

“The Choice of Resistance”

Insights from the 11th Conference "Global Gathering in Support of the Choice of Resistance"

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*In May 2023, I was invited to attend the 11th “The Global Gathering in Support of the Choice of Resistance” conference. This conference was attended by delegates from 70 countries, including Latin America, the Middle East, Europe, and Africa. This conference’s title contains a distinctive phrase: “**The Choice of Resistance.**” Why should resistance be considered an option?*

I discussed this with Dr. Tim Anderson, an Australian scholar who was one of the movement’s founders and a steadfast advocate of intellectual resistance against modern Western colonialism.

He pointed out that the term “choice” or “the right to vote” is commonly used by Western liberal thinkers and politicians. However, when it comes to the Palestinian issue, many liberal thinkers or activists deny this right. Some express their support for Palestine while saying “Don’t use violence” or “Let’s only negotiate peace.” When some factions in Palestine chose to carry out an armed struggle against Israeli colonialism, they (along with Israel) immediately labeled this struggle an act of “terrorism.”

The West, including Western Europe and the United States, often claims to uphold liberal values. They even spread these values to various nations around the world. In the paradigm of liberalism, individuals are capable of organizing themselves toward virtue. The 19th-century French liberal politician and philosopher, **Alexis Tocqueville**, argued that individuals were the best judges of their own interests and should therefore be allowed to have a say in matters concerning their personal future (Ossewaarde, 2004).

However, the West undermines liberalism’s core principles when it comes to oppressed nations. They ignore the people’s right to vote and continue their modern colonialism without considering the human rights of the subjugated countries.

For example, in 2021, the European Union stopped funding two Palestinian NGOs, Al-Haq and the Palestinian Center for Human Rights. Isn't "human rights" one of the core values of liberalism? However, for Europe, Palestinian human rights are insignificant when it comes to Israeli interests. Israeli authorities have alleged that the Palestinian NGO channeled funds from the European Union to the "Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine" (FPLP), which Israel has labeled as a "terrorist organization."

Israel, the US, and Western European countries declared the Palestinian resistance movement an act of terrorism. Consider this situation in one of the West Bank incidents. Israel conducted two days of raids on the Jenin Palestinian refugee camp in early July 2023. A total of 2,000 soldiers, F-35 fighter jets, and drones blasted the camp. Bulldozers demolished numerous infrastructures and attacked the 0.42 sq km camp that was home to 24,000 people.

"Is it any wonder paramilitaries have risen up to defend neighborhoods and families against those bloodsoaked incursions?" asked an Irish politician and Member of the European Parliament, **Mike Wallace**, after describing how Israel destroyed everything, including roads, water pipes, power plants, power grids, sewers, schools, and hospitals.

Israel has committed similar brutalities since the regime's inception in 1948 (and in the years preceding that, in preparation for the establishment of the "state" of Israel). What resistance must be made to confront this ruthless regime? Shouldn't there be the option to fight with weapons? Why is the word "peace" thrown onto the shoulders of the Palestinian nation, which has much less military equipment and funding? The lack of international support for Palestinian cause made **Dr. Yahya Ghaddar**, the General Secretary of the Global Gathering stated that all parties have an obligation to stand with Palestine.

The EU-Israel Cooperation agreement, which was ratified by the Israeli and European Parliaments and came into effect in 2000, states that "human rights and democracy" serve as the basis for the accord. However, the document does not accommodate the right of the Palestinian people to fight for their independence. In fact, Israel's existence in Palestine has been recognized as an occupying power or a party that enforces settler colonial rule on Palestinian land (Sen, 2022).

The United States, which always claims to be the promoter of democracy and funder of wars in various countries to topple governments it deems to be anti-democratic, consistently offers financial and military help as well as unlimited political support to Israel. The US has stood beside Israel by exercising its veto "right" up to 40 times. In fact, the UN resolution did nothing further than condemn, but Israel is nevertheless safeguarded.

However, as discussed during the "The Global Gathering in Support of the Choice of Resistance" conference, the Western capitalist power or "the Empire" is now having a difficult time. For hundreds of years, they colonized various parts of the world, then in the modern days, they invaded independent countries whose leaders refused to comply, killed people with the latest advanced weapons, robbed their natural resources, and caused poverty and painful suffering for billions of people on earth. The victims of the Empire spread across continents, from the Middle East, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa.

Despite this, the oppressed nations from various continents, ethnic groups, and religions,

have never stopped fighting. Sometimes they won, the other times they were silenced, but the persistence of this opposition weakens the influence of global capitalism. In a world that is moving toward multipolarity, the continuance of the axis of resistance in the Middle East has weakened the Empire and paved the way for Russia and China to rise as new great power. Since the start of Russia's military operation in Ukraine in February 2022, the global resistance movement has entered a new phase and led to a very significant geopolitical shift.

We have observed how China has risen to become the main mediator in the Middle East, succeeding in bringing together the two big powers, Iran and Saudi Arabia. The Empire divided the Muslim nations in Middle East by putting their armies against one another since conflict and division was very beneficial for their capitalist projects. They provide finances and logistics wherever there is conflict in order to make enormous profits. But now, we are seeing the power is shifting. The Arab countries are returning to make peace with Syria. For 10 years, they have shunned their Syrian allies in support of the Empire's agenda to overthrow the regime.

In Africa, we are witnessing the rise of African leaders who have the courage to speak out against the West's prolonged colonialism, which continued to plunder Africa even after it had attained de jure independence. We recently heard a statement made at the Russia-Africa Summit in reference to Ibrahim Traore, the young president of Burkina Faso:

“Why does resource-rich Africa remain the poorest region of the world? We ask these questions and get no answers... However, a slave who does not fight [for his freedom] is not worthy of any indulgence. The heads of African states should not behave like puppets in the hands of the imperialists. We must ensure that our countries are self-sufficient, including as regards food supplies, and can meet all of the needs of our peoples.”

Representatives from Africa also attended the 11th “Global Gathering in Support of the Choice of Resistance” conference in Beirut. One of them is **Mpho Masomola** from South Africa, who vocally defended Palestine in his speech. South Africa has a deep connection to the Palestinian struggle because it was once a victim of the apartheid government system.

The Latin American countries, some of whose representatives were also present at this conference, also undergo a long history of resistance to the Empire. Venezuela successfully resisted a US-planned political coup. The country is allied with the anti-Empire force from the Middle East, Iran, which bravely set off its oil ships to Venezuela despite a unilateral US embargo. Cuba also continues to stand firm, despite decades of economic sanctions and US-led destabilization attempts.

In general, it is argued that the enemy of humanity is the Empire which exploits and manipulates the nations of the world in order to harvest enormous profits. However, because the Empire dominance model differs in each country, the resistance tactics will vary depending on each situation. There are people who engage in political resistance to hold out against natural resources robbery by transnational companies, hence exposing them to the possibility of a coup d'état of the government. Others fight tirelessly to achieve independence or economic sovereignty, at the risk of being targeted by the WTO and IMF. Indonesia, for example, has prohibited the export of unprocessed mineral ores (nickel, tin, and copper) and instead promoted the domestic processing of valuable metals.

Should the Middle East, particularly states that must deal directly with Israel or Western-backed terrorist organizations, be compelled to choose mere political resistance? Is there no right to engage in violent resistance when your land and house are seized and your children are murdered, as happened in Palestine? Why did the US label the volunteer militias that defeated ISIS as terrorists after ISIS broke down village and city governments in Iraq and Syria and then committed atrocious massacres?

All forms of resistance are human rights. If Western liberal thinkers and politicians are committed to liberalism's core value, "freedom," they should support nations' decisions on how to exercise their right to freedom. As stated by Dr. Anderson's in his speech during this conference, "When humans are considered to have certain rights, it means that they also have the right to defend and fight for those rights."

According to the UN Charter, "*the purposes of the United Nations are...to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and the self-determination of peoples.*" Thus, the United Nations recognizes a nation's right to self-determination. A colonized country such as Palestine, or any other countries which have been subjected to economic, political, and physical oppression, have the right to determine their own fate. It is well acknowledged that the fate every nation wishes for is independence. Hence, the fundamental rights of every nation include the ability to exercise resistance and the freedom to choose the method by which resistance is pursued.

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Featured image: Palestinian take cover as Israeli forces fire at protesters at the Gaza border on 14 December 2018 [Mohammed Asad/Middle East Monitor]

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