

1948 – 2009

## **The Nakba: 61 years of stolen history...61 years of Ethnic Cleansing**

### **61 years of Genocide...61 years of Resistance**

On 29 November 1947, as a result of Zionist aspirations, the UN General Assembly voted the unjust partition of Palestine, into two states against the will of its own people. When the State of Israel was established on 14 May 1948, the conquered territory included 78 percent of mandated Palestine; 531 villages were destroyed and about 800,000 Palestinians were expelled and dispersed throughout the world.

For 61 years, the Palestinian Nakba (catastrophe) has been a continuous and violent uprooting of a people from their own land and communities. From Yafa to Haifa, Jerusalem to Gaza, and Jenin to Hebron, Palestinian existence is constantly threatened and subdivided. What was once referred to as the land of Palestine has now become isolated ethnic enclaves creating the imagery of an archipelago of ghettos.

Far from accepting its responsibility for such inhumane destruction of a people and of a land, Israel has legitimized its policy for 61 years trying to make Palestinians accept the Zionist logic of Jewish state only for Jews. What will happen to the 1.5 million Palestinians still living on their homeland within the boundaries of the Colonial State? Will they become strangers to their homes? And what will happen to the right of return?

For 61 years Israel has been carrying an ongoing ethnic cleansing of occupied Palestine even in the holy city of Jerusalem, particularly through settlement expansion, house demolition, and discriminatory residency laws. This colonial apartheid framework, as advocated by the Zionist doctrine, is incompatible with the law and contrary to the values we defend.

Since its establishment, the refusal of Israel to respect international commitments has led to an increasing number of settlers, the construction of the Wall, the increased violence of state militarism protected by the occupation, and the total denial of the rights of an entire people. By the policy of "fait accompli", the occupant has been increasing its grip on the

ground to prevent the resolution of substantive issues, such as the return of refugees, the question of Jerusalem and the settlements.

The turn of the new year of 2009 marked a pivotal moment in Palestine's historical tragedy as Israel embarked on a destructive and relentless attack on Palestinians in Gaza, a new-age catastrophe that must not be overlooked. For the past two years Gaza has faced a blockade, which was imposed by the Colonial State with the active collaboration of the international community. The blockade deprives the population of the minimum for living (water, electricity, food, fuel, and medicines.) The weapons used in the recent attack, which include the dime bomb and white phosphorous to name a few, are deemed illegal by the international community. In total disregard of legalities of weapon use, 1,440 people were murdered during this attack, 431 of whom were children, while 5380 people were injured. In addition to the killing of innocent civilians, these attacks completely destroyed the infrastructure in Gaza. Nearly 100,000 people were internally displaced and reside in tents. Several human rights organizations have initiated investigations of war crimes in Gaza and some have or intend to challenge Israel's actions in court. The recent attack on Gaza has been one of the quickest and largest incident that illuminates Israel's ethnic cleansing ambitions.

While the international community pronounces in favor of the establishment of a viable sovereign Palestinian state, the concerns of internal politics have always taken precedence over the principles of self-determination and international law. Without the support and consent of the international community, the occupying State would not have been able to maintain this injustice against an entire people. Western powers have turned a blind eye to Israel's continued defenseless acts of aggression and oppression and maintained the same simplistic, inaccurate and irrelevant vision prompted by Zionist logic; "a land for a people for a people without a land," while ignoring the Palestinian plight and their rights to self determination.

As a result of colonial aggression that veers towards "dividing and conquering" a people, the Palestinian national movement has endured inevitable deterioration in mechanisms of representation in the PLO (the only legitimate body intended to represent all Palestinians), which has shaken our people in exile as well as those under occupation. Despite this, Palestinian society is trying new tactics of resistance and reorganization to pursue a grassroots movement of social, political and cultural autonomy and justice. Nevertheless,

no solution will be made without the voice of the Palestinian people and we are aware of the magnitude of this challenge. Our claims have not changed and the unity and sovereignty of our people remain sacred. We reaffirm our commitment to the right of return of all refugees to their homes of origin and the right of our people to self-determination. We reaffirm our commitment to a solution takes into account **all** the rights of **all** our people and the will of our people to pursue this movement for unified national liberation. At this time the lifting of the blockade on the Gaza Strip is an absolute priority because the political and humanitarian crisis endured by its people leaves a scar that affects all of our people under occupation and in exile.

During the so called the peace process the Zionist State has attempted to normalize its relations with the rest of the world, notably the Arab world, and silence dissident voices and solidarity movements. We call on them not to relax their vigilance and to maintain all their pressure on their governments and on the Zionists institutions. In Palestine, the occupation and colonization continues to persist and no concrete action has been taken to put term.

The Palestinian Youth Network urges you to participate in all initiatives to commemorate the 61th anniversary of the Nakba so that the Palestinian narrative of injustice and resilience increasingly becomes a part of the human consciousness.

In appropriating their history, Palestinians have opted for appropriating their future.

**Until liberation, return and justice for all Palestinians**

**The Palestinian Youth Network**