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Celebrating Palestinian Resistance and Resilience

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You may rob me of the last span of my land
You may ditch my youth in prison holes
Steel what my grandfather left me behind:
Some furniture or clothes and jars,
You may burn my poems and books
You may feed your dog on my flesh
You may impose a nightmare of your terror
On my village
Enemy of light
I shall not compromise
And to the end
I shall fight....

—Samih_al-Qasim

With the passing of the 64th anniversary of the Nakba, (the establishment of the illegal Zionist state on the land and homes of Palestinians), should we mourn or celebrate? Professor Nurit Peled–Elhanan wrote of her mourning:

> "I will mourn on Nakba Day. I will mourn for vanished Palestine most of which I never knew. I will mourn for the holy land that is losing its humanity, its landscape, its beauty and its children on the altar of racism and evil. I will mourn for the Jewish youngsters who invade and desecrate the homes of families in Sheikh Jarrah, throw the inhabitants into the street, and then sing and dance in memory of Baruch Goldstein, the infamous murderer of Palestinian children, while the owners of the desecrated houses with their children and old people are sleeping in the rain, on the street, opposite their own homes. ...All these things I will mourn on Nakba Day. I will join the millions of dispossessed, downtrodden and humiliated who have not given up on the future and who still believe there is a chance, who stand as witnesses and as firebrands of the true human spirit...."

For the last 64 years, Palestinian women, men, elderly, and youth have steadfastly and spiritedly resisted the occupation and the Zionist state. It is a resistance that continues flourishing among Palestinians from all walks of life both inside and outside Palestine, be they farmers, workers, students, poets, or intellectuals.

The criminal Zionist campaign to erase Palestinian history and to whitewash Zionist massacres and the expulsion, imprisonment, and abuse of Palestinians continues 64 years after the Zionist state was founded on the ethnically-cleansed land of Palestine. In spite of the decades that have passed since May 15, 1948, Palestinians have not forgotten the

Nakba, nor the 531 Palestinian villages razed and destroyed by Zionists before and after 1948, nor the over 750,000 Palestinians violently expelled from their homes in Palestine. The refugees are future returnees, and as they await justice—the right to return to the homes and land from which they were forcibly expelled—they don't do so complaisantly.

The shelves of the United Nations Security Council and UN General Assembly are full of resolutions affirming the illegality of the Zionist state's actions and colonies. Among these resolutions, the right to return is spelled out clearly:

Palestinian Refugees have the right to return to their homes

(General Assembly Resolution 194, Dec. 11, 1948):

"Resolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return…"

Palestinians have the right to Self-Determination

(General Assembly Resolution 3236, November 22, 1974):

"Reaffirms the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in Palestine…to self-determination without external interference" and "to national independence and sovereignty."

Israel's occupation of Palestine is Illegal

(Security Council Resolution 242, Nov. 22, 1967):

Calls for the "withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict"and "acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force."

Israel's settlements in Palestine are Illegal

(Security Council Resolution 446, March 22, 1979):

"Determines that the policy and practices of Israel in establishing settlements in the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967 have no legal validity and constitute a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East."

Palestinians have a long, rich history of struggling for their fundamental and unalienable rights—those rights affirmed by numerous more UN resolutions and human rights enshrined in international law and enjoyed by people around the world. It is a struggle which goes back to the early days of Zionist colonization of Palestine and which thrives in various forms today throughout occupied Palestine and in exile. Palestinian scholar and rights activist Mazin Qumsiyeh recently wrote: "We have an amazing history of 130 years of struggle against the most well-financed, most-organized, most-supported colonial project in human history." As Qumsiyeh alludes, Zionist terrorism extends back decades before the Jewish state was formed on the ruins of Palestinian towns. Palestinian popular resistance against the racist and destructive Zionist project, extends back to the late 1800s when the first

Zionist colonists began arriving in Palestine.

The Nakba is imprinted in the minds of 11 million Palestinian women, men and children, passed on from generation to generation along with the keys to their homes in occupied Palestine. Every day in occupied Palestine there are new Nakbas as still more Palestinians are violently displaced from their homes, land, and families or are murdered at the hands of the IOF and Jewish colonists. Badil reports that:

"Internal displacement continues unabated in the OPT today. Thousands have been forcibly displaced in the Jordan Valley as a result of closure, home demolition and eviction orders, and the threat of displacement hangs over those who remain. Similar patterns of forced displacement are found in Israel, where urban development plans for the exclusive benefit of Jewish communities are displacing indigenous Palestinian communities in the Naqab (Negev) and Galilee."

The ethnic cleansing of Palestine at the hands of Zionist terrorists organizations like the Irgun, the Stern Gang, and the Hagana, began years before 1948 and continues until this day, under the more palatable (to unethical politicians and apologists around the world) pretext of a state "defending" itself.

According to Al Awda (the Return) website:

> "Jewish terrorist groups such as Haganah, Irgun and Stern terrorized the Palestinian street, destroyed villages and slaughtered entire Palestinian families. Approximately 50% of all Palestinian villages were destroyed in 1948 and many cities were cleared from their Palestinian population… Israeli forces killed an estimated 13,000 Palestinians and forcibly evicted 737,166 Palestinians from their homes and land."

Throughout occupied Palestine, the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) "defend" the Zionist state by demolishing Palestinian homes, expelling Palestinian residents from homes their families have lived in for generations, escorting armed Jewish colonists as they attack and shoot Palestinians, imposing lock-downs on Palestinian towns, arresting Palestinian men, women, teens and children under false pretexts of "security threats", violently quelling non-violent demonstrations, firing on Palestinian farmers and fishers in the Gaza Strip, and abusing and torturing Palestinian political prisoners—including hunger-strikers demanding their most basic rights.

The Zionist state "defends" itself by annexing more Palestinian land in the occupied West Bank and Jerusalem with its Separation Wall, expanding already massive illegal Jewish colonies in the occupied West Bank and Jerusalem, periodically waging brutal and criminal bombing campaigns on the imprisoned population of the Gaza Strip, enforcing 35 discriminatory laws against Palestinians holding Israeli citizenship (non-Jews), and refusing to enact UN Resolution 194 which has been reiterated over 130 times.

In one of its more recent criminal acts, the Zionist state "defended" itself when slaughtering over 1450 Palestinians in the 2008-2009 Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip, as it "defended" itself when perpetrating similar massacres in Lebanon and Gaza in 2006 and later. It "defended" itself on May 15, 2011 by opening live fire on crowds of Palestinian women, men and youths commemorating Nakba Day, killing 14 civilians and injuring

hundreds more.

It again "defended" itself in March 2012 when violently quelling Palestinians' popular demonstrations on Land Day—killing a youth from Gaza and injuring over 300 throughout occupied Palestine—and two months later in Nakba commemorations. The United Nations reports that "at least 370 Palestinians were injured by Israeli forces in demonstrations" on Nakba Day 2012. In weekly non-violent demonstrations throughout the occupied West Bank against the Zionist Separation Wall, the IOF have killed at least 21 Palestinians (10 of them minors) and have injured hundreds more.

Right of Return:

My homeland is not a suitcase, and I am no traveller" – Mahmoud Darwish

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, among other things, that "Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country." Yet the Zionist regime does not allow Palestinians violently expelled from their homes and land to return, although this was conditional for Israel's entry into the United Nations. An inalienable and non-negotiable right, the right for Palestinian refugees to return cannot be sold by anyone, be they Zionist or compromised Palestinian representatives.

The Zionist state passed a Jewish-specific law on coming to occupied Palestine. Badil notes: "In 1950, Israel enacted the Law of Return, granting any Jew anywhere the right to citizenship as a Jewish national in Israel and (since 1967) also in the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT) while the 1952 Citizenship Law denationalised the Palestinian refugees."

Al Awda, the Return:

Little known nowadays, Palestinians in the 1980s attempted to use creative non-violent resistance against the Zionists' banning of Palestinians' right to return. And while Cyprus and freedom boats would come into the spotlight in 2008 and later years, the initial concept of sailing from Cyprus dates back to early 1988. PLO officials and activists Marwan Kayyali, Mohammed Tamimi, and Mohammed Buheis organized the first of what would two decades later be a stream of boats sailing to Palestine. Purchasing a Greek ferry, the *Sol Phryne*, the team re-named it al-Awda and readied it to carry over 130 Palestinians, along with an anticipated several hundred journalists and observers, to Haifa port.

The boat never left Cyprus. In February, 1988 a bomb was planted on the boat, and shortly after on February 15, Kayyali, Tamimi and Buheis were assassinated when a remote-controlled bomb was detonated in their car. All fingers pointed to "Israel"—which had publicly stated that the boat would never be allowed near Haifa—and its Mossad (Secret Services), but as with uncountable assassinations by "Israeli" agents, "Israel" got away with murder!

The Intifada:

In 1976, the Zionist state announced plans to expropriate still more Palestinian land—thousands of acres—for "security and settlement purposes." On March 30, Palestinians responded by holding a general strike, and organized marches throughout occupied Palestine. Not surprisingly, the IOF was heavy-handed in their quashing of the demonstrations and killed six Palestinians in the process, injuring hundreds more. Land Day, as it came to be known, is commemorated yearly, with more reasons yearly to protest

continuing Zionist land-grabs.

The First Intifada (uprising) broke out throughout occupied Palestine in December 1987, lasting until 1993, with popular demonstrations, strikes, civil disobedience and other manifestations of unified non-violent resistance to the Zionist occupation. The IOF killed over 1000 Palestinians during the years of the Intifada and employed a criminal bone-breaking campaign on Palestinian protesters and other civilians.

On September 28, 2000, when war criminal Ariel Sharon—accompanied by1000 troops and paramilitary police, and scores of Jewish colonists—entered the al-Haram al-Sharif complex, one of Islam's holiest sites and in which Al Aqsa Mosque is housed, hundreds of Palestinians revolted, starting off the Second Intifada. Like the First Intifada, the collective uprising against the Zionist occupation spread throughout occupied Palestine. It lasted until 2005, with Palestinians subjected to more Zionist crimes and brutality, including massive IOF invasions into Palestinian towns and cities and the bulldozing of thousands of homes throughout occupied Palestine. Well over 5500 Palestinians were killed in the Second Intifada. Yet, Palestinians' uprising has not stopped, as the Zionist occupation continues.

In August 2008, after planning and mobilizing for two years, the Free Gaza movement completed what Marwan Kayyali and others had been trying to do before they were assassinated: Free Gaza sailed two rickety fishing boats filled with international solidarity activists, journalists, and Palestinians from Cyprus to Gaza, Palestine. Four more successful missions carried Free Gaza activists, including Palestinians, to and from the Gaza Strip. On the next three attempts, Israeli gunboats rammed a Free Gaza boat three times, nearly sinking it, and forcibly boarded the other two Free Gaza boats, abducting and deporting all on board.

New initiatives sprang forth from Free Gaza's example, including boats from Malaysia, Libya, Canada, Ireland, Turkey, and a boat of Jewish activists. All of these were prevented by the IOF from reaching Gaza, Palestine. In another brazen display of ruthlessness, Israeli commandos assassinated nine Turkish civilians participating in the Freedom Flotilla in May 2010. Air-dropped onto the Turkish *Mavi Marmara*, the Israeli commandos descended firing machine guns and proceeded to hunt down passengers, shooting many "point-blank assassination style," as Kevin Neish, a Canadian participant, described.

The return movement inspired by Kayyali has not been limited to sea travel. Since early 2009, land convoys from Africa, Europe, and around the world have proceeded to Gaza via the Egyptian Rafah crossing, bringing supplies of humanitarian aid vitally needed in Gaza, but more importantly challenging the illegal Israeli-enforced complete closure of Gaza's borders to people, goods and exports.

Palestinians, later supported by international activists, launched the growing BDS (Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions) campaign, the Gaza Freedom March, the Global March to Jerusalem, and organized the Welcome to Palestine campaign which saw people from around the world fly to Tel Aviv with the intent of visiting Palestine. Zionist security prevented the vast majority from entering Palestine, going as far as to send "no-fly" lists to airports around the world.

Final Comments:

For the last 64 years, Zionists in Palestine have been killing Palestinians, destroying homes,

uprooting ancient olive trees, burning, poisoning, and destroying farm land, stealing water, imprisoning Palestinian men and women, girls and boys, and breaking their bones. They have been strangling the 1.7 million Palestinians in Gaza, denying them rights to employment, agriculture, fishing, clean water, electricity, travel, education, and adequate medical care.

The massacres, from Deir Yassin to Gaza, are permanent witness to the Zionists crimes. However, the Palestinian spirits will never be broken, and with every new Palestinian infant inside occupied Palestine or in the diaspora, a new generation is born with as great determination to resist as their parents and grandparents. They memorize the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish, Samih Al Qassem and many others as they memorize the names of every Palestinian town, hill and valley. They will return.

Enemy of light
The signs of joy and the tidings
Shouts of happiness and anthems
Are there at the port
And at the horizon
A sail is defying the wind and the deep seas
Overcoming all the challenges
It is the return of Ulysses
From the lost sees
It is the return of the sun
And the return of the ousted
And for their sake
I swear
I shall not compromise
And to the end
I shall fight!

—Samih_al-Qasim

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