

For Palestinians: No Choice but to Speak Truth to Power

In Gaza Israel has so far killed over 200 and injured more than 1,400 people.

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Pain mixed with hope; defiance in the face of unimaginable odds; celebrities show [solidarity](#) with Palestine; large [protests](#) held in solidarity with Palestinians around the world; Palestinians strike across all of occupied Palestine from the river to the sea; intifada everywhere; a sea change in public perceptions of Palestine and Israel, so much so that NPR this morning called Hamas a “Nationalist Palestinian” movement, instead of the usual “terrorist” designation.

Designations in the media matter enormously. This is the fourth destructive [Israeli war](#) on the Gaza Strip since December 27, 2008 (lasting 22 days). [Distorted takes](#) on Israel’s brutal attacks on Gaza, especially by public officials and journalists, are still rampant, echoing the long-standing hasbara of the apartheid Israeli state and the political alliances Israel has forged in the West since the Nakba:

CNN reporter Robyn Curnow asked **Mohammed El-Kurd**, a Palestinian poet living in his Sheikh Jarrah home in Jerusalem if he supported “violent protests in favor of his family”? **Edward “Ned” Price**, an American political advisor and a former intelligence officer serving as the spokesman for the U.S. Department of State, refused to condemn the killing of Palestinian children on the basis that he did not have “enough information about events on the ground.” **Dominic Raab**, the United Kingdom’s Secretary of Foreign Affairs who had been silent for months when Israeli settlers brutalized families in Sheikh Jarrah, condemned “the firing of rockets at Jerusalem and locations within Israel. The ongoing violence in Jerusalem and Gaza must stop.”

Canadian **Prime Minister Justin Trudeau** used “some of his favorite buzz words: ‘concern,’ ‘sadness,’ and ‘empathy,’ while answering a question from New Democratic Party (NDP) leader **Jagmeet Singh** about the situation in Palestine, following with unwavering support for “Israel’s right to defend itself.” The New York Times’ Isabel Kershner, ran a series of articles with headlines including “Arab-Jewish Coexistence in Israel Suddenly Ruptured,” and “Israeli-Palestinian hostilities explode, with shocking communal violence.”

Two concepts/memes persist: One is Israel's so-called "right" to exist as a Jewish state and thus defend itself with "violence" if need be (and concomitantly is licensed to march every Palestinian who resists to prison or death), and another is that Palestinian armed struggle for liberation is "terror" activity.

The first has a long history of Zionist deception and a spectacular public relations campaign worldwide using a Jewish narrative and Jewish influence wherever it could be applied. Thus the conflation we see today between Zionism and Judaism.

The confusion is difficult to erase even as Jews worldwide are increasingly speaking against Israel's apartheid and violence in Gaza—[See](#) my blog post titled "Jews" vs. "Jewish People"—which not to use and why. Consider a news item in the Independent today about a letter by Google Jewish employees known as 'Jewish Diaspora in Tech' urging Google not to conflate Israel with Jewish people, adding that 'anti-Zionism is not antisemitism'. **In Gaza Israel has so far killed over 200 and injured more than 1,400 people.** The letter says in part:

We ask Google leadership to make a company-wide statement recognising the violence in Palestine and Israel, which must include direct recognition of the harm done to Palestinians by Israeli military and gang violence," the employees wrote in a version of the letter that has been made public.

While both Israelis and Palestinians have been harmed and killed in the ongoing conflict, the Jewish employees said that ignoring the deadly attacks faced by Palestinians erased the company's Palestinian coworkers.

I am happy about this statement, of course, although I don't understand what the identity 'Jewish Diaspora in Tech' is meant to signify. Are they religious and is this a spiritual/mythical designation or a nationalist one? The very name of the group, in my opinion, adds to the confusion of the terrible situation in Palestine since the Nakba.

The following quotation by **Menachem Ussishkin**, a Russian-born Zionist leader and head of the Jewish National Fund, in a speech at the 7th World Zionist Congress, Petrograd, May 1917, sums up how Zionism has weaponized the spiritual concept of "Diaspora Jews" against Palestinians:

Zionism is the solution of the Jewish question. None of us is thinking that all Jewish people must relocate to Palestine, at least in the foreseeable future. This is absolutely unnecessary. What IS necessary, and what our goal is—is creation of a national-territorial center for all Jewish people in the world, a national mother country for our national colonies worldwide.

Such center is being founded and keeps being strengthened by the forces of Diaspora. Diaspora is very important to us. On the other hand, the scattered bits and pieces of Jewry only then can be said to lead a healthy life, when they are nourished by the life juices of the Mother Country. Only through the unbreakable bond between the Mother Country and its colonies, through its organic symbiosis, we envision the healing of the Jewish nation, the solution for the Jewish people. Thus the work in Palestine and the work in Diaspora organically intertwine and complement one another.

Similarly, Vincent Fean, Chair of trustees, Balfour Project asks a very good question of Israeli

leaders in an article in Arab Digest titled: Israel-Palestine: in search of the rule of law, May 18, 2021, but goes on elsewhere to refer to Israel's "right" to the "Holy land."

His question is: "Is your vision peace with equality, or is 'peace' for you the absence of Palestinian resistance to permanent Israeli control, amounting to oppression?"

Unfortunately, in his [statement](#) for the Balfour Project's upcoming Conference on Jerusalem, Fean speaks of how "the Jewish people exercised their right to self-determination in the Holy Land more than 70 years ago with British help."

Well, the "Jewish people" have no "right" to Palestine, which he euphemistically calls the Holy Land; Palestine's indigenous inhabitants do, whatever religion they may follow. This language/idea that claims "both sides have rights in Palestine" is the Zionist narrative that we are trying to debunk.

The second persistent hasbara claim is that Palestinians, an occupied people, do not have a right to armed resistance.

But as Stanley Cohen [says](#) in [Palestinians Have a Legal Right to Armed Struggle](#):

Long ago, it was settled that resistance and even armed struggle against a colonial occupation force is not just recognised under international law but specifically endorsed... Though Israel has tried, time and time again, to recast the unambiguous intent of this precise resolution—and thus place its now half-century-long occupation in the West Bank and Gaza beyond its application—it is an effort worn thin to the point of palpable illusion by the exacting language of the declaration itself. In relevant part, section 21 of the resolution strongly condemned "the expansionist activities of Israel in the Middle East and the continual bombing of Palestinian civilians, which constitute a serious obstacle to the realization of the self-determination and independence of the Palestinian people" ... Never ones to hesitate in rewriting history, long before the establishment of the United Nations, European Zionists deemed themselves to be an occupied people as they emigrated to Palestine—a land to which any historical connection they had had long since passed through a largely voluntary transit.

Indeed, a full 50 years before the UN spoke of the right of armed struggle as a vehicle of indigenous liberation, European Zionists illegally co-opted the concept as the Irgun, Lehi and other terrorist groups undertook a decade's long reign of deadly mayhem. ... Self-determination is a difficult, costly march for the occupied. In Palestine, no matter what the weapon of choice—whether voice, pen or gun—there is a steep price to be paid for its use.

Today, "speaking truth to power" has become very much a popular mantra of resistance in neoliberal circles and societies. In Palestine, however, for the occupied and oppressed, it is an all-but-certain path to prison or death. Yet, for generations of Palestinians stripped of the very breath that resonates with the feeling of freedom, history teaches there is simply no other choice.

Silence is surrender. To be silent is to betray all those who have come before and all those yet to follow.

And as Stanley Cohen also says: "It's time for Israel to accept that as an occupied people, Palestinians have a right to resist—in every way possible."

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Featured image: Head band of figure in the poster says "Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades" (Source: Rima Najjar)

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