Conclusion: The current situation

The conflict has been misrepresented as a 'war' between 'two sides'. In fact, as I have argued, and as the late Palestinian intellectual Edward Said put it, there are not two sides involved in the "violence" in the Middle East. There is a colonial state turning all its great power against a stateless people, repeatedly refugees, and dispossessed people, bereft of arms with the aim of destroying this people. What is left for the Palestinian people after the fourth, some say third, strongest army in the world, with its navy and air force has been bombarding the West Bank and the Gaza Strip? Ten years of "negotiations" created only Bantustans, and when Palestinians asked for the implementation of international law (in Camp David,) they were accused of blowing Ehud Barak's "generous offer." Palestinians have been at the receiving end of merciless assaults by Israeli troops, and reservists, hidden in their helicopter gun ships, F16's and Tanks.

The current American government considers the killing of Palestinians by tank and plane missiles "legitimate," whereas acts of Palestinian resistance are "terrorist attacks." Israel,

therefore, is given the green light to conduct its genocidal attacks against Palestinians whose death is considered collateral damage.

George Bush's administration does not have a balanced plan to resolve the crisis in the Middle East. What all American envoys to the region, have been trying to do is reaching a cease-fire in accordance with Israeli conditions and without linking it to any clear political programme that is based on Security Council resolutions and international legitimacy. Of course, the logical outcome of this American biased, even antagonistic position, and the lack of will to find a just solution/peace, is catastrophic. It also means the failure of the American "anti-terror" campaign, not to say the possible dismantling of the alliance it is trying to form in the region under the guise of "The New Middle East."

The Israeli reoccupation of the already occupied West Bank and parts of the Gaza strip has not stopped Palestinian resistance; on the contrary, it has intensified it. When Sharon, the minister of defense then, decided to invade Lebanon in 1982, Lebanese National and Islamic resistance emerged as a bigger challenge, which led to the humiliating withdrawal of the IOF from South Lebanon.

Israel has won almost all of its previous wars against the official Arab regimes, but has lost against resistance and liberation movements. It will surely lose the current war against the Palestinian resistance and will be forced to withdraw its forces from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank unconditionally. Lebanon is still a fresh example. The most reactionary Arab leaders could come up with to help their Palestinian brothers and sisters is prince Abdullah's proposals while foreign volunteers are in Ramallah, Dheisheh and Beliin, are doing all they can to protect ordinary Palestinians. The generals and marshals of the Arab states are busy condemning Israeli attacks and begging Bush to intervene and Ehud Olmert to soften his brutality while Palestinians sacrifice their lives

The impact of the current Intifada is expected to remove the immunity of the Arab regimes against revolutions and popular anger. Current demonstrations in Cairo, Amman, Damascus, Sana'a, Manama, and even Kuwait might only be the beginning. Significantly, at the beginning

of the first Intifada (1987-94), the American Secretary of State, George Schultz said “we are not worried only about Israel, but also about the surrounding Arab countries”. From what we are witnessing now in the Arab world, it seems that Schultz’s fear of the Arabization of the Intifada was an imperialist far-sightedness.

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All of this, therefore, does not mean that ‘the story’ will be a gloomy, nihilistic one against compromise or political solutions in principle. On the contrary, it will envisage a minimum fair solution at this stage based on resolutions of international legitimacy, which accord the Palestinian people some of their rights such as self-determination, establishment of a sovereign independent state, return of the dispossessed refugees, Jerusalem, the removal of all Jewish settlements, and equality amongst all citizens of the state of Israel. The story will, then, paint a picture of an historic solution that envisages reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis, an image of Palestinians and Israeli Jews living in one secular democratic state in which ALL citizens are treated equally regardless of their religion, sex, or color.

¹ My reference to mainstream media, within this context, is meant to distinguish them from what is considered alternative media. On the one hand, CNN, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*—to mention but few American controlled media Apparati—hold a different view from that of *The Nation*, *Le Mond Diplomatique*, *News From Within*, *Challenge*—to mention but a few courageous magazines and news papers

² Ironically, one year after the signing of the Oslo Accords, apartheid in South Africa came to an end.

³ On the Nazism-Zionism analogy see Finkelstien’s excellent *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict* (1995) Part I, pp7-88. See also his *From The Jewish Question to the Jewish State* (1987).

⁴On the colonial-settler nature of Israel see Maxim Rodinson’s (1973) *Israel: A Settler State* (1987).

⁵ The Israeli ‘Law of Return’ grants every Jew who immigrates to Israel a citizenship.

⁶ On the question of the premeditated expulsion of the Palestinians see the various works of Israeli New Historians, especially Beni Morris (1987) and Ilan Pappé (1999; 2007)). See also Nur Massalaha (1992) and Wlidi Khalidi (1988). See also the latest research of Arnon Soffer, *Israel, Demography 2000-2020: Dangers and Opportunities* (2001). Soffer argues for the expulsion of Israeli Palestinians, the presence of Israeli sovereignty in all settlements, and limiting the number of Palestinian children. Soffer’s research was presented to the Israeli Knesset in 2001.

⁷ This is in Ben Gurion's words (see Shabti Teveth, *Ben Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs*, 1985).

⁸ My following argument was published in *News From Within* (XIII.9). Jerusalem. October 1998. 29-32.

⁹ There are eight over-populated refugee camps in the GS: Jabalia, Shatti, Nusairat, Bureij, Maghazi, Deir el-Balah, Khan Younis and Shabora (in Rafah).

¹⁰ The doctrine of the 'Iron Wall' has been central to Israeli policy since its inception: negotiations with the Arabs must always be from a position of supreme military strength. (see Shlaim, 2000).

¹¹ 'Petition of Twenty' was signed by the most prominent Palestinian intellectuals who refused to be 'legitimizers of power', and was supported by the likes of Edward Said, Hisham Shiraby, and Haidar Abdul Shafi.

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