

Israel Is, Like the US, Prime Target for New Mass Uprising

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*Israeli **Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** must be very worried over the US-wide protests by African-Americans and their supporters against the murder by smothering of a black man by a white police officer on May 25.*

Having announced he would begin the process to annex portions of the occupied Palestinian West Bank on July 1, he must be concerned that in response, violence, similar to the rioting in the US, could erupt in the, so far, mainly quiet West Bank and East Jerusalem. After more than a century of Palestinian resentment and resistance to expropriation and suppression, Israel is, like the US, a prime target for a new mass uprising, a Third Intifada.

Netanyahu must also fear that his friend and ally **Donald Trump**, who supports annexation, could very well lose the US presidential election in November. Indeed, Netanyahu has vowed to get the job done before US voters go to the polls. Trump is, after all, now facing the sort of protests and violence that Netanyahu might have to deal with in a month's time. Trump's poll ratings have also fallen because of his mishandling of the Covid-19 crisis, which has killed more than 110,000 US citizens.

The situations in the US and Palestine are analogous. Both countries were born sin and continue to reap the resentments of peoples they harmed by denying their humanity.

The US practiced slavery, ethnic cleansing of indigenous tribes and racism against non-whites. For the white majority, the non-white presence, interests and rights were and largely remain of little or no concern. This is why centuries old anger has repeatedly driven black citizens into the streets to protest discrimination, persecution and lynching. While peaceful demonstrations have erupted across the US in response to Floyd's death, many rioters have retaliated for decades of abuse by looting and burning private and public property.

Palestinians face the very same treatment by Israelis. This was inevitable. As early as 1895, the founding father of "the Jewish state", Theodor Herzl referred to the native Palestinians as "the penniless population" which could be expropriated and spirited across the border. To put it bluntly, the Palestinians whose peoplehood and rights were denied could be expelled.

The language of denial of Palestinians as a people was picked up by Lord Arthur Balfour when he drafted his infamous 1917 declaration pledging Britain, as post World War I mandatory power, to facilitate a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine while

referring to the native population as “non-Jewish communities”.

Following the 1967 Israeli conquest of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, Israeli **Prime Minister Golda Meir** continued routine denial by stating “There is no Palestinian people. There are Palestinian refugees.” She did not, naturally, explain why Palestinians were and are refugees. Later she elaborated on her contention that there are no indigenous Palestinians by saying that when she settled in Palestine in 1921, the Jewish colonists were “the avowed Palestinians”. Israel and Israelis generally refer to Palestinian citizens of Israel as “Arab Israelis”. The words “Palestine” and “Palestinians” call into question the very legitimacy of Israel.

This being the case, there is little wonder that Palestinians in occupied East Jerusalem took to the streets last weekend after Israeli soldiers shot and killed Iyad Halak, 32, an unarmed autistic Palestinian man as he was walking to a school for students with special needs where he studied and worked every day. The soldiers claimed he was carrying a “suspicious object that looked like a pistol”. When they shouted at him, he fled, they chased him, cornered him and, allegedly, shot at his legs. Although Israel claims, the senior officer called a halt to the firing, one man loosed off six or seven shots at Halak, killing him. Some 150 Palestinians from East Jerusalem marched in the streets to protest his death. One poster asserted, “Palestinian lives matter”, a slogan echoing the US “Black lives matter”. Israeli police forcibly dispersed the protesters.

On social media, Palestinians rightly compared this case with the murder of George Floyd in the distant US state of Minnesota. Palestinian men and boys like their black counter parts in the US fear for their lives whenever they go out of their homes. In both countries “agents of law and order” regularly get away with murder. Promised investigations come to naught and perpetrators go unpunished. Consequently, tension and resentment build up to boiling in US black and Palestinian communities.

In recent years, Israel has prepared the way for annexation. It has taken over the land of Palestinian farmers in the Jordan Valley and forced them to move to Jericho, the largest town in the area, or into several other small enclaves while Israeli colonists harvest date palms and other crops in the Valley. Israel has done the same thing to Palestinians in the West Bank, particularly in the Bethlehem area.

Netanyahu’s annexation of West Bank Israeli colonies and the Jordan Valley could prompt Palestinians in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and, perhaps, even Gaza to revolt. By annexing the Jordan Valley and Israeli squatter enclaves in the West Bank, Netanyahu will finish off any notion of a Palestinian state as there will be no land for this state.

In an interview with an extreme right-wing newspaper, Israel ha-Yom, he frankly stated that when he annexes the Jordan Valley to Israel. Its 60,000 Palestinian residents would remain as now “subjects” of the occupation rather than citizens of any state. Therefore, Palestinians living in their occupied country will remain “stateless” with no rights, no protections against Israel, and no passports, which would allow them to travel freely.

Palestinians are much worse off than members of the US black community who are legally citizens, with rights and passports. If they focus their rage over the killing of George Floyd to effect change in the still colonial US, they may even be treated as citizens with rights and respect.

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