

De-Colonizing the Mind: We Cannot Liberate Palestine With Colonized Minds

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The inability — or unwillingness — of both the [Ramallah](#)-based [Palestinian Authority](#) and the [Hammas](#)-led administration in [Gaza](#) to provide a relatively acceptable example of good governance based on giving ordinary people a say in decisions that affect them means that serious soul-searching is required among those holding leadership positions in Palestine.

The alternative to the [Fatah](#)-Hammas rift is not, as both parties argue, new elections for the PA's presidency and the [Palestinian Legislative Council](#), within the framework of the disastrous [Oslo accords](#).

Rather, it is a form of mass democracy, in which all [Palestinian refugees](#) (living in the occupied [West Bank](#) and Gaza Strip, inside present-day Israel and in the diaspora) can participate by taking common action for broader goals.

Israel must be clearly told that the single demand of Palestinians is for a true, multi-party democracy throughout historic Palestine based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Proposals made by the main Palestinian parties until now have not, unfortunately, been convincing to those living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip — one third of the Palestinian people.

Racist solution

The crisis in [Yarmouk](#), the Palestinian refugee camp in [Syria](#), has exposed the [PLO](#) and other organizations that claim to speak on behalf of Palestinians as inefficient, incompetent and powerless and — most importantly — unable to come up with a unifying political vision around which the entire Palestinian people can rally.

Such a vision would not coexist with Oslo and its logic of the so-called "[two-state solution](#)." That logic has led to a Jewish state on 78 percent of historic Palestine, [Jewish-only settlements](#) on more than 60 percent of the West Bank and a [concentration camp](#) in the Gaza Strip.

This racist solution — camouflaged as the minimum that "both parties" could agree to, regardless of the rights of more than six million refugees living in the diaspora and 1.7 million Palestinians living as third class [citizens in Israel](#) — has posed a serious challenge to the so-called Palestinian national program.

This solution has created a [bantustan](#) in Palestine — one that the chiefs of the infamous South African “[independent homelands](#)” with their Pretoria-based white [apartheid](#) masters would have found “reasonable and fair” since it guarantees the ethnonational identities of the parties involved.

What has been totally overlooked is the nature of Israel as a settler-colonial entity that has, like apartheid [South Africa](#), colonized the land and obliterated the basic rights of the indigenous population. But in addition to its institutionalized apartheid policies, Israel has gone on to commit [war crimes](#) and crimes against humanity in Gaza, with the complicity of hypocritical Western governments and the UN.

Have Palestinians been abandoned?

Have Palestinians lost hope? Has their leadership abandoned them since 1993, with the signing of the Oslo accords?

Do Yarmouk refugees still think that the PLO is their “sole, legitimate representative?”

Are Palestinians in Gaza, after three massive Israeli attacks in six years, and an ongoing medieval [siege](#), being called on to succumb to Israel and kiss the hands of the so-called international community and its aid organizations which have [failed to rebuild a single home](#) of the thousands that were destroyed by Israel seven months ago?

Are Palestinians supposed to go on negotiating with the incoming fascist government of Israel headed by [Benjamin Netanyahu](#), knowing very well that the next Israeli massacre is going to be far worse than the previous ones?

It is time for the Palestinian liberation struggle to adopt tactics that have been successful against racist, settler-colonial ideologies in the American South and South Africa. Without serious intervention from freedom-loving nations, civil society, conscientious people, and internal mass mobilization in South Africa, [Nelson Mandela](#) would have died in jail and South Africa would probably still be an apartheid state.

Making Israel helpless

Hence, the only route we, in Palestine, can see to end Zionist atrocities committed against unarmed civilians is in the growing movement for [boycott, divestment and sanctions](#) (BDS) against Israel.

Israel may have one of the world’s strongest armies and be the largest recipient of US military aid, yet it will find itself helpless against the will of ordinary people who have decided to boycott its products and its racist institutions.

No government can force its citizens to buy Israeli goods or its artists to perform in [Tel Aviv](#), the Middle East’s equivalent to [Sun City](#) during South Africa’s apartheid era. The Palestinian-led BDS movement, launched in 2005, has continued to grow and has gained unstoppable momentum around the world.

Ordinary Palestinians have realized that a colonized mind cannot and will not liberate Palestine; a decolonization of the Palestinian mind must precede the decolonization of the land.

And that is precisely why the Oslo accords have failed Palestinians. They have kept Palestinian leaders in both the Fatah and Hamas camps trapped behind the façade of false “independence,” “dialogue,” and “coexistence” based on Palestinian subordination to the white, Ashkenazi master.

It is time for the current Fatah and Hamas leaderships to catch up with the people of Palestine who have roundly rejected the Oslo accords and remained steadfast in their determination to regain their lost land. Those who wish to lead Palestinians need to embody this determination and to represent it as the inspiring vision that it is.

It is not a vision of weakness or submission at the negotiating table, but rather an expression of the will of a people who will not rest until they get back what is rightfully theirs.

It is an expression of true democracy.

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