

The Illegal Occupation of Palestine: UN Must Take a Leaf From the Global Grassroots BDS Movement

By [Rima Najjar](#)

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Among ongoing outrageous actions and in defiance of international law, Israel's HabayitHayehudi party has just [approved](#) a plan for annexing the remaining occupied Palestinian territory "while either facilitating the exit of Palestinian residents or allowing them to remain but without voting rights."

This is by no means a surprising outcome, nor is it simply a reflection of so-called right-wing or extremist factions in this Israeli government. It is an explicit articulation of the unconscionable Zionist supremacy ideology on which the Jewish state is founded.

Israel now is in control of all historic Palestine. It is armed to the teeth, including with [nuclear](#) weapons, because the only way it can "exist" as a Jewish state is by continuing to dispossess, oppress and discriminate against Palestinians—those who are still managing to hold on to their property, pushing them into smaller and smaller enclaves or displacing them within Israel, while keeping six million [refugees](#) and exiles out and at the same time bringing in Jewish "settlers" to "colonize" Palestine.

Public debate on Israel today is finally opening issues that go to the heart of Israel's legitimacy, its Zionist ideology and constitution as a Jewish state and, by extension, issues that are central to Palestine's liberation.

Additionally, there is a whole body of international law meant to check and regulate State criminal activity such as that exhibited by Israel, whose violations of such laws make for a long [list](#).

And yet, when it comes to the Jewish state, the U.S. and its allies continue to find it impossible to hold Israel accountable on the basis of the laws they themselves have enacted.

Not many people know that enforcing international humanitarian law is enshrined in section 3.6.3.1 of the U.S. Department of Defense Law of War Manual. It is called the "golden rule" principle: Do unto others as you would have done to you. "It is not necessarily relevant who violates the law (friend or foe) or what specific provision is violated," [writes](#) Tripp Zanetis. "Any violation undermines international adherence to the law and this directly impacts the safety and wellbeing of our military forces."

The United Nations was [formed](#) after WWII as an inter-governmental organization to resolve

international conflicts, “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war,” “to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights,” “to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors,” “to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest.”

But unfortunately, under the banner of peace, the UN has had a hand in creating injustice and conflict, because essentially it is run as a political organization. A [case](#) in point is Israel:

The common representation of Israel’s birth is that the UN created Israel, that the world was in favor of this move, and that the US governmental establishment supported it. All these assumptions are demonstrably incorrect.

In reality, while the UN General Assembly recommended the creation of a Jewish state in part of Palestine, that recommendation was non-binding and never implemented by the Security Council.

Second, the General Assembly passed that recommendation only after Israel proponents threatened and bribed numerous countries in order to gain a required two-thirds of votes.

After WWII, when more and more countries were decolonized (the Jewish colonization of Palestine is the only active colonization remaining in the world today), 80 former colonies joined the UN (see [The United Nations and Decolonization](#)), reshaping it. However, the structure of power in the UN works against democratization. As permanent members of the Security Council, China, France, Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States use the veto power to maintain their foreign policy interests, either singly or collectively, and they control the international order.

Here is a brief outline of how the United States has used its [veto](#) power:

The United States did not exercise its first veto until 1970, on a resolution regarding Southern Rhodesia, which is present-day Zimbabwe.

Since then, it has used its veto 79 times, with more than 40 related to issues in the Middle East.

The majority have been resolutions that have criticised the Israeli government or failed to condemn armed Palestinian factions in the same language as that being used for Israel.

It used its last veto to block a resolution that would term Israeli settlement activity in Palestinian territory “illegal” and demand a halt to all such actions.

The five major powers were granted permanent membership in the UN Security Council after WWII because they were “major powers among victorious allies and predominant actors in international relations. They were active in the negotiations that led to the adoption of the UN Charter which established the organization.” See [On what basis was Security Council permanent membership granted?](#)). Since that time, it has been business as usual (i.e. the spoils go to the victors), despite the resounding words of the UN Charter.

These countries also significantly contribute financially to the UN system, with the US, as the

only superpower, leading the way. To reform this system, you need nothing less than a revolution.

Or you can try to [join](#) it, as Japan aspires to do:

Unlike China, Japan is not a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council and has long resented paying much more for the U.N.'s upkeep than China and Russia, despite the fact China and Russia enjoy far more sway as a result of their permanent member status and accompanying veto power. (Adding to the sting for Japan is the fact that Beijing has been the single biggest opponent of a permanent Security Council seat for its regional rival.)

In the meantime, China's [proposed](#) 2017 four-point plan on Palestine/Israel with a focus on the economic is "undermining Palestinian efforts to change the status quo....It is not clear yet, though, whether this is "a major departure along a new track that challenges US hegemony and European passivity? Or is China simply pursuing its own economic interests in the guise of peacemaker?"

It is true that what the UN and its subsidiary agencies (UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNRWA and UNSCOP, to name a few) have "[resolved](#)" and published on Israel/Palestine since the UN General Assembly Resolution on the Partition of Palestine (1947)—the Conciliation, Status of Jerusalem and Right to Return (1948), the Permanent International Regime for Jerusalem (1949), the Security Council resolutions on principles of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East (1967, 1973), etc.—fills volumes.

But these are all currently worthless, as witness the fate of the [report](#) commissioned by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) that concludes Israel practices an apartheid regime that oppresses and dominates the Palestinian people as a whole. The decision by the UN Secretary General to remove this report "points to the criminalization of the United Nations."

It is more than high time for the UN to take a leaf from the global grassroots movement of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) of Israel and enforce these resolutions and reports through sanctions against Israel.

Rima Najjar is a Palestinian whose father's side of the family comes from the forcibly depopulated village of Lifta on the western outskirts of Jerusalem. She is an activist, researcher and retired professor of English literature, Al-Quds University, occupied West Bank.

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