

As we have seen with historic colonialism, slavery, and apartheid, oppressors manage to vilify and demonize their victims in order to keep their regime in place. The smoke-screen created by the American and Israeli governments is no different...



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Imperialism & the Criminalization of the Palestinian People

An Anarchist Analysis

By Carol Baker & Shawn O'Hern



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Imperialism and the Criminalization of the Palestinian People: An Anarchist Analysis

As organizers with *Revolution* and *not* *Bank*, we have had on hand when discussing the politics of *Revolution*. We readily point out the government's... [faded text]

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As organizers with Richmond Food not Bombs, we have facts on hand when discussing the politics of Food not Bombs. We readily point out the government spending on our armed forces versus the money needed to feed and house people in our hometowns. But what about the money our government spends funding the war machines of foreign governments? Our tax dollars go many places once they are taken from us. Since September 11, US aid increased to a number of oppressive countries such as Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan to name a few. And of course, the country receiving the most US foreign aid dollars, Israel, has also seen an increase in their already heavy-laden pockets.

Israel has been illegally occupying Palestine since 1967. Israel constantly ignores United Nations Security Resolutions demanding the liberation of the occupied zones and the return of the refugees to their rightful homes (UN Resolutions 242 and 194). How is it possible that Israel maintains this expensive, racist, and dehumanizing settlement of Palestinian land? Through US funding and through the criminalization of the Palestinian people and cause. Historically we can see that no matter what form of occupation, colonization or genocide takes place, two things are necessary: money and ideology to justify humans treating others of our species so barbarically. Israel receives its money from the United States. The ideology, inherently racist and anti-Arab, is justified through religious doctrine, "scientific" analysis of the so-called "Arab mentality," and a successful PR campaign that has painted the Palestinians not as refugees facing the racist guns of the fourth largest military on the planet, but as criminals, terrorists, and infiltrators into their own lands. Zionist Israelis regularly refer to the "Palestinian problem," the plague, or even to the people of Palestine as "cockroaches."

As anarchists, proponents of social democracy, or even simply

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A note from the authors: The history presented in this pamphlet is necessarily a brief overview of the long and tragic history of Palestine, its Arab neighbors, and Israel. The purpose of this pamphlet is to provide an anti-authoritarian analysis of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. We hope that this introductory article entices the reader to seek more information and read on their own a more comprehensive history of the conflict. We have cited information from and highly suggest the following books: *Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel & the Palestinians* (Chomsky), *The New Intifada, Resisting Israel's Apartheid* (Carey, editor), and *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising against the Israeli Occupation* (Lockman and Beinin).

A b o u t B e t t e r D a y s . . .

The Better Days Collective is an organized group of anti-authoritarian people who aim to educate, agitate, and organize for an egalitarian society based on the principles of direct democracy, community self-determination, and social equality. As anarchists, we believe that everybody should be able to fully and equally participate in making decisions that affect their lives and communities. Currently the world we live in is organized in a top-down manner that fosters dependence on institutionalized authority and eclipses any possibility for us to cooperatively determine how society is organized. In place of our own voices politicians represent our "interests," in the work place we have bosses who have the ability to determine our quality of life, and in our communities we have police who violently enforce laws the state. Everywhere our life is measured by the standards and demands of appointed authority figures who manage and manipulate our lives to maintain their power over us. Simultaneously, people are oppressed every day on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, economic class, age, and physical ability to name a few examples. All of us have internalized the quest for power over others and therefore we continue to maintain different forms of domination in our everyday lives. Because of this, we organize for a free society. We envision a culture based upon the principle "from each according to their ability to each according to their need" in which no one is in the position of oppressor or oppressed. We are determined to organize in solidarity with people in struggle against their oppressors, to create forms of popular education that seek to empower and inform, to nurture community self-determination, and to build alternatives to the authoritarian institutions that govern how we live. We wish to be free.

as opponents to human rights violations, the radical left must hear the call of the Palestinians. Israel is harming itself though these atrocities; making a mockery of its national ideology, which celebrates the "light of hope" for the Middle East and regularly claims to be founded upon the principals of true social democracy. The people of Israel are divided themselves, many of whom reject racist Zionism and face internal oppression for "deserting the cause." Israel, by forcing its "ethnocracy" (a country where rights are assigned according to ethnicity) upon the people of the occupied territories, further harms itself by fostering an environment that gives strength to the ideologies of militant resistance against Israel. The list of victims of this occupation runs long and across many borders. Palestinians have suffered, Lebanese have suffered, Egyptians have suffered, Syrians have suffered, and Israeli citizens have suffered. Our tax dollars support this suffering. Zionist groups in America support this suffering and our military most certainly supports this suffering. But Westerners allow themselves to be blown away by the smoke screen of propaganda that tells us all Arabs are terrorists, haters of Westerners, religious extremists, intellectually inferior, and altogether not worthy of our concern. A closer examination of the history of this conflict, the reasons for unyielding US support for Israel, the amount of money going into Israel from the US, and the propaganda that supports the ruin of Palestinian culture will easily reveal a different struggle.

When attempting to learn about Palestine it is helpful, actually vital, to understand imperialism and how it works. Imperialism is empire building. It is when one nation-state controls an area outside of its borders through military, economic, and/or political means. Imperialism set up the apartheid state in South Africa, partitioned Ireland, guided US involvement in Vietnam, US conquest of Turtle

Island (the ancient name the indigenous people gave this land), and several hundred disastrous, oppressive regimes around the globe. It is when one country takes control over the land, resources, and people of another area or nation and turns them into servants of a distant power or attempts to eliminate them completely. This is exactly what Israel, with US backing, is doing to the people of Palestine.

Brief History

After the events of the Second World War, the British and French emerged as the controlling empires in the Middle East. The Jews and Arabs living in these areas received conflicting promises from the British Empire. Prior to and during these events, the Jewish people, feeling repression in Europe, developed a national liberation movement. Jewish people have historically been repressed throughout Europe. As a reaction to this oppression a movement developed within the Jewish community that believed that the Jews needed a Jewish land and Jewish state. This movement was called Zionism. From the beginning, Zionists realized they would never be able to establish their own state on European land, so they aimed for the "developing world." The conclusion was to occupy the land held by the ancient Hebrews 2000 years ago; to create a religious homeland where immigration would be unhindered. This concept was backed by the British government (the Balfour Declaration) and to a lesser degree by the United States. Both the US and Britain had established immigration quotas, severely limiting the number of legal Jewish immigrants in their respective countries.

Nazi prosecution and genocide of the Jewish population sent many fleeing to what we today call Israel. Between 1930 and 1941, 271,957 Jewish immigrants came to Palestine. In the minds of Western powers, unable to acknowledge their own anti-Semitism, the Zionist movement was well received. In 1948, Israel took over most

state. A civil rights/human rights movement could be one focus of our support, particularly for exposing Israeli abuses and discrimination and the limits of capitalism and government to satisfy human needs and desires. This may provide the basis for anti-hierarchical, egalitarian ideas to take hold. Support for reparations for the Palestinian community is also necessary.

Withdraw the settlements. Stop Zionist expansion! As stated earlier, the creation of settlements is the wedge that Israel uses to push into new territory, further displacing people native to the land. Israel needs to withdraw all settlements acquired through the Six Days War and withdraw from the continuing settlements that occur constantly in Palestine.

Self-determination for the people of Palestine. The people of Palestine, like all people, have the right to determine their own destiny. This will take form in the social, economic, political, and cultural structures they create. As anarchists, we would hope that these institutions would be secular, egalitarian, decentralized, anti-authoritarian, and networked on the basis of mutual aid and solidarity. But, the probably won't be. In and of itself, the ability to define your own destiny is a revolutionary concept that should be supported.

Self education. Anarchists that are out of touch with these issues should form discussion groups, free schools, and book clubs to self-educate on the history of the Middle East and the elements that have laid the groundwork for such a notoriously illegal occupation of a people's land. Through understanding and education, we can show solidarity with the oppressed people of Palestine and, in turn, the oppressed around the world. With more revolutionary minds contemplating and discussing this issue, the seeds of new ideas can sprout up and anarchists in America can show their support for the people of Palestine.

anarchist circles on Palestine. We are left with a lack of understanding of what is going on and the history of the conflict. Quite simply, we don't know the facts. Secondly, there is a fear of appearing anti-Semitic or supporting a fundamentalist Islamic agenda. This is a binary construct, exemplifying our lack of analysis. To be anti-Zionist is not to be anti-Semitic. It is anti-domination. This point cannot be stressed enough. We are against all forms of domination. We must stand against anti-Semitism as we challenge the Zionist conquest for power and control. Third, what would a solution to this conflict look like? What is a realistic and obtainable outcome? We shouldn't assume it is our place to lay out a blue print for how the conflict could be ended and reparations allotted.

There are many things we can demand and do now to help create a more peaceful and humanitarian atmosphere in the region:

US out of the Middle East. This state gives the guns and money to support, maintain and enforce the imperialism of Israel. One of the most direct ways to de-escalate the violence of the Israeli State is to limit its military power. Imperialist states with strong, high-tech armies should make anarchists cringe. Historically, the state of Israel has used its army and police forces to aggressively implement its Zionist policy of conquest. The best example being the aforementioned Six Days War where the Israeli militarily occupied and took control of new territory overnight. This would be the equivalent to the US army invading the northernmost state of Mexico and declaring it the 51st state (as has been done with every inch of the land that is now the United States). This could also work to lessen US dominance in the region as a whole. Israel is the epicenter of US influence and control over the Middle East.

The right of return for all refugees and equal rights and representation for all. We cannot expect much from the Israeli

of what was historical or Mandatory Palestine, dispossessing hundreds of thousands of Palestinians while depopulating 531 Arab villages in the process. Two-thirds of the population were driven out. Today, these people make up the nearly four million refugees, frequently referred to as "the Palestinian problem." It only took President Truman eleven minutes to recognize the new state. As we will see, the US and Britain not only wanted to keep the Jewish community out of their countries, but also saw a very important strategic possibility in the new Israel. A number of conflicts, attacks, and counter attacks between Israel, the Palestinian refugees in nearby Arab countries and Egypt made this area highly unstable in the time period between the Israeli declaration of independence and what is today known as the Six Days War of 1967. After the 1948 creation of the Jewish state, the West Bank and Gaza went to Jordan and Egypt, respectively. Both were subsequently lost to Israel in 1967 and remain under its control to this day, with the exception of a few areas that, according to the Israelis, operate under Palestinian "autonomy." To put this land occupation in perspective, Israel took 78% of Palestine in 1948 and took the remaining 22% in 1967.

Immediately following the hostilities of 1948, the United Nations investigated the massive refugee problem and adopted Resolution 194 on December 11, 1948. This resolution called for what is commonly referred to as the "right of return" for the refugees forced to leave their homes. It also called for the "repatriation, resettlement, and economic and social rehabilitation of refugees and payment of compensation..." Israel refused to allow all of the refugees to return, citing a national security crisis and danger to the nation should the people be allowed to return to the land taken from them.

The United Nations also convened after the Six Days War of

1967. On November 22 of that year, the UN Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 242, which contained the call for the "Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict... and termination of all claims or states of belligerency." Israel, with US support, still occupies the areas conquered in the Six Days War. With a review of the United Nations reactions, the neighboring Arab reactions and the suffering of the refugees, it is a wonder how Israel maintains control over the occupied territories. But once we add the United States in as a supporter of Israel, the tapestry of imperialism soon unravels. With an ally like the United States, Israel is funded militarily, economically, and diplomatically to the extent that it can ignore the call of the world and the call for justice for the Palestinians.

Why the US Supports Israel

The United States does not give one third of its foreign aid to Israel for ideological reasons. There are strategic assets that come with an alliance with Israel. These assets have come to shape what many now call the "special relationship" between the US and Israel.

Control over the energy reserves in the Middle East are of great concern to the US. Oil is the energy resource that funds the industry of Europe and Japan and US control over this resource extends to US leverage over these countries. The United States enjoys an ally in Israel that is close to these petroleum reserves and near the waterways by which it is transported. The desire to control this resource came to a head during the Cold War. As the Soviets gave arms and economic support to Arab countries, the US maneuvered to fund and arm Israel.

Israel also serves US interests elsewhere around the world in ways that the US cannot (overtly). For example, when congressional human rights restrictions were impeding direct American support to

like the reality for people of color in the United States.

Palestinians have not simply accepted the hand dealt to them. They have shown stiff resistance. The most visible forms of revolt have been the intifadas and the guerilla actions of such groups as Islamic Jihad and Hamas. The intifadas are popular uprisings in the Occupied Territories where Palestinians, mainly youth, battle Israeli security forces in the streets. Armed with rocks and small arms, they battle the high-tech, heavily armed, US-equipped forces of imperialism. Jihad and Hamas are most well known for their suicide bombers, often claiming lives inside Israel. Israel usually responds with collective punishment, mass murdering and bulldozing (with US manufactured bulldozers) Palestinian villages in retaliation. There have also been other forms of resistance such as strikes, demonstrations, and economic boycotts. Just as the Palestinians will not remain silent under the racist yoke of Zionist oppression, the world must not allow the plight of these people to be demonized by the corporate powers of Western and Israeli government.

Conclusions

So why with such a clear-cut case of imperialism and domination have anarchists had so little to say regarding the Palestinian struggle for liberation? First, the internal racism of our movement is to blame. Although we are making strides to understanding how white supremacy affects our society and our organizing, we still have a long way to go. Often we still don't see beyond our own noses. White-dominated anti-capitalist movements receive our attention but a struggle by a people of color against an imperialist nation is dismissed. This is particularly true of the Middle East in general. As anarchists we may feel some affinity with the Zapatistas and educate ourselves on the history and politics of Mexico. At the same time there is very little written information in

educational opportunities for Arabs.

As with apartheid and slavery, the oppressed as a “race” are presented as inferior. Segregation is regularly suggested as a mechanism for solving the “Palestinian problem,” while references are made to the “filth” of mixed marriages, “hybrid children” and the “Arab mentality.” Palestinians have been referred to as “a plague already written in the Bible,” and “cockroaches in the Holy Land.” Leftist Israelis that speak out against such racism and openly oppose their government’s actions are similarly treated as traitors and often jailed for their beliefs. Jewish religious leaders come under fire when they speak out against the torture of Palestinian prisoners (many of whom are teenage children). But the dehumanization of the Arabs in the occupied territories doesn’t end there.

Zionists have used a number of brutal tactics to gain control of this land; from setting up discriminating structures to make life unbearable for Palestinians, to expanding settlements in areas of Palestinian villages, displacing Palestinians and creating a flood of refugees, to flat out conquest, war, and murder. The imperialist power has set up what are basically fortified neighborhoods in contested areas, providing the reasoning to move in army and police forces loyal to expanding the imperial power base. In addition to this, Israel is an apartheid state. Palestinians that live in the refugee camps and go into Israel to work have to cross checkpoints and show identification to get to the land that used to be theirs. Israelis pass freely. It can take hours to get through the checkpoints and even ambulances are stopped. In the video “The Land and the People,” a documentary on Palestine, a pregnant woman gives birth in an ambulance that is held in line for hours. Her child dies before they make it to the hospital. Palestinian workers get paid less than Israeli workers and the conditions they labor under are worse. It is much

the mass murderers of Central America during the Regan administration, Israel stepped in to do what the US could not openly do (arm the militaries of Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras). More recently, Israel supplied American jets to Indonesia when that country’s arms were depleted in the course of the genocide of the Timorese. The US gives Israel billions of dollars annually in a way that is outside of the norm for foreign aid, hence the term “special relationship” with Israel. There are three basic components to this relationship. First, the US allocates funds to Israel without specifications as to how the money is to be spent. As other countries are required to meet specific terms with their funds, Israel is free to spend its US aid on the occupation. Secondly, Israel receives its money in one lump sum, as opposed to a gradual allocation plan that other countries receive. Third, the sum of the money Israel receives is greater than the money given to any other country in the world (more than all of South America and Africa, minus Egypt, combined). In addition to these three points, there is also a regular pattern of forgiving loans, discounting weapons sales, and supporting Israel, often as the sole dissenting opinion, in the United Nations.

As Israel provides a strategic asset to the United States in the Middle East, US funding in turn supports the Israeli system of apartheid and domination over the Palestinian people. However, in order to maintain such a high level of visible oppression, the Israeli and American government must justify its actions to the citizens of their countries and to the international community. The result is a massive public relations (PR) campaign against the Palestinian people.

The Criminalization of the Palestinian People

As we have seen with historic colonialism, slavery, and

apartheid, oppressors manage to vilify and demonize their victims in order to keep their regime in place. The smokescreen created by the American and Israeli governments is no different. One constant affirmation by the powers in control is that support for the Palestinians and criticism of Israel is akin to anti-Semitism. Those who chose to view this issue as a human rights issue rather than a nationalist "security issue" are quickly tagged as anti-Semites. There is a definitive difference between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. To be anti-Zionist is to be anti-Imperialist, not anti-Jewish.

Palestinian uprisings, or *intifadas* (literally, "revolution of stones"), are regularly referred to as terrorist cells and organizations, while Jewish terrorist groups acting within Palestine prior to 1948 are nostalgically referred to as freedom fighters and heroes. Today, any group that is a proponent of Palestinian self-determination is labeled terrorist. Bias in the American and western media supports these notions. A 2001 report by FAIR (Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting) found that in the fall of that year, of the 99 intifada stories broadcast by the three major corporate networks, only four made mention of the occupation, while the majority of reports made constant mention of Israel feeling "isolation," "under siege," and "suffering daily attack." Surely this rhetoric is designed to fool the audience into feeling sympathy for Israel while giving no voice to the Palestinians. No reports tell of the British and American weapons at Israeli disposal while the Palestinians have none of these things. By contrast, Palestinians, their organizations, and Arabs are generally depicted in terms of violence, religious extremism, irrationality, and an unyielding refusal to accept a Jewish nation state as a neighbor.

Zionist Israelis in power regularly (and historically) make public comments that, racist in nature, strive to underline the legitimacy of their claim on the ancient lands. Many of these claims

are religious in nature, just as varieties of Christianity in America sought to divinely legitimize slavery. Zionists claim that God intended for these lands to belong to the Jews and that the Arabs on the land are a "plague" and "God is sorry he created" them. While the Islamic call to a holy war, *jihad*, is used to incite fear of religious extremism and terrorism into the hearts of the "rational world," the Zionist equivalent, *milhemet mitzvah*, or "Divinely-commanded war" is never mentioned, although many Zionists have referred to the war with Lebanon as such a war.

Palestinian culture is regularly attacked in the occupied territories. Palestinian universities are regularly raided and their student bodies jailed at the whims of the Israeli army. Cultural events, like Palestinian art shows, plays, fashion shows and gatherings are frequently and violently disbanded while organizers are taken to jail for their involvement. Palestinians are regularly jailed for possessing illegal literature of "political significance." Clearly the Israelis seek to humiliate and demoralize the Palestinians under their rule. This tactic is used to ensure there is no organized resistance and no opportunity to enjoy life under Israeli rule. The government and leaders that control the occupation seek to drive out those Palestinians still living on "Jewish land."

More similarities with slavery and apartheid are apparent when one examines the Arab labor situation in Israel. Arab migrant workers brought in to work in factories and on the kibbutz are not allowed to spend the night in Israel, so they are routinely locked in the factories over night. Arab labor is cheap and used to fulfill the jobs that most Israeli citizens themselves would not work for such low wages (factories, farm work, etc.). In 1967, the Koenig memorandum called for mechanisms to "thin the concentrations of existing Arab population" by the reduction of employment and