

“Palestinians are being attacked by Israeli settlers, and weapons are replacing stones.” Interview with Dr. Stephen Sizer

By [Dr. Stephen Sizer](#) and [Steven Sahiounie](#)

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The current government of Israel is the most right-wing and extremist in the last 70 years. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, elected for a sixth term, had previously scoffed at the Jewish fanatical parties, but now finds himself allied with them to hold on to power, and stay out of jail for corruption.

The West Bank of Palestine is under military occupation of Israel, and there is no international 'road map for peace' being pursued. The Occupied Territories of Palestine are demanding their freedom, democracy, and human rights. Groups of resistance fighters are growing in momentum in the West Bank, especially Jenin.

Because of the American veto in the UN Security Council, Israel is never held accountable for their crimes against the Palestinian people who have been deprived of all human rights and civil rights, for 70 years.

In an effort to understand some of the issues today in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Steven Sahiounie of MidEastDiscourse interviewed Dr. Stephen Sizer.

Dr. [Stephen Sizer](#) is the founder and director of [Peacemaker Trust](#), a registered charity dedicated to peacemaking, especially where minorities are persecuted, where justice is denied, human rights are suppressed or reconciliation is needed.

Sizer is chair of the [Convivencia Alliance](#), a cross-faith, international initiative for a just peace in the Middle East, and in particular, a just coexistence in Palestine/Israel based on equal rights in One Democratic State (ODS).

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Steven Sahiounie (SS): Recently, the Mayor of [Barcelona, Spain suspended relations with Israel](#). The Spanish city had a twin-city pact with Tel Aviv, but the Mayor has called Israel an apartheid state, recalling the UN report. Do you think more cities, groups, or countries may follow this lead?

Stephen Sizer (SSizer): I am sure other cities will follow as Israel becomes more and more explicitly an apartheid regime and as the momentum for [boycotts, divestment and sanctions](#) (BDS) grows. The challenge is to counter attempts by Israel to deflect criticism by associating BDS with antisemitism through the discredited IHRA working definition of antisemitism.

SS: Jake Tapper of CNN interviewed Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and asked about whether Israel had any peace plans for the Palestinians. Netanyahu responded that he saw no reason to make any peace deal. In your opinion, when western citizens hear that response, do they care? And, should they care?

SSizer: Israel has not made a single concession since 1967 because you cannot concede what is not yours. If I stole your property and then offered to give you back 80%; is that a concession? The Zionist agenda is to annex all the land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan. That has always been the plan. Netanyahu does not need to negotiate with Palestinians. The Israeli government are given every incentive by the US administration and other sympathetic countries. Trade with Israel is more important than international law. Most people are still largely convinced that Israel is a democracy and therefore its security interests trump any negotiation of land for peace. Nine out of ten Zionists are Christians especially in the USA – Somewhere between 20 and 509 million at least. That is a powerful support base that ensures the US administration continues to back Israel unconditionally.

SS: Netanyahu has said his two most important goals for his new administration are to build more settlements and to sign more Arab normalization agreements, referring specially to Saudi Arabia. In your opinion, do you think Arab countries should be doing business with Israel in light of the fact they have no plans for Palestinian rights?

SSizer: No, Arab states should not, but then neither should Western governments. We have to lead by example. Most Arab states do not care about Palestinian rights any more than they do for their own citizens. They all want to trade with Israel. Saudi Arabia and Israel have a lot in common. Ethno-religious nationalism gives both a measure of security – as a Jewish State and a Muslim State. That is why Trump was so popular in Israel but not with American Jews because as a racist he believed the USA is a Christian nation and if Jewish people in America didn't like that they should go and live in their state.

SS: The Geneva Convention assures the right of resistance to military occupation, and even armed resistance, as long as civilians are protected. In your opinion, do you see the resistance movement in the West Bank gaining supporters from western citizens?

SSizer: Very unlikely. In the West, we suffer from cognitive dissonance and Manichean dualism – there are good guys and bad guys. The Ukraine are Europeans seeking freedom from the Russian Bear – our long standing Communist enemy so we support them. Israelis are seen in a similar vein – especially since so many trace their roots to Europe and the USA. The Arabs on the other hand are not. So we tend to pick one side against the other in any conflict and colour, expediency, self-interest and economic incentive are much more

significant factors than justice or human rights.

SS: The second Intifada (uprising) ended in 2005, but the burning issue of lack of human rights, and property rights for 6.8 million Palestinians has been smoldering, and seems to be gaining momentum. In your opinion, could we see the Third Intifada erupting?

SSizer: Yes – like living on an earthquake fault line – it's just a question of when. Many would argue the third intifada has begun. It is escalating in the Palestinian ghettos as violent attacks by Israeli settlers are increasing and in response, weapons are replacing stones.

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This article was originally published on [Mideast Discourse](#).

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