

Neither the Israeli Elections Nor the Palestinian Elections Are About Democracy

In Israel, they are all about entrenching the Zionist regime in Palestine from the river to the sea; in the occupied territories, they are all about liberation and de-Zionization.

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Global Research, April 20, 2021

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)
Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)
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Chances are, you are unaware that Palestinian elections are in the offing. But if you are following them, there is a lot to ponder.

If you are like me, you followed the US elections with disbelief, and now, things are “back to normal.” You followed the Israeli elections with disgust, and now, “safely past another election, Israel turns attention back to de-Arabization of the Zionist state.”

As Miko Peled [writes](#):

“The Zionists openly say that they will allow Palestinians to choose whether they remain in “Israel” as residents without rights, leave, or fight and be killed by the Israeli forces—these same forces that have been killing them for more than seventy years.”

In March, The New York Times’ Patrick Kingsley and Adam Rasgon [reported](#) on the “stark differences” in electoral politics between Israel and the Palestinian Authority: “While many Israelis feel numbed by their fourth election in two years, Palestinians are excited about the chance to vote for the first time in more than a decade.”

Dig more deeply and you will find a chasm of difference ... and not just in “the mood” of the electors.

Zionism is an ideologically exclusionary social and political policy toward non-Jews based on an ancient tribal identity, and a Zionist regime has had an iron grip on Palestine for decades, as many people know. The upcoming Palestinian elections may be an opportunity for change within the Palestinian Authority, an empowering change that officially sheds the Oslo agreement to focus on the de-Zionization of Palestine, one way or another.

To understand what’s really going on re the Palestinian elections, try to find sources other than The New York Times (NYT). In the article I reference above, for example, you will find this seemingly banal declaration:

The Palestinian election, scheduled for May 22, will be the first since a violent rift in 2007 between the Palestinian faction that controls the Gaza Strip, the Islamist militant group Hamas, and its rival that exerts limited autonomy over parts of the West Bank, the mainstream Fatah.

Missing from the NYT report is any contextualization regarding the role the US played in the vicious division between Hamas and Fatah in derailing the democratic process in Palestine after the 2006 elections when Hamas won. Consider this passage from *The Making of Hamas's Foreign Policy* by Daud Abdullah (2020):

Ten years after the [Roadmap](#) was announced, one of its key drafters, Elliott Abrams, conceded that further disengagement from the West Bank 'might not produce a Palestinian state in accordance with the Roadmap'. Nevertheless, he advised that the USA and its allies should 'continue to support Abbas against Hamas', because he was all they had. With regard to Hamas, Abrams added that, while efforts to create internal splits in Hamas were a 'no-lose proposition', the USA would play 'no part in this' and leave the task to other governments, including Russia and the Arab nations.

The "violent rift" between Hamas and Fatah, a rift that was unnecessary and futile according to Daud Abdullah, caused the deaths of 350 Palestinians, including 20 children and 18 women.

Furthermore, there is no mention in the NYT article that the Gaza strip since then has been subjected to an unconscionable economic land, air and sea blockade, imposed by Egypt and Israel in the hope of provoking a popular uprising against Hamas. It speaks a lot to Palestinian resilience and steadfastness (*sumoud*) that, to date, and despite the horrendous bombing (mainstream outlets have largely ignored Israel's latest round of near-daily attacks, which began in early August, 2020), the US strategy has failed.

Instead, you read in the NYT report dewy-eyed language about young Palestinians who "dream of a new and more competent Palestinian leadership with a clearer idea of how to achieve statehood," that appears to lay the blame for the Palestinian predicament (*nakba*, rather) entirely on "Palestinian leadership," rather than on US and Israeli strategies meant to keep Palestinians in check, their leaders in prison, and Israel dominant.

If Patrick Kingsley and Adam Rasgon were to go beyond the framework of the status quo and the mirage of "democracy" in Israel or the OPT; if they were to step outside the defunct "peace process" framework they continue to polish for their readers, they would find plenty more going on with young Palestinians in and out of Palestine that is worthy of Israel's attention and theirs. Nearly a third of Palestinian party logos, for example, including those for Fatah and Hamas, erase Israel from the map of Palestine.

It would help if these reporters could read Arabic and would take a look, for example, at the leadership and other training workshops offered continuously in Ramallah by [Masarat](#), the Palestinian Center for Policy Research & Strategic Studies, whose director, writer and political analyst Hani al Masri, recently stepped down from his post at the Center in order to run in the elections. Here is a rough translation of the conclusion of [an article](#) he published on April 14:

If the fate of the elections is placed in the hands of the occupation, then this

means that no elections will take place unless they achieve the interests of the occupation — i.e., obligating the Palestinian Authority to follow the Oslo Agreement unilaterally, even though successive Israeli governments have long abandoned their obligations per Oslo.

We should make the elections part of the battle against the occupation (as we did by joining the International Criminal Court and obtaining the observer membership for the State of Palestine in the United Nations). This also requires preparing a plan to end Oslo and its commitments as a prelude to ending the occupation and achieving freedom, sovereignty and independence, which will not come through diplomacy and negotiations, but rather through combining political action and negotiations in a timely manner after changing the balance of power, and committing to a liberation struggle and popular resistance.

Our struggle includes boycott and organizing uprisings that grow and continue until the occupation is defeated. In addition, we are holding elections in order to give popular legitimacy to the Palestinian Authority, to strengthen it, to open the doors for possible change and necessary reform, through the establishment of effective and good governance; elections give Jerusalem the status, importance and priority it deserves to thwart the Israeli plans. Elections promise change and could rid us of a Palestinian Authority with a decaying legitimacy, operating without a legislative council that could strengthen it, challenge it, hold it accountable, give it confidence, and prevent corruption.

And if Patrick Kingsley and Adam Rasgon are interested in further investigative reporting, I suggest they look into what young Palestinians in exile are planning and thinking. One place to begin is [Masar Badil](#)'s "The Alternative Palestinian Path Conference (Towards a new revolutionary commitment)", Madrid, Spain, October-November 2021.

In the end, neither Israeli elections nor Palestinian elections are about "democracy." In Israel, they are all about entrenching the Zionist regime in Palestine from the river to the sea; in the occupied territories, they are all about liberation and de-Zionization.

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Featured image: At a 2018 rally in Washington DC [Rima Najjar]

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