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Free Palestine!: Voices of Decolonization

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Palestine, Hamas, and the Israeli Occupation

Anonymous

This essay, aimed at international readers, explains why Hamas is a resistance group. It presents the history of the party and its significance in the colonial context and refutes the statement that Hamas is a "terrorist" organization by bringing attention to the international right of Palestinians to defend themselves. I also reveal the colonial and genocidal intentions of the Israeli government by looking at early Zionist texts, which used settler logic against both Palestinians and Indigenous Peoples in the Americas.

What is Hamas? And why does Hamas exist in Palestine? It is believed that Hamas is a terrorist organization that has to be exterminated, but should Israel exterminate a democratically elected party, especially when its members and voters are Palestinians themselves? Israel is currently punishing Hamas for the attack they launched on October seventh by massacring its voters, even though half of the Palestinian population is under eighteen and can't vote. If Hamas is a terrorist organization for conducting attacks on Israel, why aren't American political parties called the same for creating havoc and terror across the Middle East? And why shouldn't we call the political parties in Israel terrorist organizations when they are taking hostages, bombing multiple countries, killing innocent people, occupying vast areas, and expelling Palestinians from their homes?

To answer these questions, it is interesting to note that the term terrorist is still used by the United States mainly to target organizations within the Arab Islamic world. Out of the seventy foreign organizations the U.S. condemns as terrorist groups, fifty-four have Arab or Islamic backgrounds. These groups are considered the biggest threat to the world even though combined they have not done even half of what the American parties caused in the Middle East and across the world. The U.S. has been involved in war for 222 out of its 239 years of existence. It has been directly involved in twelve major wars, but it always justifies its military interventions. On the other hand, the organizations that the U.S. deems as "terrorist" are denied any attempts to justify their actions, even though they launch attacks for reasons that range from fighting against invaders, preventing the U.S. from toppling their democratically elected regimes, and overthrowing unjust governments. In addition, most of these groups are based in developing countries where people labor in terrible working conditions for American and European multi-million dollar companies.

Since Hamas is labeled a terrorist group by the U.S., many Americans believe that Israel's brutal massacres against Palestinians are justified. This excuse is enough for the U.S. to not classify the political parties within Israel as terrorist organizations. On the other hand, pro-Palestine activists believe that Hamas is used as an excuse to take what is internationally recognized as Palestine and exterminate its people. The Palestinian Genocide dates back to the year of the Nakba in 1948 (during British rule) when around 15,000 Palestinians were killed and 750,000 were expelled. This happened forty years before Hamas, which was only founded in 1987. In other words, trying to exterminate Hamas does not excuse the genocide against



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Palestinians. Hamas is a resistance movement and political party that started as a response to the genocide itself. Every attack Palestinian political parties have launched against Israel has been in response to the occupation and the genocide. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the British invaded the area, and instead of granting the Palestinians the right to rule themselves, they gifted their lands to European Jews without a democratic process. This action contradicts the international right for humans to self-governance. From its start, the Israeli state has been a threat to Palestinian autonomy, causing more terrorism than Hamas or any of the U.S. classified terrorist organizations.

Zionist discrimination and racism against Palestinians started way before the establishment of Israel. In *The Iron Wall*, first published in 1923 by Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky, one of the most prominent Zionist activists and writers, refers to the process of taking Palestinian lands bluntly as colonization and compares Palestinians to Indigenous Peoples of the Americas:

Culturally they [Palestinian Arabs] are five hundred years behind us, they do not have our stamina or our determination, but they are as good psychologists like us, and their minds have been sharpened like ours by centuries of finely woven logomachy. We can tell them what we like about the innocence of our aims, diluting and sweetening them with honeyed words to make them agreeable, but they know what we want, just as we know what they do not want. They feel at least the same instinctive and jealous love for Palestine as the old Aztecs felt for ancient Mexico, and the Sioux for their rolling prairies. (Jabotinsky 1923, 3)

He explains that “colonization can have only one goal and the Palestinian Arabs cannot accept it. It lies in the very nature of things and, in this particular respect, nature cannot change” (6). Jabotinsky assumes that Arabs, Mexicans, and the Sioux (or Oceti Sakowin) are “backward,” five hundred years behind Europeans, disregarding the advanced civilizations of all three distinct cultures. Unfortunately, there are still people, even today, who are unaware of the developments in mathematics, mechanics, and philosophy that took place specifically in the Levant during the Arab golden age, even though they use Arabic numerals and terms such as algebra and algorithm. The same people might also be unaware of the many developments in agriculture and architecture that Europeans learned from the Aztecs and the Sioux. One of these people is Netanyahu, who insists on referring to Palestine before the Zionist invasion as a barren land with no infrastructure. His attitude is another representation of the same racism Jabotinsky used to justify the occupation of Palestine and other Indigenous lands.

In his book, *Inter/Nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine*, Steven Salaita (2016) discusses the interconnection between Indigenous people in the Americas and Palestine in detail. He shows how Israel provides weaponry and training to soldiers in Mexico and Guatemala to oppress the resistance of the indigenous people in both countries. Salaita explains that “General Efrain Rios Montt, the architect of Guatemala’s 1982-83 genocide, which especially affected Ixil communities in the country’s highlands, considered Israel an indispensable ally in the global fight against communism, with which he fancifully associated Guatemala’s Native communities” (Salaita 2016, 8). Several sources mention the support Latin American governments get from Israel to oppress Indigenous uprisings:

Israeli firms began exporting weapons in the 1950s to Latin America, including to Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic under the Somoza and Trujillo dictatorships. Massive government investment in the arms industry followed the 1967 War and the ensuing French arms embargo. Israeli arms, police, military training, and equipment have



now been sent to at least 140 countries, including to Guatemala in the 1980s under Efraín Ríos Montt, the former dictator recently convicted of genocide against the Maya. (Johnson and Quiquivix, 2013)

The suffering undergone by Palestinians is shared by Native Americans not only metaphorically, but both Peoples are struggling under American imperialism and Israel's unwavering support to regimes that aim to oppress Indigenous people. Just as Jabotinsky said, the Israeli government wants to take all hope that one day they will be able to get their lands back from them. The hope of Palestinians will be encouraged if a rebellion succeeds somewhere else, which may be why Israel helps the governments in South America.

Israel doesn't only oppress Palestinians and strive to quash their uprisings, the Israeli government intends to reduce Palestinians because the increase in their numbers threatens the existence of Israel. According to Jabotinsky, "The Red Indians," fought against both the bad settlers and the good settlers. He explains his desire for a Jewish majority in this passage: "In the first place, I consider it absolutely impossible to expel the Arabs from Palestine. There will always be two nations in Palestine, which is good enough for me, as long as the Jews become the majority" (1923, 1). He doesn't stop here, he also adds: "Every native population in the world resists the settlers as long as it has the slightest hope of being able to free itself from the danger of being colonized. That is what the Arabs are doing in Palestine, and what they will continue to do as long as there remains a single spark of hope that they will be able to prevent the transformation of 'Palestine' into the Land of Israel" (1923, 4). If you think these words are cruel, Jabotinsky's bluntness cuts right through the hypocrisy of Zionists in another passage:

This does not mean that there can be no agreement with the Palestinian Arabs. What is impossible is a voluntary agreement. As long as the Arabs feel that there is the slightest hope of getting rid of us, they will refuse to give up this hope in exchange for kind words or bread and butter, because they are not a rabble, but a living people. And when a living people give in on matters of such vital importance it is only when there is no longer any hope of getting rid of us, because they cannot breach the iron wall. (Jabotinsky 1923, 7)

We have to keep in mind that this book was published in 1923. This means more than twenty years before the establishment of Israel, Zionists were already plotting the extermination and expulsion of Palestinians. Later, Netanyahu explains on multiple occasions how Palestinians are immigrants from neighboring Arab countries. If that's the case, then who are these Natives Jabotinsky is talking about? The history of Palestinians is presented differently within the Zionist narrative, and this only proves the amount of misinformation in Israeli discourse. The question that presents itself now is how can Zionists achieve Jabotinsky's wish and ensure they are always the majority in Palestine. Expelling Palestinians and exterminating them are two of the most efficient ways that have been used since Jabotinsky wrote his book. For more information, you can read about him in the archives gathered by The Jabotinsky Institute, an NGO in Tel Aviv that "fosters his legacy."

After establishing that Israel has been targeting Palestinians way before Hamas, we can dive into the origins of this "terrorist" organization that Israel claims threatens its civilians. Before Hamas existed as a religious political party, the most dominant and influential political party has been Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), a secular party that engaged in armed resistance and later became known as Fatah. To destroy the unity of Palestinians, Israel felt the need to help create a religious political party in Palestine against the secular Fatah. This is when they created Hamas. General Yitzhak Segev told *The New York Times* in an article published in



1981 that the Israeli government gave him a budget to finance a religious movement in Palestine (Shipley, 1981). The budget he was given was used to sponsor mosques, which functioned as religious schools. These mosques convinced people to turn against the left secular party, ultimately creating generations of people who saw the establishment of a religious state as their only salvation. *The Intercept*, an American non-profit news outlet, also published an article on this topic. “This is not a conspiracy theory,” *The Intercept* wrote, “Hamas is a creation of Israel” (Mehdi and Sayedahmed 2018). These were the exact words used by Israeli historian Avner Cohen when speaking to *The Wall Street Journal* (Higgins 2009). Even though it was created by Israel, Hamas developed into a political party that aims to liberate Palestinians *from* Israel and bring back the territories they gradually lost in the past eighty years, alongside the hundreds of prisoners. The only hope Palestinians have to protect themselves and resist the invaders is the armed resistance provided by Hamas and Fatah. In other words, Hamas now represents the need and right of Palestinians to protect themselves. This is a right granted by the United Nations to occupied populations across the globe. Palestine can’t exist without an army or any form of resistance, especially with an occupying force with nuclear power at its border.

When it comes to Israel, its attacks and occupation of Palestinian territories are continuously justified by ideas that are disproved academically. As mentioned earlier, Netanyahu claims, in his YouTube interview with Jordan Peterson, that the land where Israel was established had been barren. He asserts that Palestinians are refugees from neighboring Arab countries who were attracted by Jewish innovation in the area. In reality, Ottoman Palestine enjoyed a population of around 350,000 people in the 1850s. Most of these inhabitants were Muslims, but about 13,000 of them were Jews and 23,000 were Christians. The numbers kept increasing until 1917 when the area was invaded by Britain. In 1915, Ottoman Palestine had a population of 700,000; 38,000 of its population were Jews and 81,000 were Christian. Lorenzo Kamal, a professor of global history and history of the Middle East and North Africa at the University of Turin, explains that the people in the Levant traveled around freely and considered each other to be culturally the same (Kamal, 2023). People traveling to Palestine from Lebanon or Syria weren’t seen as immigrants regardless of their ethnic or religious backgrounds, but the influx of Jews from European countries during the 1800s were seen as foreigners. These European Jews, nevertheless, were welcomed, and those of them who were born in Palestine have always been regarded as Palestinians. The charter of the Palestine Liberation Organization itself explained that “the Jews who had normally resided in Palestine until the beginning of the Zionist invasion are considered Palestinians” (*The Palestinian National Charter* 1968, article 6).

Historically speaking, the Levant region has never belonged to any ethnic or religious group, it has always been diverse and cosmopolitan. Jewish people who lived under Ottoman rule had high positions and contributed much to the development of Ottoman culture and society, such as the diplomat Joseph Nasi and Rabbi Yitzhak Sarfati. Following their expulsion from the Spanish Peninsula and other European areas, large numbers of Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jewish people migrated to the Ottoman Empire and enjoyed what is described by Stanford J Shaw, a Jewish American historian, as a great era of prosperity. Shaw explains in his book *Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic* the reasons why this part of Jewish history is important. According to him, “the most important reason of all is that the Ottoman Turks provided a principal refuge for Jews driven out of Western Europe by massacres and persecution between the fourteenth and twentieth centuries” (Shaw 1991, 1). He adds that “The Sultan’s Jewish subjects remained content with Ottoman rule, contributing significantly to



the Empire's economic development and benefiting from toleration and protection in return. They therefore resisted all efforts to get them to join revolts and movements against it, particularly during its last century of existence," (Shaw 1991, 1). This only shows how the Israeli project has not taken into consideration the Jewish people who lived in Palestine. The same thing happened in Morocco, where Jewish neighborhoods and tribes were packed with successful Jewish traders and diplomats such as Rabbi Yehuda Jabali and R. Amram Bendiwane. As demonstrated above, North Africans and Middle Easterners never hated Jewish people. The hatred that has started to develop is about Israel as an occupation. If we do not intervene and stop the current genocide, it will keep increasing. The lack of education, the extreme violence in Palestine, the endless discrimination, and unrelenting violence and murder of and against its people are making it impossible for them to have favorable opinions.

In the sea of misinformation we witness online, it is important to read what the other side has to say. I have only recently started exploring works by Zionist authors and discovered that there is much more for me to learn about this movement than what I had learned from the local news in Morocco where I grew up. I have discovered that Zionism started as a plan to ask Argentina and the Ottoman Empire to give a small area of their land to Jewish Europeans. Theodor Hertz explains this plan in this passage:

"Should the Powers declare themselves willing to admit our sovereignty over a neutral piece of land, then the Society will enter into negotiations for the possession of this land. Here two territories come under consideration, Palestine and Argentina. In both countries important experiments in colonization have been made, though on the mistaken principle of a gradual infiltration of Jews. An infiltration is bound to end in disaster. It continues till the inevitable moment when the native population feels itself threatened, and forces the Government to stop the further influx of Jews. Immigration is consequently futile unless based on an assured supremacy." (Hertz 1896, 32)

Hertz believed that this plan would provide oppressed and marginalized people economic stability. In return, Theodor Hertz wanted the Jewish state to take on most of the Ottoman or Argentinian debt in case the people agreed to share their space with European Jews. As we can see in this passage: "The Society of Jews will treat with the present masters of the land, putting itself under the protectorate of the European Powers, if they prove friendly to the plan. We could offer the present possessors of the land enormous advantages; take upon ourselves part of the public debt, build new roads for traffic, which our presence in the country would render necessary, etc." (Hertz 1896, 33). Hertz's plan which has always been to conspire with the ruling powers in Europe against Natives, has evolved over the years, from asking for a random space to start a nation to forcefully claiming all of Palestine.

Today, the Israeli government is rejecting the term genocide because it hasn't used the exact word to describe what they do to Palestinians. However, they did actively and deliberately kill tens of thousands of Palestinians in the past months, thousands of them children. These children are described as "casualties of war" because the Israeli army was trying to kill Hamas. It is supposedly difficult for Israel to differentiate between a Palestinian citizen and a Palestinian citizen who had actively engaged in armed resistance, but to mistake thousands of children for resistance fighters must not be tolerated. Given the obvious crime of committing genocide, no government is naive enough to use the word to refer to its massacres. Israel has been targeting Palestinians as an ethnic group for years. It has murdered, imprisoned, and displaced hundreds of thousands of children, women, and men. This makes them responsible for what is referred to as genocide: a term coined by Raphael Lemkin, a Holocaust survivor, to

describe mass murders conducted against people of the same ethnicity or nation.

Historically, the Levant has never legitimately belonged to any religion or ethnicity, not to Muslims, Arabs, Jews, or any other group. What we have to learn from great leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Edward Said, two great supporters of Palestine, is that modern civil nations must not be built on religion, ethnicity, or race—they should be shared between people without the discrimination that Palestinians have to undergo daily. We will never know where Palestine would be without its armed resistance fighters who have grown up in extremely difficult circumstances. They have been without education, clean water, access to health care, and homes. They have lost family members and friends due to the brutal settler tanks and bombs. Will Israel even be able to exterminate the Palestinian resistance? If so, are they going to give Palestinians the freedom they so long for? Or are they going to sponsor another “terrorist group” to justify killing more of them until there are none? Israel wants to keep bombing the area until a few Palestinians remain. Only then, when Palestinians become a small minority, will Israel consider admitting to its crimes. Perhaps, if this future is realized, the United States will express its regret for not intervening earlier. As for now, the Palestinians, much like Indigenous people in the Americas, are giving the whole world a lesson in resistance. They are showing oppressive occupying regimes, such as Israel, that Natives will never lose hope, and this means that the future Israel is longing for will never be realized.

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