

“Apartheid In Palestine. Hard Laws and Harder Experiences”

Review of Dr Ghada Ageel's New Book

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Ghada Ageel (ed.), *Apartheid in Palestine. Hard Laws and Harder Experiences*, University of Alberta Press, Edmonton 2016, \$ 59,95.

Apartheid in Palestine” is a valuable guidance in the struggle for justice in Palestine. Ghada Ageel gathered activists, indigenous Palestinians and scholars, which do not represent the worn-out media views that the public is tired of hearing. The authors believe that peace to the region can only come if justice is done to Palestinians and if their rights, denied for decades by Israel and the international community, are met.

Ghada Ageel is a visiting professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, and an active member of the Faculty for Palestine/Alberta, Canada. She has gathered authors, such as Reem Shaik, Ramzy Baroud, Tali Shapiro, Reza Masali, to name a few from the activist side, and scholars such as Keith Hammond, James Cairns, Susan Ferguson, Edward C. Corrigan and others. They present to readers a deep understanding of the Palestinian narrative that centers around the traumatization resulting from the loss of their homeland and the dispossession which came along with that loss. To non-Palestinians, this narrative hasn't been widely known, especially in the U.S., because it competes with the Israeli Holocaust narrative of eternal victimization.

In this anthology, indigenous voices, activists, and scholars present their views from their very different vantage points. Drawing on personal stories and meticulous research, their common accomplishment is a better understanding of the situation and what needs to be done to achieve equality and a just peace. Palestinian and some Israeli writers document the dispossession that took place since 1948 and continues unabated up until now.

Richard Falk, the renowned Professor emeritus for International Law from Princeton University, sets the right tone in his foreword, saying with the Oslo accords in shambles new ideas on both sides are becoming evident. Israeli society is moving to the far-right where ideas of transfer and Bantustanization are wide-spread. The best the Palestinians can expect from the current Israeli situation is a status of second-class citizens. Reasonable people who call for a viable Palestinian sovereign state in Israel are treated like “politically irrelevant voices in the wilderness”.

According to Falk, on the Palestinian side, the focus is shifting from “the level of governments to that of people and popular mobilization”. The Palestinian Authority (PA) has been marginalized due to its collaboration with the Israeli occupier and Hamas can't act effectively owing to its ghettoization in the Gaza Strip. One bright spot is the recognition of a

Palestinian state by more and more countries of the European Union, although they keep repeating the Oslo-mantra of a two-state solution, which is de facto as dead as a dodo, so Falk.

Some authors write about their life story, determined by the traumatic experiences of the loss of a homeland; others talk about their political struggle for justice, which is part of their identity, and some authors interpret the Palestinian struggle from the perspective of international law and international relations. Many contributions to this anthology describe the chilling political situation of the Palestinians, aptly designated by Eva Illouz in Haaretz as “conditions of slavery”.

In her introduction, Ghada Ageel describes her impressions on the onslaught brought about the people of Gaza by the Israeli military machinery. Shortly after the ceasefire in 2014 came into effect, the author entered the Strip to see her family. She was shocked by the devastation. Despite the increasing support of the BDS movement worldwide, international protest by the United Nations and relief organizations and a protest letter by sixty-four influential figures, among them seven Nobel laureates, calling for an arms embargo on Israel, the Netanyahu government went on expanding the colonies in the Jordan Valley. Since Israel rejects all peace options, Israel is either becoming an apartheid state or the Palestinians may face another wave of brutal ethnic cleansing, writes Ageel. The topics “Apartheid”, “Nakba” (=the Palestinian catastrophe of 1948) and BDS pervade many articles.

Ramzy Baroud, a consultant for Middle East Eye in London, highlights the fact that Western media seldom allow Palestinians to narrate their own story. In academia it is hardly better, he writes. The Palestinian narrative appears thus as an annex to the dominant Zionist one or is presented in a fractional and disconnected language that has little to do with reality. In contrast, the Israeli approach is always cohesively presented in the media. According to the author, in occupied Palestine, the settlers go on daily rampages under the watchful eyes of the Israeli military in order to cause damage to farmers and to try to break their bond with their land. Baroud mentions also the precarious and dismal situation of Palestinian refugees in neighboring Arab countries. “Palestinian refugees are also prisoners, of a precarious legal status, of Israeli intransigence, of international negligence, and of Arab betrayal.” The resistance in Palestine will go on until the people acquire their human rights, writes the author.

Keith Hammond, who lectures philosophy in the Open Studies Center of the University of Glasgow, addresses the question of Israel’s Legitimacy. Great Britain has the longest engagement with Zionism than any other country in the world, writes the British holocaust expert Cesarani, which Hammond quotes. Hammond mentions Israel’s close “incorporation” into European institutions, although the country violates every principle the EU pretends to stand for. He traces British support, especially that of the Labor Party, for the Zionist cause, back to late 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. According to Hammond, the “most effective opposition to Zionism in the UK before 1948 came from those inside Jewish communities”. Since the call for a boycott on Israel in 2004, the labor movement started communicating with its Palestinian counterparts. The author calls for a moratorium in order to put pressure on Israel “to change its persecution and dispossession. The right of return for Palestinians has to be honored and the whole nature of politics in Israel shifted.”

Edward C. Corrigan, who works as a specialist in citizenship and immigration law, evaluates

Israel's occupation policy in the light of different international conventions and comes to the conclusion that they are all violated by the occupation regime. His criticism is lodged in the words of Moshe Goral, the legal analyst for Haaretz: "To describe a situation where two populations, in this case, one Jewish and the other Arab, share the same territory but are governed by two separate legal systems, the international community customarily uses the term *apartheid*".

The anthology could trigger a process of revisiting the last colonial conflict in the light of justice. All contributors emphasize that the situation in occupied Palestine is politically, economically, personally and morally, intolerable. They presented all arguments that are needed to confront Israel's occupation regime. How serious the Netanyahu government takes BDS, shows the smear campaign it has started. An extremely valuable book and a must read for everyone interested in a just peace in Palestine.

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