

Palestine's West Bank: Fifty Years of Immoral Occupation

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Today, the Israeli occupation of the West Bank has reached the milestone of 50 years that will be recalled in shame.

Fifty years that have dehumanized both the occupier and the occupied; years of failing to muster the courage to right the wrong.

Fifty years that bred nothing but hatred and contempt for the other; years of illusions trying to deny the other the right to a home of their own.

Fifty years of yearning for peace only to be crushed time and again; years of submission to hopelessness and despair.

Fifty years of pessimism, paralysis, and abdication of responsibility; years of fearing to grasp the only solution but choosing instead to hold onto self-delusion.



A protester holds a placard as she stands next to Israeli soldiers during a protest against Israeli settlements in Beit Fajjar town south of the West Bank city of Bethlehem December 27, 2014. REUTERS/ Mussa Qawasma

Fifty years of disingenuous engagement with one another for the worthiest cause of peace; years of mutual victimization and finding comfort in self-pity and stolen dreams.

Fifty years of occupation that transcends the pale of human decency, subjecting the Palestinians to dejection and despair; years of colonization, home demolitions, terrifying night raids, uprooting of olive trees; years of usurping Palestinian land, robbing them of their dream to be independent and free.

Fifty years of inflicting pain and anguish that spared but a few; years of constant fear of administrative detention and incarceration, with thousands of political prisoners languishing in jails; years of being deprived of their basic rights, not knowing what tomorrow will bring; years of outcry of Palestinian youth, born and reared under occupation with no hope and no prospect of being unshackled from the chains of dishonor and despair.

For fifty years, Israel denied the Palestinians self-determination, justifying it in the name of national security—but nothing threatens its security more than the continuation of the occupation. Breaching the moral law and flouting the Palestinians' human rights only nurtures another generation who live to resent, live to hate, and live to harm, for there is nothing left for them to lose.

For many Israelis, fifty years of occupation seems to pass as if it were normal, conditions to which they have simply become accustomed—never mind that moral erosion has infected the Israelis' social fabric, defying the moral principle on which the state was erected.

They have been led astray by corrupted leaders with no courage of conviction to change direction, exempting themselves of the moral obligation to be just and fair. They have become indifferent and complacent, blind to the light, with little concern about where Israel will be in ten or fifteen years if they do not end the inhumane occupation.

Israel has spent fifty years preparing its youth for the next violent battle, injecting the poison of hatred into their veins, and viewing the Palestinians as objects that can be dispossessed without any sense of moral culpability.



To end the occupation, the Palestinians must do their share. Years of misguidance, division, and violent extremism, while remaining bent on destroying Israel and inciting the people to violence, was nothing but self-defeating.

Plagued by factionalism and blind rivalry, the Palestinians missed one opportunity after another to reach out for peace, choosing instead to fight hopelessly unwinnable wars, leaving them shattered yet still holding onto the illusion they can prevail.

Palestinian leaders have spent fifty years squandering resources for personal gains, guarding their power while riding on the backs of the poor and despondent. They have

victimized one generation after another, robbing them of a promising future, alienating and leaving them languishing in the darkness of their despair, rather than defying the Israelis by building a free, independent, and flourishing country in which they can take pride.

When will this all end? How many more children must die for an elusive goal that defies reality and common sense? Those Israelis and Palestinians who believe in a shared destiny must never agree to cooperate with the corrupt leaders who are oblivious of how ominous the future will be if there is no change.

Israeli leaders must end the occupation and stop reveling in the lies of their own creation. It is time to recognize that the occupation is an albatross choking every Israeli ever so slowly, sapping their spirit, corrupting their soul, and stripping Israel and the Jews the world over of the values of what is right, what is just, and what is caring—the pillars of their very survival.

I call on every man and woman of conscience to bring the madness of this debilitating conflict to an end. No Israeli or Palestinian child should die in another violent conflict between the two sides that will change nothing but bring more suffering, despondency, bloodshed, and sorrow.

As the late **President Kennedy** said in the 1960s,

“[the] people expect more from us than cries of indignation and attack. The times are too grave, the challenge too urgent, and the stakes too high...”

It is time for both sides to rise and demand that their leaders compromise and come to terms with a reality that neither can change, and seek a just and fair solution that must bring an end to the occupation.

If the Israelis and Palestinians continue to hate, resent, and kill each other, they will be consumed by the land they are fighting for. But if they learn to live in harmony and peace, together they will make the land exude milk and honey, ushering in a renaissance the likes of which has never been seen before.

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