

Building Global Palestine Solidarity

Victory of Leeds Palestine Solidarity Students: La Lucha Continua

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In late November 2018, students, led by the Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC) at the University of Leeds, immediately mobilized to demonstrate as soon as they found out that Zionist war propagandist, Mark Regev, was visiting campus to speak. Regev has had an illustrious career in advocacy for Israeli escalation of ethnic cleansing, house demolitions, and 'Israel Defense Forces' (IDF) murderous wars against the Palestinians, especially in Gaza in recent years.

There were a sizable number of students, there was potency of our loud vocal chords disruptively shouting incessantly, and of our specific chants, speeches, and indictments or Zionist terror and racism that Regev embodies. The amalgamation of our chants, stories by dispossessed Palestinians, drumming and dance of unshakeable resistance of our peaceful, non-violent protest – all figuratively rocked the building where Mark Regev was speaking, and haunted him throughout his visit, and throughout whatever settler-colonial genocidal rhetoric he was vomiting anyways.

But it is pivotal to understand why Regev was suddenly parachuted to the University of Leeds. Just days before his visit, the University of Leeds became the first university in the UK to divest from Israeli apartheid: an undoubtedly huge victory to celebrate.

What has been happening with regard to global Palestinian solidarity is not insignificant by any stretch of the imagination. Now global in scope and impact, the Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign against Israel has generated an awareness of the 'wretched of the earth' conditions of Palestinians under Zionist occupation. In short, for the first time, our side, the side of justice and liberation from settler colonialism – with its effective BDS campaign – can no longer be silenced by the global Zionist machinery of propaganda.

A sober, even cautiously optimistic, analysis of the current situation does not in any way demonstrate indifference to the fact that Israeli terror has continued unabated for more than a decade against Palestinians, Lebanese, and other Arabs. But there are several factors why Israel's legitimacy is increasingly only limited to Washington, Riyadh, Abu Dhabi, and Cairo.

BDS and the international Palestine solidarity campaign have been consistently highlighting the sheer inhumane conditions that Palestinians undergo under Zionist occupation, and the gratuitous wars Israel launches whenever it fancies. This campaign, similar to that waged as part of the international solidarity movement against the white minority Apartheid regime in South Africa, compelled international actors, businesses, and ultimately states to halt all forms of engagement with such a racist regime – though, as expected the US and Israel remained the last steadfast supporters of the Apartheid regime.

However, it's important to remember that the African National Congress (ANC) and the United Democratic Front (UDF), as well as other broad layers of the South African anti-apartheid struggle, did have one significant advantage: their oppressors, the small minority of white South Africans, never really had any intention of exterminating the local black population. Even if they wanted to, it would have been tough considering the black population's absolute majority.

Rather, the intention was to ruthlessly exploit them, keep them ghettoized in bantustans, and maintain them in conditions of enslavement and subordination to service a life of privilege for South African whites.

South Africa was one form of settler colonialism, by first the Dutch, and then the British. The Zionist one in Palestine unfolds a bit differently. Israeli Jews never recognized even the presence of any indigenous Palestinian Arabs in the land they were coming to conquer, and if some were inconveniently there – they were to be 'transferred,' i.e., ethnically cleansed. Zionists who emigrated to Palestine have had every intention to seize all of its land and to live completely separate from what Israeli officials have called 'vermin' and 'cockroaches,' i.e. Palestinian Arabs.

It is precisely for this reason that Israel feels no compunction in criminally pounding Gaza repeatedly over the past few years, or Lebanon in 2006. *Zionist settlers, unlike South African whites, have absolutely no need for Palestinians to exist as human beings – and therefore would relish the idea of total ethnic cleansing or even genocide – as of course other settler-colonial states (such as the US) have done.*

In such abysmal conditions on the ground in occupied Palestine, how can we continue to dream and give hope to our Palestinian sisters and brothers? The first factor is that the global Palestine solidarity movement has never been stronger, including its central component of BDS. It is becoming increasingly difficult for Western liberals who for many years have had a soft spot for 'democratic, civilized' Israel to ignore how fanatically rightwing *both* the Israeli government and society have become. Hence, the morality of blindly supporting such a state in whatever murderous campaign it unleashes has finally shaken the conscience of many who were unflinching supporters of Israel in the past. This includes an increasing number of global Jewry. Norman Finkelstein documents this significant shift in his, *"This Time We Went Too Far: Truth and Consequences in the Invasion of Gaza."*

But there's a second reason why Zionist paranoia-schizophrenia is reaching new levels. It began in 2006 when Israel invaded Lebanon, thinking the IDF would just ravage the place and eliminate Hezbollah as if it's some little isolated ant colony. The notion that Hezbollah is some alien, separate entity that can be isolated from the wider population of Southern Lebanon was shown to be demonstrably false, and very painful for the Zionist invaders. The impact on Israelis was not just a military one, but, more importantly, a deeply psychological one. Despite inflicting horrendous levels of civilian and infrastructural damage to Lebanon, Lebanese resistance fighters made Israeli soldiers flee in desperation for their lives, retreating back toward the Israeli side of the border.

This was unprecedented. The Arabs had been led to believe just one story, based on the indoctrination they had been subject to by their respective cowardly autocrats who, post-1967, always out-competed each other in servility to Zionism and Western hegemony: the Zionist entity was invincible, and had crushed our multiple armies in every war – hence,

resistance is futile.



Source: Occupy Pal TV

Well, a people's resistance movement in Lebanon just proved the opposite in 2006. And despite the blockade and bombardment of Gaza, Gazans have demonstrated what can only be called a prophetic heroism: their resistance remains as steadfast as ever, despite unspeakable suffering.

It is, nevertheless, important to take stock of wider geopolitical shifts, dangers, and realignments taking place that will certainly impact the Palestinian struggle for liberation.

Hence, how can we evaluate the ongoing repression and resistance in Palestine in light of broader transformations taking place regionally and globally. These larger issues will necessarily confront those striving against the cruelties and barbarism against Palestinians, Kashmiris, the Rohingyas, blacks and immigrants in the US - the list goes on and on.

At the heart of this discussion is ascertaining whether we truly carry the capacity to break through the rigid parameters of the hegemonic social and political imaginaries that have sustained a world order marked by savage coloniality - even as the West is confronting a welcome development for the rest of the world: the Wests' 'de-centering.' In brief, can we dispel with impoverished discourses of the 'geo-culture' of the last few barbaric Eurocentric centuries, the ones that have been responsible for the current oppressive impasse from Palestine to Brazil, and broaden our imaginary potential to conceive of meaningful decolonial alternatives.

The Palestine solidarity movement, and the global justice and anti-war movement generally, need not shy away from beginning to map out the coordinates of what counter-hegemonic tendencies and forces deserve our unconditional solidarity, our not uncritical, but certainly comradely, support. How can our struggles forge an innovative non-Eurocentric grammar of politics, which renders both the essential geopolitical analysis, but more fundamentally, interrogates the epistemological foundations of recurring patterns of violent hierarchies and

power relations that mark ongoing global coloniality.

Returning to Palestine and the Middle East, how can we obtain a serious geopolitical assessment, so that there is greater clarity for a trajectory of ongoing and future resistance?

What can we conclude from what we have been observing in Palestine and the region? Two essential points stand out. One is that the conventional Westphalian-colonial state system has seen its most disastrous results in the Middle East. The maddeningly constructed colonial boundaries, the erection of pliant Arab autocracies, and most catastrophically of all, the planting of the settler-colonial state of Israel to be the linchpin of Western hegemony in the region – is the artificial political landscape that was established in the region in the early 20th century, intended for the sole purpose to service Western hegemony. Western interventions and wars, particularly by Washington, have turned a horrible situation into an ongoing nightmare of suffering, from Gaza to the Yemen.

The second point may be the most analytically instructive to understand the current political predicament we confront. Three pivotal moments of the new century, i.e., the 2003 US invasion and occupation of Iraq, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 2006, and the Saudi war against the Yemen in 2015, epitomize, despite the enormous human toll that these wars of unadulterated aggression have taken, the growing *weakness* of Imperial-Zionist control over the Middle East, not its strength.

These are not the decisions of sober ‘adults in the room’ enacting realpolitik, as bad enough as that has been in the past. We have now entered the phase where the emperor can see clearly that he has no clothes, and he and his minions (Israel, the House of Saud, the UAE, Egypt) will go to any length to reverse their declining fortunes. There is no other way possible to explain how in our ‘modern, civilized, human rights’ age, that the routine daily slaughter of Yemenis and Gazans have become normalized and the ‘international community’ can’t lift a finger to stop it – and of course several Western countries are directly complicit in these festivals of slaughter relished by the House of Saud and its Zionist soulmates.

What these bringing of ‘hell on earth’ policies of these reactionary regimes really signify are their last gasps to maintain control, somehow, anyway, even by annihilation. They are all ‘wounded tigers’ whose heyday of domination is now long past.

This ‘wounded tiger’ syndrome afflicts the US, the House of Saud, and the Zionist state. They all know that they have lost any moral legitimacy they might have deceived some sections of global opinion to grant them in the past. For the US, it’s the multiple invasions, drone attacks, torture camps and Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib imprisonment photos – culminating in an openly racist authoritarian psychopath elected as leader of the ‘free world’. For Israel, it’s the repeated pounding of a defenseless, starving population of Gaza. The world is witnessing Israel – its mouthpiece being the murderous charlatan, Bibi Netanyahu – displaying absolute indifference to any attempt to call out its brazen and continuous violation of virtually every tenet of international humanitarian law, not to mention war crimes that by now have been normalized. And for Saudi Arabia, it has been the fact that the wealthiest country in the Arab world has now been pulverizing the poorest one, i.e. Yemen, causing one of the most grotesque human tragedies of our time. The result is an epidemic of cholera outbreak and mass starvation. Nevertheless, though the US-supported UAE-Saudi butchery of the Yemenis has been continuing for three years, it has taken the reckless behavior of Clown Prince ‘Bone Saw’ Salman (or MBS) to finally raise

some eyebrows. MBS propagandists in love with the 'reformer' have shifting gears to seeing him as unreasonably lashing out at his royal competitors and even mild critics, in gruesome ways that are now raising serious doubts in Washington about his reliability, stability, predictability.

At this point in time, it is so patently obvious which forces of reaction want to hinder the possibility of any decolonial and counterhegemonic possibilities of resistance and liberation. On the one hand, global Zionism is ludicrously centering campaigns of social justice everywhere within the framework of their pernicious Islamophobia. This is why Iran/Muslims/Middle Easterners can be connected to Central American immigrants, collaboration with 'rogue' states like Venezuela, etc.

But his Islamophobia has now become the central plank of American permanent war doctrine. Parting from more quotidian definitions and explanations of the term, Islamophobia is fundamentally about restricting the sovereignty, autonomy, and political agency of the larger 'Islamicate': Muslim-influenced areas stretching from Java to Mindanao, Southern Thailand, Java, Tashkent, Palermo, Timbuktu, Granada, to Chicago, Toronto, Leeds, and so on. Islamophobia at the present juncture is the intolerance for how transnational Muslims really are and always have been. There is no 'West' - a permanently shifting social construction over time and space - that has ever been without Islam.

Such Islamophobia only accepts 'good Muslims,' kept on permanent probation, who demonstrate a 'moderation' that enables and facilitates all of the contours of ongoing global imperial penetration of Islamicate societies and the Global South. .

In the past, 'peripheral' (peripheral to the Middle East) nations like Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey were useful imperial satraps for this hegemonic project that kept Empire and Zionism on top, with its petro-Arab quislings at their service.

But Iran stopped playing that game since its Islamic Revolution of 1979, and Turkey and Pakistan find themselves in very different geopolitical alignments, though still unclear, from the very clearly defined ones of the Cold War.

Not just in Palestine or in Kashmir, but throughout Muslimistan, there is undoubtedly a central question that haunts the Islamicate every minute of our lives: how can one of the one of most venal, satanic even, regimes on the planet be the 'Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques,' and what does this say about the 'state of the *ummah* (community of global Muslims),' and more importantly, the planetary colonial political economy whose 'great powers' prop up this dismal state of affairs.

It must be stated emphatically: colonialism, Zionism, and the House of Saud - all working in tandem of course - have been the biggest plagues unto Islamicate societies in the modern period. All of them remain. Any decolonial possibilities, any genuine pluriversality, and any response from Muslim and the social majorities of all faiths under conditions of neo-colonialism, must begin with the demand for autonomy and sovereignty for their societies. Muslims must recognize that no significant rupture in the political grammar of their tripartite gang of oppressors will occur without completely annihilating all three.



Coming back to our powerful protest against the bloodthirsty Mark Regev (image on the left) at the University of Leeds, we insisted to remind everyone that Palestine remains a symbol of resistance of the oppressed for liberation everywhere. We rejected the common infantile refrain of Zionists that the Palestine solidarity movement is ‘singling out Israel’ – since, roughly, a hundred percent of us also firmly believe the tyranny of the House of Saud and other Arab autocracies who have enabled Zionist occupation, along with Empire – should also be targeted for their support for Zionist occupation and slaughter, as well as their own crimes and wars.

We had no confusion in making these linkages between movements of the oppressed (for some reason, only Zionists get confused by it – and then ask us why we are confused by it!). Within the domain of Islamicate, it is becoming abundantly clear that *the majority of the global ummah* (community of Believers) is making the connections, and is enraged about the very obvious political degeneration and violence in front of their very eyes. The issue of Zionist brutality against the Palestinians was fairly well understood. But only recently has much of the Muslim world discovered the *extent* to which the House of Saud (we especially have MBS to thank for this), along with its friends in Abu Dhabi and Cairo (and the battalions of Blackwater-style private mercenaries they’ve hired) – have collaborated to ensure Imperial-Zionist supremacy over the region.

There is no doubt that the ‘masters of the universe’ and their comprador elites in the Muslim world are taking cognizance of this mass righteous rage by ordinary Muslims as well as by the social majorities of the Global South. That is precisely why regimes like the Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Egypt are becoming more ruthless in their repression and atrocities – in order to crush the rumblings of resistance to tyranny emerging everywhere.

The purpose of these client petro-monarchies of the Gulf, especially Saudi Arabia, has always been to sustain the fundamentally exploitative, dictatorial, and neo-colonial relationship under which ordinary Muslims and others from the Global South are coerced to live, somehow survive, or most likely, suffer painful deaths.

Such an assessment would make any decent human be averse to being anywhere near the House of Saud or the House of Zionism. If I was not a Muslim, I know that I would certainly not think twice about ever stepping foot inside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabi unless it was to assist a movement likely to succeed in its overthrow! We can – and should – address the important question of the mandatory pilgrimage for Muslims, the *Hajj*, and what possibilities exist to boycott, occupy, internationalize the Holy sites, etc. – somehow avoiding a penny going to the coffers of the dungeon chambers of the House of Saud. More important and immediately, how do we devise strategies to protect and preserve its sanctity from the pharaohs that run the place!

Of course, the Transcendent rarely has good endings for pharaohs anyways! That should infuse some hope in our ongoing struggles and resistance to the aforementioned pillars of violent domination in the Middle East.

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