

Palestinians Have Only One Option Left: Stay and Fight

A new wave of struggle has to start now for equal rights in one state on all of the land of historic Palestine

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An elephant trap has for years now laid in the path of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's [messianic](#) plans to establish the state of Israel between the river and the sea.

It was the demographic fact that, in that space, [there were more Palestinians than Jews](#). According to 2016 [figures](#) from the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) that were provided to the Israeli Knesset's foreign affairs and defence committee, there were 6.5 million Muslims and 6.44 million Jews between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea, although those figures are out of date now. The committee referred to Muslims rather than Palestinians, thus excluding Palestinian Christians.

This means that [Netanyahu's annexation plan](#) on its own cannot work. The huge concrete infrastructure with which Israel has cemented its occupation of the West Bank – settlements, walls, roads and tunnels – and its [apartheid state](#) as cruel and as complete as anything manufactured in South Africa, are all palliatives – medicines which reduce the pain to a Jewish majority state but not the cause.

Another Nakba

You can announce as many times as you like, as US President Donald Trump [did](#) yesterday, that Israel will take over the Jordan Valley and thus about 30 per cent of the West Bank, and establish Israeli law over the settlements. But without physically moving greater and greater numbers of Palestinians out of the expanded state of Israel, little changes. Annexation just becomes another form of occupation.

Population transfer, mass population transfer, another Nakba or Catastrophe, therefore, lies at the heart of Trump's and Netanyahu's "vision" for peace.

This is a peace of sorts. It's the silence you hear in the Palestinian villages in 1948, in [Beit Hanoun](#) in 2014, when Israel bombed a UN school in northern Gaza crowded with hundreds of displaced civilians killing 15 and injuring 200 people, or in East Aleppo or Mosul, after each in turn have been bombed to a pulp. It's the peace created in the total and complete defeat of the Palestinian struggle for a state built on their own land.

The hidden plan

So, for me, the heart of the apocalyptic vision lay not in the supremacist speeches of Trump

or Netanyahu, in which both proclaimed “mission accomplished”, and the complete victory of the Zionist movement over the Palestinian people. It lay in a paragraph buried deep inside [the 180-page document](#), the most detailed document Trump bragged that had ever been produced about this conflict. Precisely.

It’s the paragraph which says that land swaps by Israel could include both “populated and unpopulated areas”. The document is precise about the population it is referring to – the 1948 Palestinian population of the so-called northern triangle of Israel – Kafr Qara, Baqa-al-Gharbiyye, Umm al-Fahm, Qalansawe, Tayibe, Kafr Qasim, Tira, Kafr Bara and Jaljulia.

VISION for PEACE CONCEPTUAL MAP

The State of Israel



The document goes on:

“The Vision contemplates the possibility, subject to agreement of the parties, that the borders of Israel will be redrawn such that the Triangle Communities become part of the State of Palestine. In this agreement, the civil rights of the residents of the triangle communities would be subject to the applicable laws and judicial rulings of the relevant authorities.”

This is the hidden and most dangerous part of this plan. The triangle is home to about 350,000 Palestinians – all of whom are Israeli citizens – perched beside the north western border of the West Bank. Umm al-Fahm, its main city, has been the home of some of the most active defenders of Al Aqsa.

Yousef Jabareen, a member of the Israeli Knesset from the Joint List, told me:

“Umm al-Fahm is my hometown, Wadi Ara is my lifeblood. The Triangle is home to hundreds of thousands of Arab-Palestinian citizens living in their homeland. Trump and Netanyahu’s annexation and transfer programme remove us from our homeland and revoke our citizenship; an existential danger to all Arab minority citizens. Now is the time for Jews and Arabs who value democracy and equality, to stand and work together against this dangerous plan.”

Official ‘ethnic cleansing’

For years now the [“static transfer”](#) of this population out of Israel has been toyed with by Israeli leaders of the centre or the right. The idea of a population and land swap was alluded to by former prime ministers Ehud Barak and Ariel Sharon. But it was only [Avigdor Lieberman](#) who took the expulsion of Palestinians up consistently as a cause.

He [advocated](#) stripping a suggested 350,000 Palestinians in the Triangle of their Israeli citizenship and forcing the other 20 per cent of the Israeli population, who are non-Jews, to make a “loyalty oath” to Israel as a “Jewish Zionist state”, or face expulsion to a Palestinian state.

Two years ago, Netanyahu [proposed](#) to Trump that Israel should rid itself of the Triangle. Today these plans for ethnic cleansing have been sealed in an official White House document.

As Palestinian member of the Knesset, Ayman Odeh, [tweeted](#), Trump’s announcement was “a green light to revoke the citizenship of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arab citizens who live in northern Israel”.

Supporting Trump

The presence of the Emirati, Bahraini and Omani ambassadors in the audience was the other remarkable feature of the announcement in the White House on Tuesday. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the UAE [welcomed](#) the plan without reservation. Qatar did too, although it added that the Palestinian state should be negotiated on 1967 borders and Palestinians should retain their right of return.

Trump said he was amazed at the number of calls he received from world leaders in support of his plan. Not least from our very own British Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

Ditching four decades of British foreign policy on an equitable and just two-state solution, Johnson threw the UK's weight behind the Trump plan. British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab also [released](#) a statement to say they "welcome" the deal. "This is clearly a serious proposal, reflecting extensive time and effort," he said.

"I cannot believe the amount of support this morning has," Trump bragged. "I have been called by leaders, Boris [Johnson] called; so many called. They're all saying, 'whatever we can do to help'".

There are some, however, who realise the danger of this plan. Senator Chris Murphy is one of them. He [tweeted](#):

"The unilateral annexation of the Jordan River valley and existing settlements, deemed illegal under US and international law, will set back the peace process decades. And it risks real violence and massive destabilization inside places like Jordan."

Home alone

No-one should underestimate the historic nature of the declaration that has just taken place. The two-state solution or the idea that a viable, contiguous Palestinian state can be created alongside a Jewish majority state is dead. It [was dead](#) long before Oslo Accords.

Arab peacemakers like [King Hussein of Jordan](#) was told in terms by both the Soviets – Yevgeny Primakov – and James Baker, then secretary of state, that an independent Palestinian state would never be achieved. This was even before the Madrid conference which preceded Oslo. The king did not need to attend the funeral of his friend Yitzhak Rabin, who was assassinated in 1995, to realise this. He knew it already. But it really is dead now.

The US has now given its official imprimatur to the eastern borders of the state of Israel. The [map Middle East Eye published](#) says it all. The Palestinian state envisioned by the plan looks like an MRI scan of the brain of an Alzheimer's victim. The Palestinian state has been entirely eaten away.

The message of this map to Palestinians of whatever faction is now crystal clear. Forget your divisions, forget what happened between Fatah and Hamas in Gaza [in 2007](#), cast aside claims of coups, and unite. Unite against an existential threat.

The Palestinians are truly alone. All of the staples of their negotiating position have gone. They have no Jerusalem, no right of return, no refugees to return, no Golan Heights and now no Jordan Valley. They have no Arab allies. Syria is wrecked, Iraq divided, Egypt and Saudi Arabia are now Israel's playthings. The Palestinians have lost the support of the most populous Arab nation and its richest one.

They have nowhere to flee to. Europe is closed for any future mass migration. They have only one option: to stay and fight. United, they can undo Israel's supremacist plans for ethnic cleansing. They have done this before and they can do this again.

A new struggle

Palestinians now have to face this reality. The PLO's recognition of Israel, in 1993, has finally hit the dead end that this road was always going to lead to. The US, international law, UN resolutions were never going to come to their rescue, and in this sense alone, Trump's brutal plan has done Palestinians a favour. It has blown away decades of fantasy.

What has to start now is a new wave of struggle for equal rights in one state on all of the land of historic Palestine. This will involve a huge fight. No-one should underestimate what will happen if the Palestinian people rise up again. But no-one should be in any doubt too, of the consequences of acquiescence.

This is the first time since 1948 that all Palestinians can join together to do this. They have to seize this opportunity or wither away as a footnote in history.

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