

# Palestine: Why Context Is Important

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*The genocide in Gaza has entered its 15<sup>th</sup> month. More than 44,000 Palestinians have been killed so far by Israel. 17,000 of them are children [other estimates point to more than 100,000 children].*

*This is the largest number of children killed in a genocide over a 14-month period. A large number of women have also lost their lives.*

*Children and women constitute the majority of those killed. Palestinians in the West Bank are also victims. As a consequence of the genocide in Gaza, Lebanese, Yemenis, Iraqis and Syrians among others have also paid the price.*

Apart from bombs and bullets, which are the main weapons used by Israel, an increasing number of Palestinians have also died as a result of starvation. This is because food, medicines and other essentials are not readily available. This is deliberate Israeli policy aimed at eradicating Palestinians. Gaza has also been rendered uninhabitable. Most of the hospitals have been destroyed totally or damaged extensively. It is estimated that over a thousand doctors and nurses have been killed by the Israeli armed forces and other groups.

It is not just medical personnel that have been exterminated. Teachers and students in their hundreds have also been target of the Israeli brutality. Many journalists have also become victims. The destruction of schools and universities is part of the larger devastation of Gaza.

What explains this devastation and the annihilation of a significant segment of the Palestinian population? The only rational explanation is that Palestinians and Palestine are being ethnically cleansed. Ethnic cleansing is central to Israel's occupation of Palestine. It has been happening since 1948 when the state of Israel was established. In 1948 for instance, some 750,000 Palestinians were driven out from their villages and homes by armed Israeli groups. In subsequent years smaller numbers have also been evicted and expelled from their homeland.

It is not just expulsion and annihilation. Many Palestinians have also been jailed and tortured by the Israeli authorities.

Why is Israel so determined to wipe out the Palestinians? It is mainly because the Palestinians are a constant reminder to the Israelis and the world as a whole of who the original inhabitants of Palestine are. The very presence of the Palestinians exposes the truth about Israel. A huge portion of those who sought domicile in Palestine in 1920s and 30s were Jewish migrants from Eastern Europe. Those Jews who were indigenous to Palestine constituted only ten percent of the entire Palestinian population when the British colonial power formulated the Balfour Declaration of 1917. It was in the Balfour Declaration that

Britain which had mandatory powers over Palestine promised to establish an exclusive homeland for Jews in Palestine. The promise was a violation of the mandate. However, it encouraged European Jews to migrate to Palestine. This migration was also the result of the growth of Zionism in Europe. Zionism was espoused by a small segment of Jews and some Christians who saw the establishment of an exclusive Jewish state in Palestine as God's promise to the Jews. It is ironical that many of the Jewish leaders who subscribed to this notion of God's promise were themselves atheists!



Immigration of Jews to Palestine (From the Public Domain)

The indigenous Arab population in Palestine both the Muslim majority and the Christian minority, opposed Zionist migration and domicile from the beginning. There was a significant protest movement in 1929 and a mass uprising among the Arabs in 1936. However, up to the early 1930s Jewish domicile was small. What changed all this was the Nazi holocaust directed against the Jews in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. Mass sympathy for the Jews in Europe and North America reached unprecedented levels. The idea of an exclusive homeland for the Jews gained currency in the West.

It is against this background that one should view the move by a West-dominated UN to partition Palestine. 60 percent of the land was given to the Jews who constituted only 30 percent of the population of Palestine. The remaining 40 percent was given to the Arabs who comprised 70 percent of the population. Arab Muslims and Christians rejected the partition which was not only wrong from a demographic perspective but was also contrary to the UN Charter since no plebiscite was conducted among the populace to determine their

wishes. A war broke out between some Arab states and the new state of Israel. The former lost the war while the victor began the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians.

The violence employed by Israel was heavily criticized by some of the leading Jewish thinkers of the day. Among the notable voices opposed to Israeli injustices against the Palestinians were **Albert Einstein, Hannah Arendt and Martin Buber.**

But Israeli violence continued. In June 1967, Israel was involved in yet another war against Palestinians and Arab states. In this six-day war Israel triumphed and gained control over Gaza, West Bank and East Jerusalem. This meant that the remaining 22 percent of original Palestine was now also in their hands. Gaza was now transformed into the world's largest "open air prison."

This was the situation until 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023 when Hamas allegedly attacked Israeli Kibbutz at the border. More than a thousand people mainly Israelis died in the assault. Hamas and allied groups took many prisoners, a number of whom are still in captivity. The Hamas action has become the justification for Israeli genocide against Palestinians.



Photo released by the Israeli military from the events of October 7, 2023. (Photo: Israeli Defense Forces)

Given the way in which Israel has used the Hamas action of 7<sup>th</sup> October to justify its cruel, inhuman genocide one begins to wonder if October 7 itself was a False Flag Operation. This is why there has to be an independent international investigation into what really happened on 7<sup>th</sup> October.



Whatever the truth about 7<sup>th</sup> October, the more fundamental question is whether the world would be able to stop the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians. The citizens in those Western democracies that support Israel should apply much more pressure upon their governments to act against Israel and the US to end the genocide in Gaza and the killings in other parts of Palestine. Citizens in Arab and Muslim countries that still interact with Israel should also persuade their governments to terminate all relations with Israel. There are states that directly or indirectly supply oil and gas to the genocidal entity called Israel.

At the global level efforts to isolate Israel diplomatically should be intensified. An isolated Israel maybe more amenable to make fundamental changes to its behavior vis- a -vis the Palestinians and other peoples.

While external pressure is applied upon Israel, it must be remembered that there are significant domestic changes that are also taking place. More than half a million Israelis, many of them with knowledge and skills have already left Israel. Its economic base is shrinking and its ability to sustain growth has been compromised. The dichotomy between the religious and secular segment of society has become more pronounced. Extremist forces exploiting ethnic and religious sentiments have become more mainstream than ever before.

The interplay of these forces within a challenging economic milieu may produce actors who are more moderate and more inclined to realise the insane futility of trying to eradicate the indigenous Palestinian population. They may then learn the importance of treating Palestinians as equals with similar rights and freedoms as their own people.

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*Featured image: Palestinians line up to fetch some water in a refugee camp in Gaza. (Photo: Mahmoud Ajjour, The Palestine Chronicle)*

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