

What Jordan's Prince Hassan Fails to Recognize: Palestinian Struggle Is an Advance Guard of the Arab Liberation Movement

It's time for a fresh start for Palestine, as Prince Hassan says, but a truly fresh start, not a variant mutation of the toxic past

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It's déjà vu time for Palestine; we have lived through the same fiasco before only to get bogged down in the Oslo poisoned swamp.

*Déjà vu washed over me as I read a letter by **Prince Hassan bin Talal** of Jordan addressing Israelis, [published](#) in Yedioth Ahronoth (Feb 26, 2021), the largest Israeli newspaper (Hebrew). It is a letter clearly written within the “one-homeland-two-state” initiative framework.*

The rhetoric of Prince Hassan's letter includes references to climate change, weapons of mass destruction (meaning nuclear), global security (meaning terrorism) and Covid19, all of which, other than Israel's own security, were not in the political lingo or horizon of the [Oslo Accords](#) (ratified in 1993 and 1995). But the outline of the plot to draw Palestinians away from a struggle for liberation is much the same. In historian Nur Masalha's [analysis](#), it is even worse:

“One homeland—two states”, a solution that seeks to legitimize Zionism in all of Palestine, is a discourse much worse than the traditional “two-state solution” and the solution to full Palestinian sovereignty in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This initiative can only strengthen the Israeli grip on the West Bank and reinforce reactionary Arab powers (within the Palestinians and in the Arab world) that seek normalization with Israel.

Following is an excerpt of the letter [translated from an Arabic translation of the Hebrew. In the Arabic translation of the letter on which I am basing this blog post, every reference Prince Hassan makes to Israel is, oddly, in quotes.]

Jordan faces a triple threat: increased number of refugees it hosts, budget cuts, and the need to support a vulnerable population. The Corona epidemic has only worsened the situation. Of course, we are not alone in this campaign.

Corona poses a threat to health and the economy in every country... This is perhaps the greatest test of solidarity and compassion the world has ever known. Within such a reality, cooperation between all parties to revive our region is essential.

... The main point is that no country in the Middle East can solve its problems on its own. We must work together to advance our common regional goals. The alternative is a reality in which competing countries are rushing to maximize domestic consumption toward unlimited resource depletion. This is a tragedy that will hurt everyone. Water cooperation in a low-potable water region would be a good place to start.

We can take inspiration from the coal and steel community in Europe or the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. It is encouraging to see that despite the conflicts between the countries of Southeast Asia, and despite the great and varied diversity of political systems, these countries are cooperating in the face of very few common trade challenges. This comes at a time when trade between Arab countries represents less than ten percent of its total commercial activity.

Our region is characterized by a mixture of oil and human resources that can help build pluralistic and modern societies, encourage political and economic reforms, and reduce inequality. We must work to increase the stability of the countries of the region—including the State of Palestine, which will be present alongside “Israel” in the framework of an arrangement based on a two-state solution, political affiliation and close economic cooperation. Such a political settlement must involve the division of Jerusalem; taking into account the Abrahamic religions (Islam and Judaism), maintaining the security and integrity of Al-Aqsa Mosque, and rejuvenating the Palestinian leadership to sit in Jerusalem—the capital of “Israel” and Palestine—will complete the bilateral parties. Israel and the Arab countries that are ready for this could really start the process. Other countries in the region, including Turkey and Iran, could join in due course. Time for a fresh start.

In a short introduction to the letter, the Israeli reporter Smadar Perry gushes with assurances to the Israeli reader that “Prince Hassan is keen to keep his door open to Israelis.”

Perry also assures his Israeli readers that “Senior officials in Amman with whom I spoke are convinced that Prince Hassan would not have started publishing an article he wrote in an Israeli newspaper without a green light from King Abdullah himself.”

These are mostly people he has known from the start of the peace process in which he participated deeply on the side of King Hussein ... Recently, there was a secret meeting between him and a group of Israelis in key positions who did not know him personally, and most of them had never visited Jordan. Two weeks later, the prince had another conversation through Zoom with five other Israelis known to the kingdom on the topic: How can the peace process be strengthened? ... In the message he sends to readers in “Israel” through these pages, he tries to open a new window, to cautiously break the deadlock in the relations between the two countries.

The letter attempts to engage Israelis as if they have agency to act, assuming they are rational, decent human beings who are capable of appreciating global economic, climate and security forces (“the creation of a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction,” he says). It attempts to engage Israeli leaders as if they are capable of cooperating in good

faith and as if hegemony in the region is not their *raison d'être*.

It's the kind of "courting" letter Prince Hassan would never write to engage Jordanian citizens, who, in fact, don't have agency and whose leaders have zero leverage both with Israel and in the region.

Instead, Jordanians may or may not hear of Prince Hassan's secret meetings with Israeli officials similar to those his brother King Hussein regularly used to conduct. That's because, decades after the 1994 Wadi Araba peace treaty between Jordan and Israel, widespread "people to people" ties have not materialized. Nor will they ever materialize without a just resolution of the Nakba.

In the letter, Prince Hassan references this same treaty between Jordan and Israel positively, as an achievement to build on:

October of this year marks the 27th anniversary of the signing of the peace treaty between Jordan and "Israel," the same historic agreement that marked the beginning of the end of the long and tragic conflict between Israelis and Palestinians and represented an important milestone towards peace between the peoples of the region.

The Wadi Araba peace treaty had been incentivized by Washington in the same way Trump's deal incentivized the recent "normalization" between the Gulf countries and Israel. If it has achieved anything, it is to make Jordan, a client state of the US, a perpetual supplicant to both Israel and the US.

In seeking prosperity, peace and stability "in the region," what Prince Hassan fails to recognize is a fundamental [principle](#) of our Palestinian struggle:

The Palestinian people, recognizing their role as an advance vanguard of the Arab liberation movement in the struggle against imperialism and Zionism, calls upon all of the democratic and progressive forces and popular movements of the world to provide all forms of support to the struggle to achieve their full rights and national liberation.

Prince Hassan was 43 years old in 1991, when the Palestinian delegation attended the "Madrid Peace Conference" under cover provided by Jordan, by-passing the decisions of the Palestinian National Council. He is now 73 years old and, based on this letter, has learned hardly anything about the true nature of the "peace process" or the true nature of the Zionist regime with whom he is dealing "in secret."

Advocates of the one-homeland/two-state confederation between what remains of Palestine and Israel believe that "in the long run, one might envision transforming the confederation into one federal state, with the autonomous regions Israel, West Bank, and Gaza."

Given the experience of the "interim" agreement of Oslo that lasted decades and netted enormous strategic gains exclusively for Israel and the US, it is hard to understand on what exactly such advocates base their faith.

It is much saner to advocate, as Nur Masalha says, for the [One Democratic State Campaign](#): a progressive liberation movement, an ambitious movement with a future vision that seeks

to end the colonization of Palestine and change the reality on the ground from the river to the sea. These tasks are not easy and cannot be accomplished in the short term:

The discourse of “political realism” is also a refrain of the Oslo architects. In the name of “political realism”, we Palestinians found ourselves mired in the Oslo swamp.... The discourse of “one homeland— two states” is essentially the “two-state solution incomplete”: without full and effective Palestinian sovereignty in the West Bank, no Israeli decolonization, and Palestinian “coexistence” with Jewish settlers in the West Bank.

The Oslo two-state “peace process” is dead. Israelis and Palestinians need to consider a just and equitable alternative, which means one democratic state, not a so-called binational state that entrenches and legitimizes the apartheid status quo, political Zionism, settler-colonialism, and Israel as a Jewish state.

In an excellent analysis of the letter [published](#) in al Arabi al Jadeed, Lamis K. Andoni wonders:

Al-Hassan bin Talal proposes a solution based on the establishment of two states, Israeli and Palestinian, at a time when it has become clear, and for some time now, the “Palestinian state” that Israel might accept, is a monolithic and isolated entity without sovereignty, in which Israel controls its outlets, its sky—literally what’s underground and what’s above. Regarding the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination, it means the cancellation of all historical and legal rights, the most important of which is the right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes. The question here is: Why does Jordan accept giving free gifts that further weaken the already dysfunctional balance of power? How can Jordan call on the Palestinians to give up all their cards, and then talk about a solution acceptable to the Palestinians, unless there is no place for the opinion [will] of the Palestinians in the first place?

It’s time for a fresh start for Palestine, as Prince Hassan says, but a truly fresh start, not a variant mutation of the toxic past.

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