



SIX REASONS

WHY YOU SHOULD SUPPORT PALESTINE

Key arguments about the Israeli state and the Palestinian resistance

Israel was formed out of imperialism

Britain played a crucial role in creating Israel in the interests of its Empire. In 1917, Tory foreign secretary Arthur Balfour publicly pledged to recognise a “national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine. Colonising Palestine was part of Britain’s project to reshape its influence after the fall of the powerful Ottoman Empire and the First World War.

Sir Ronald Storrs, the first British military governor of Jerusalem, said the Zionist state would be a “little loyal Jewish Ulster in a sea of potentially hostile Arabism.”

These political aims also served to satisfy the plans of the Zionist movement, which had begun to emerge in the late 19th century.

To escape the violence of European ruling classes, Zionists argued that Jewish people would only be safe in an exclusively Jewish state. Palestine, with its historic and religious roots, was just one suggestion.

Other possible locations for a new state included areas in Argentina, Uganda, Azerbaijan, and “empty” land in the US.

Zionism, which many Jewish people rejected, was never about seeking sanctuary for Jewish people. It has always been a colonial project to create a state where Jews are the majority, which is only possible through the expulsion of any other people from the land.

The Balfour Agreement allowed British Zionist administrators to implement these colonial plans. One of these architects of colonisation was the first British high commissioner in Palestine Herbert Samuel.

As commissioner of Palestine from 1920, he passed a series of laws that allowed Zionist settlers to seize land from Palestinians.

From 1919 to 1923, the number of Jewish settlers doubled. The British colonists established the Department of Commerce and Industry to offer generous longterm loans to Jewish businessmen and farmers.



Zionism meant ethnic cleansing

The new Zionist state developed a systematic plan to grab Palestinian land and ensure a Jewish majority.

At least 850,000 Palestinians were forced from their homes during the Nakba, meaning Catastrophe. Half of their villages and towns were “wiped out, leaving only rubble and stones”.

Supporters of Israel still say that no such plan existed. They claim Palestinians fled because of a war with neighbouring Arab states.

But the Plan Dalet was an approved military operation to clear out Palestinians. The techniques it used were clear—“By destroying villages (by setting fire to them, by blowing them up, and by plant-

ing mines in their rubble).

“In the case of resistance, the armed forces must be wiped out and the population expelled outside the borders of the state.”

Settlers rolled oil barrel bombs into villages, as they drove vans with loudspeakers telling people to flee for their lives. These techniques developed in the months leading up to Israel’s formal creation, as well as after.

The Zionist army, the Haganah, carried out atrocities and massacres. In the city of Haifa, where Jews and Arabs both lived, the Haganah besieged Arab areas with heavy shelling and sniper fire.

The brigade’s commander Mordechai

Maklef—who later became the Israeli army’s chief of staff—gave simple orders. “Kill any Arab you encounter. Torch all inflammable objects and force open doors with explosives.”

David Ben-Gurion, the then-prime minister of Israel, signed Israel’s founding declaration on 14 May 1948. The UN ratified the declaration, stating that 55 percent of Palestine would be given to Zionist settlers.

Before 1948, just 600,000 Jewish settlers were living in Palestine. This number almost doubled in three years following the Nakba. The first country to recognise Israel as a state in 1948 was the United States—Israel’s biggest imperialist ally.

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How Palestinian resistance was formed

During the 1950s, the slow process of building a national liberation movement gathered pace in the refugee camps scattered around the region.

Palestinian refugees accessed meagre support from UN agencies but were denied political rights by their host countries. Wealthy or middle class Palestinians gravitated towards the Gulf, where they played key roles in public services and the media.

It was among these circles that a new Palestinian movement was born. Fatah was founded in 1959. Among its founders were Yasser Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas. Abbas is the current president of the state of Palestine.

One of Fatah's core principles was "non-interference"—Palestinians should not take sides in the struggles within the Arab countries they live in. Deeply problematic but it meant it focused on Palestinians' armed resistance against the Israeli state, inspired by the guerilla tactics of other anti-imperialist groups.

The Six Day War in 1967 saw Israel obliterate a coalition of Arab states, including Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. By the end of the war Israel seized control of Gaza, the West Bank, the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula. Israeli troops defeated and captured resistance fighters, many of which were exiles.

But it suffered an embarrassing defeat at the hands of Fatah fighters in Karameh in Jordan in 1968. Fatah began to dominate the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), set up by the Arab regimes in 1964 as the official representative of the Palestinian people.

The Fatah-controlled PLO moved away from the idea that it was possible to liberate the whole of Palestine. It made concessions to the idea that a mini-Palestinian state alongside Israel would be enough and was drawn into false peace negotiations.

The leaders of the PLO, because of their own class position, imagined they could be part of the Palestinian ruling class, closely backed by Arab leaders.

The first Intifada changed everything

From the 1950s until the 1980s, political and military direction lay with the Palestinian leadership in exile, not within the Occupied Territories themselves.

In 1987 frustration with the misery of life under occupation exploded in an uprising, or Intifada. It took both the Israelis, the US and the PLO leadership by surprise.

The First Intifada revealed the brutality of the Israeli occupation to the world. Protests were sparked after Israeli forces

rammed their truck into a line of cars, killing four Palestinians in the Jabalia refugee camp in December.

Only a day after their funeral, attended by 10,000 people, Israeli soldiers shot into a crowd of protesters. They killed 17-year-old Hatem Abu Sisi.

Across the Occupied Territories Palestinians rose up and mobilised protests, riots, strikes and created networks of local committees to provide health care and education.

From 21 December, Palestinian workers struck mainly in the fruit and hospitality industry. The Palestinians' ferocity during the First Intifada was impossible for the Israeli state to contain for more than five years.

The First Intifada ended because of the promise of peace talks with the Israeli state in the early 1990s. The PLO had never seen the road to liberation as being through revolts of ordinary people and was happy to be part of these talks.

The peace process was an imperialist trap for Palestine

Supposed "peace deals" brokered by the West have always been a sham. One such was the Oslo Accords signed in 1993.

The true purpose of this was to enshrine Israel's hold over land under the pretence that Palestine would be handed a state that could exist alongside Israel.

The deal was accepted by the leaders of the PLO after they had squandered the opportunities won by popular struggle through the Intifada. But Palestinian academic Edward Said called the Accords "an instrument of Palestinian surrender".

PLO officials were satisfied with the weak promise of a small amount of Palestinian self-governance in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These were to be implemented over five years.

Meanwhile the rest of what was Pal-

estine would be kept under Israeli sovereignty. The newly formed Palestine Authority (PA), dominated by Fatah, was handed 18 percent of the occupied West Bank. Around 22 percent would be supposedly governed by the Israelis and the Palestinians together.

The rest—66 percent—would be left to the Israelis, including control of imports and exports. The Oslo Accords made it even more impossible for Palestine to survive without Israel.

Border closures strangled the Palestinian economy. Before the Accords, one third of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip worked in Israel. By 1996 that had collapsed to 15 percent, while earnings from work in Israel dropped from 25 percent of Palestinian GDP to 6 percent.

Today the PA might have some appearance of power. It has an elected body of 132 representatives. It even has its own police force—a condition of the Oslo Agreement.

But Israel still does what it likes in areas assigned to Palestine. The PA, controlled by those who once dreamed of waging armed resistance against Israel, is a mechanism for maintaining colonisation.

Hamas soon became the party representing the disillusionment of the Palestinian people, offering a more radical and military alternative that the PA. Hamas was central to the Second Intifada.

This sparked after the Camp David Summit in 2000 between Israeli prime Minister Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat, PA chairman, failed to achieve anything.

Only a single state for Arabs and Jews offers a solution

The Palestinians have suffered more than 100 years of violence, brutality and racist laws at the hands of the Zionist settlers and their backers. Promise after promise has been broken, while Israel has continued to snatch more Palestinian land for its own.

While Palestinians have been left with worse than nothing, Israeli settlers have been emboldened. A so-called two-state solution has failed. It will continue to fail because the Israeli state is still committed to building a Jewish majority and expunging all Palestinians.

Israel will never willingly hand the Palestinians a state from the land it has stolen or allow return for the millions of Palestinian refugees.

Today, the Israeli state continues to strengthen its own one-state solution. Israeli settlers, backed by the Israeli government, seize homes and land from the Palestinians.

Socialists must argue that a secular and democratic state where Muslims, Jews, Christians and others live together is possible. This kind of state existed before Balfour's agreement, so it is possible

again.

Even if the Oslo Accords had produced a viable Palestinian state and dismantled Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza there would still not be justice.

This would not address the historic crime on which Israel's existence is based. It would also leave in place a racist, colonial state, armed by US imperialism to be its watchdog in the region.

But winning this will take revolutionary upheaval across Palestine and the Middle East region that can upend the Israeli state and its imperialist backers.