

The Russell Tribunal on Palestine

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After two years of “underground” work, it was launched with a “successful press conference” and announcement that:

“The Russell Tribunal on Palestine seeks to reaffirm the primacy of international law as the (way to settle) the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.” Its work will focus on “the enunciation of law by authoritative bodies. The International Court of Justice (ICJ), in its opinion on the (Separation Wall in Occupied Palestine, addressed relevant) “International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law, as well as dozens of international resolutions concerning Palestine.”

This Tribunal will “address the failure of application of law even though it has been so clearly identified.” It begins where the ICJ “stopped: highlighting the responsibilities arising from the enunciation of law, including those of the international community, which cannot continue to shirk its obligations.”

The Russell Tribunal is part of the larger BRussell Tribunal, named after noted philosopher, mathematician, and anti-war/anti-imperialism activist Bertrand Russell (1872 - 1970). Established in 1967 to investigate Vietnam war crimes, it’s a hearing committee, most recently on the Iraq war and Bush administration imperialism. Its work continues as “the only game in town for the anti-war movement in America, Britain and Europe” - to unite non-violently for peace on various world’s hot spots, now for Occupied Palestine to expose decades of injustice against a defenseless civilian population.

National committees will be formed globally, including expert ones composed of jurists, lawyers, human rights and international law experts, weapons experts, and others “to work on the evidence against Israel and third parties” to be presented in Tribunal sessions. Two are planned, “the earliest....by the end of this year.”

Frank Barat of the Organizing Committee urges activists to spread the news and offer support for this vital project. After Israel’s unconscionable Gaza attack, it’s never been more vulnerable given mass world public outrage. It’s long past time to hold Israel accountable for its decades of crimes of war and against humanity, flaunting international humanitarian law, waging aggressive wars, continuing an illegal occupation, expropriating Palestinian land, and committing slow-motion genocide, so far with impunity. No longer can this be tolerated. The Russell Tribunal on Palestine is dedicated toward that end.

The Tribunal’s Declaration on Iraq applies to Palestine. Substituting Israel for America and Palestine for Iraq, it reads as follows:

“The (Israeli) occupation of (Palestine) is illegal and cannot be made legal. All that has

derived from (it) is illegal and illegitimate and cannot gain legitimacy. The facts are incontrovertible. What are the consequences?"

"Peace, stability and democracy in (Palestine) are impossible under occupation. Foreign occupation is opposed by nature to the interests of the occupied people, as proven" by:

- the forced diaspora;
- many others internally displaced or in refugee camps for decades;
- harsh military subjugation;
- a regimented matrix of control;
- the genocidal Gaza siege;
- state-sponsored mass incarceration, violence, and torture;
- the flaunting of international law and dozens of UN resolutions;
- targeted assassinations;
- the many tens of thousands of Palestinians killed, injured, or otherwise grievously harmed;
- massive land theft and home demolitions;
- the lack of judicial redress;
- denying all rights to non-Jews; and
- a decades-long reign of terror against defenseless Palestinian civilians.

Western propaganda tries to justify the unjustifiable, vilify ordinary people, call the legitimate government "terrorist," rationalize savage attacks as self-defense, reject the rights of the occupied, and deny their self-determination.

"In (Palestine, people) resist the occupation by all means (including armed struggle), in accordance with international law. "The Commission on Human Rights has routinely reaffirmed" it. So have numerous General Assembly resolutions. The March 1987 Geneva Declaration on Terrorism states:

"Terrorism originates from the statist system of structural violence and domination that denies the right of self-determination to peoples....that inflicts a gross and consistent pattern of violations of fundamental human rights....or that perpetuates military aggression and overt or covert intervention directed against the territorial integrity or political independence of other states," such as Palestine.

The UN General Assembly has "repeatedly recognized" the rights of "peoples who are fighting against colonial domination and alien occupation and against racist regimes in the exercise of their right of self-determination (to) have the right to use force to accomplish their objectives within the framework of international humanitarian law."

It also recognizes the legitimacy of self-determination seeking national liberation movements and their right to strive for and receive appropriate support for their struggle. Further, under the UN Charter's Article 51, "individual or collective self-defense (shall not be "impair(ed) to respond against) an armed attack."

In other words, armed force is a legitimate form of self-defense as distinguished from "acts of international terrorism," especially by one state against another or any group, organization, or individual. Israel refuses to accept this. It continues an illegal occupation, calls armed resistance "terrorism," and imposes its will oppressively and illegally.

World leaders "continue to justify the negation of popular sovereignty under the rubric of (fighting terrorism), criminalizing not only resistance but also humanitarian assistance to a besieged (and beleaguered) people. Under international law, (Palestinian freedom-fighters) constitute a national liberation movement. Recognition of (them) is consequently a right, (an obligation, and) not an option." World leaders have a duty to hold Israel accountable under the law and no longer support its crimes.

Palestine "cannot recover lasting stability, unity and territorial integrity until its sovereignty is (recognized, affirmed,) guaranteed," and enforced by the world international community.

"If (world leaders) and (Israel want) peace, stability and democracy in (Palestine), they should accept that only the (Palestinian) resistance - armed, civil and political - can achieve these by securing the interests of (their) people. (Their) first demand....is the unconditional withdrawal of (Israeli forces) illegally occupying" their land.

Palestinians are the only legitimate force to secure their own security and rights under international law. "All laws, contracts (and other occupation-related) agreements....are unequivocally null and void. According to international law and the will of the (Palestinian) people, total sovereignty" over Palestine, its resources, culture, and all else (past, present, and future) rests in (their own) hands.

Further, international law demands that full "compensation....be paid" to compensate for what Israel plundered and destroyed. Palestinians want self-determination and "long-term peace" and security. They have every right to expect it. "We appeal to all peace loving people in the world to work to support" their struggle. Regional "peace, democracy, progress" and justice depend on it. The Russell Tribunal on Palestine is committed to work toward this end. Nothing short of it is acceptable.

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