

Washington's "Malicious Intent": Trump and Son-in-Law Kushner's "Deliberate" Ignorance of Palestinian History

"Not Capable of Governing Themselves": To Kushner, Final Status Is the Status Quo

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When the President of Israel and the Jewish son-in-law of the President of the United States make surprisingly thoughtless statements about Palestine, they show us just how deliberately ignorant of history they are—and how uncaring they are for Palestinian suffering at a deeply subconscious level.

Hatim Kanaaneh, Palestinian doctor and author of *A Doctor in Galilee: The Life and Struggle of a Palestinian in Israel* and a collection of short stories entitled [Chief Complaint](#), doesn't know what to make of Reuven Rivlin's slip of the tongue in addressing his guest Mohammad Kiwan, the chairman of the Council of Muslim Leaders in Israel, at an iftar (breaking the fast) meal the Israeli president hosted at his home in celebration of Ramadan. Rivlin says to the Palestinian (with a straight face, apparently), "Your Home Is My Home."

Kanaaneh imagines Sheikh Kiwan responding: "Had you left it standing in Damoun (Kiwan's village), you would be welcome to enter it." Kanaaneh goes on to "try to exonerate [Rivlin] of any conscious malicious intent."

I wish I could do the same for Jared Kushner's calculated, ignorant and orientalist comment in an [interview](#) about the deal to liquidate Palestinian claim to their homeland:

"Donald Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser Jared Kushner said in an interview that the Palestinians aren't yet able to govern themselves and declined to promise them an independent state in the [White House](#)'s long-awaited Mideast peace plan."

Malicious intent is all over that statement. He goes on to add condescendingly,

"The hope is that they over time will become capable of governing."

When Kushner says Palestinians are not ready "to govern themselves", he is really calling upon their hasbara carefully-manufactured image as terrorists. Given Palestinian history of denial and desperation, they are not to be trusted, he is saying. They have yet to accept "civilized" behavior—i.e., mask their rage and pain—and reject "uncivilized behavior."

Kushner's statements are so outrageous, I hardly know where to begin to address them. Let me start almost exactly a hundred years ago when the Turks lost Palestine in 1918 and their rule was replaced by a "British Mandate", an agreement between the Allied Powers in 1923, which also incorporated the ambiguous terms of the Balfour Declaration of 1917. Ever since then, Palestinian Arabs understood that the phrase "Jewish national home" with its religious connotations in the Declaration was merely a euphemism for a Jewish settler-colonial state and that 'article 2' of the Mandate, with its reference to "self-governing institutions", was a fraud.

Similarly, today Kushner's phrase implying that self-government would come later when the Palestinians were "ready" to govern is meant as a fraudulent "safeguard". The British Mandate over Palestine of 96 years ago has simply evolved into an "Israeli Mandate". It is blessed, not by the United Nations, but by an arm-twisting imperial power.

The deal of the 20th century (the Balfour Declaration) triggered the Great Palestinian Arab Rebellion, "probably the boldest challenge to Britain in her colonial half of the twentieth century", according to Walid Khalidi. The deal of the 21st century will also inevitably inflame Palestinian rebellion—and for exactly the same reasons.

In the 20th century, the Arabs of all the Middle East States expected independence in return for their help to Britain during WWI. They fought against their co-religionists, the Turks, putting their faith in the principle of self-determination as enshrined then in the League of Nations. Eventually, when they were deemed "ready" for self-governance, all the Arab states eventually achieved independence, despite the negative colonialist imagery imposed on them—except for Palestine.

In the 20th century, as in the 21st, Palestine was excluded from the doctrine of self-determination in a clear strategy of dispossession. Balfour had explained to President Wilson in a memorandum: "we are dealing not with the wishes of an existing community but are consciously seeking to reconstitute a new community and definitely building for a Jewish numerical majority in the future." [At the commencement of the Mandate, there were approximately 486,000 Muslims in Palestine, 84,000 Jews and 71,000 Christians.]

In today's lingo "Jewish majority" also translates as "Jewish self-determination", leaving the self-determination of Palestinian Arabs who were there and had always been there, nowhere. Pre-Zionist Palestine as well as the remnant pockets of Palestine today called the "occupied territories" have been portrayed as backward and unproductive awaiting "Western penetration and fecundation", to use Ella Shoat's disturbingly apt phrase, which is also morally superior to the Arab masses.

And underpinning the entire Zionist venture in Palestine, as Walid Khalidi explains, is a myth, that when "stripped down to its barest essentials may be presented as two sides of a coin. The obverse carries the Right of Return deriving from Divine Promise. The reverse carries explicitly, the dismissal of the millennia-old 'Arab' presence in Palestine."

This myth played and it still does today a key role, beclouding the strategy of dispossession and tapping a huge reservoir of emotions in the West. Is Jared Kushner a White supremacist who just happens to be Jewish, or is he a Jewish supremacist as in a Jewish nationalist? Today the Jewish State which has sovereignty over all of Mandate Palestine minus Jordan has a Western ideological and political orientation despite the fact that 70% of its population

is “Third-World derived” (Palestinians and Mizrahi/Sephardic Jews). Its character is anomalous, as Edward Said so often described it.

What are Trump’s motives and that of countless other American politicians for sponsoring Israel? The answers are deliberately beclouded with the myth, causing Western “purblindness” to use Walid Khalidi’s expressive word.

In Palestine under the Mandate, British policy, similar to U.S. policy today, was never to accept the principle of one-man-one-vote in Palestine, and no self-governing institutions were ever developed for the country at large. It was not possible to question the provisions of the Mandate then, just as it is impossible for Palestinian “negotiators” to question the Jewish national provisions of the Israeli government today.

During the failed Oslo process, money was poured into the occupied territories for “development” and “capacity building”. Numerous reports were and are still being written, with each one beginning, as a matter of framing, with a long list of the obstacles facing both economic development as well as capacity building in the occupied territories, and affirming that only final status negotiations could achieve an enduring development—both political and economic.

It turns out the long-awaited final status is ... the status quo!

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