

Pakistan and the Question of Recognizing Israel

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Global Research, December 14, 2020

Region: [Asia](#), [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [History](#)

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The changing geopolitical dynamics in the Middle East have re-opened an old debate in Pakistan; should Pakistan re-examine its policy towards Israel? This is not the first time that Pakistanis are discussing this issue pertaining to the recognition of Israel, it has been done before during the Benazir and Musharraf modernization eras.

*The Prime Minister of Pakistan **Imran Khan** has made it clear that his country will not recognize Israel until there is a viable and independent Palestinian state that is acceptable to Palestinians. However, while there are some secular and liberal fractions in Pakistan who support the recognition of Israel as a state, a majority of the population is not in favour of recognizing the Zionist state of Israel.*

In 1896, **Theodor Herzl**, the founder of Zionism wrote a book “The Jewish State” in which he categorically mentioned that they had to drive out the indigenous population from Palestine. Even those who sympathize with the Jews due to the holocaust must understand that this book had been written a long time ago. Therefore, we must be mindful that the holocaust had nothing to do with Palestine.

This does not stop here. The first Prime Minister of Israel, **David Ben-Gurion**, told the UN that Israel would only accept the partition plan as a down payment for the rest of Palestine, and they will eventually occupy the entire Palestine.

Moreover, the current Prime Minister of Israel, Netanyahu, recently stated while losing the elections that ‘I will never allow the Palestinian state as far as I remain in power,’ and hence, he won the election. Thus, the illegal expansionist agenda of Israel has existed throughout history.

There are some people who believe that Pakistan should not view this issue through binaries, but from the broader perspective of the regional and major powers that are allies of Israel. The normalization of relations of a few Arab States with Israel and the recent secret meeting of MBS with Netanyahu at Neom on the Red Sea are considered to be major developments for pressuring Pakistan to recognize Israel.



These developments though should be viewed from the current geopolitical dynamics of the Middle East where the USA, Israel and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia all have a common interest – containing and isolating Iran while pressuring it to the maximum.

Pakistan is the only country in the Muslim world which possesses nuclear weapons and has an important geostrategic location, and it must adopt a balanced approach in its foreign policy tools.

Pakistan has a very clear stance just like its founding father **Quaid-e-Azam M. Ali Jinnah**. He said, 'Pakistan will never recognize Israel until Palestinians are not given their rights and there is no just settlement.'

Further, **Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal** was also among the earlier supporters and advocates of the Palestinians problems and he was even he was prepared to go to jail for any issue. Therefore, Pakistan being a Muslim country, should not accept Israel at any cost.

How can we accept Israel when our Muslim brothers and sisters are facing grave human rights violations at the hands of the apartheid state? Why should we accept Israel?

What have they done for world peace, human rights and particularly for Palestine? NOTHING! Instead, they have increased the misery and suffering of the Palestinians through basic human rights violations, including regular killings and bombings, increasing illegal settlements and expanding their evil expansionist agenda. Islam and justice are not separate, but intertwined, and the unjust authority of Israel is committing crimes against humanity.

Furthermore, if we view this issue through a moral perspective, we see that the issue is not about being a Muslim, Christian and or a Jew, but it's about the principles of justice and standing with the oppressed rather than the oppressor. Therefore, justice demands that Pakistan should not accept Israel until and unless the Palestinians are given rights of self-governance and autonomy.



The Prime Minister of Pakistan, **Imran Khan**, admires **Nelson Mandela** and quotes him as an example of how South Africa rid itself of the apartheid state. Those who suffered in South Africa say that the Palestinians are facing a worse situation.

Even Nelson Mandela made it clear that “Our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of Palestinians.”

The Palestine solidarity BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) movement is very strong against Israel and forcing it to change the model of the pariah state of the Zionist model.

This is what was adopted by the resistance in South Africa to dismantle it. Moreover, Albert Einstein who was Jewish himself opposed the creation of a Jewish state based on the Zionist model, and also refused to become the Prime Minister of Israel. In fact, he wrote in New York Times that he had nothing to do with the Zionists, and history will condemn all of those who sided with grave human rights violations.

There is no denying the fact that Israel is a colonial settler state that is increasing its illegal settlements on Palestinian land, which is completely in violation of the UNO resolutions. Until 1967, Israel had captured 78% of Palestinian land and their land has been shrinking with every passing day.

The world though is not taking any notice of this because the sole superpower, the USA, is standing behind Israel and considers it the only reliable partner in the entire Middle East. The so-called Muslim Leaders are also not doing anything for the plight of the poor Palestinians.

Instead of pressuring Israel collectively from the platform of OIC, the Arab states are joining the Israeli camp separately. Thus, OIC must be fully functional to raise the voice of the voiceless Palestinians and the reason for which it was established.

If we look into history, we see that efforts were made in 2002 as the Arab League Initiative. The Arabs had declared that they would recognize Israel as its pre-1967 borders, and if some adjustments were required, they could be reached through negotiations and the refugee problem be dealt with. At that time, the President of the US, Bush also praised the initiative, but Israel rejected the proposal and asked for conditions that were possible to implement. Similarly, PLO Yasir Arafat also accepted the US’ conditions of renouncing terrorism and recognizing Israel, and we all know what Israel did in response.

Both Palestine and Indian held Kashmir are in a parallel situation. India is adopting the playbook of Israel – military brutalism and now settler colonialism. What moral grounds will Pakistan have in condemning India in the case of Kashmir, if Pakistan accepts Israel? None!

It will just amount to hypocrisy and double standards. Justice cannot be denied for too long and this is what history teaches us. For instance, France occupied Algeria for almost 130 years, and subsequently the French were driven out by the Algerians. Thus, oppression and injustice do not remain permanently. This is high time that progressive voices become stronger and resistance movements regain momentum against apartheid state of Israel. Normalization of ties with Israel without any solution could further alienate Palestine and aggravate the instability in the Middle East. Hence, if there is acceptance of Israel, it must be on the basis of a mutual solution based on the 1967 borders, and that is only 42% of Palestine. If we cannot accept this, then shame on us!

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