

Analysis

Gaza: A prison for Palestinians

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October 1, 2005—In August, Israel configured its 38-year illegal military occupation of the Gaza Strip by unilaterally 'disengaging' from the territory and evacuating its illegal Jewish settlers. However, the Palestinian territory continues to be under Israel's brutal occupation.

Israel's 'disengagement' plan is nothing but Israeli PR oversold by Western media to divert the public from the brutality of Israel's occupation of Palestinian land. Israeli military control of the world's largest open-air prison will continue unhindered, with tacit support of Western powers.

Gaza is the most densely populated territory on earth, where 1.4 million defenceless Palestinians huddle together in an area of about 360 square kilometres. Gaza forms the westernmost portion of original Palestine, having borders with Egypt on the southwest and today's Israel on the north and east. The territory is bounded by the Mediterranean Sea on the west.

Furthermore, many commentators have argued that the overcrowded territory has no significance to Israel and has always been considered as a burden. By 'disengaging' from Gaza and evacuating the Jewish settlers there, Sharon will concentrate on the annexation of important Palestinian lands in the West Bank and Jerusalem. Although this argument may have some truth, Palestinian Resistance to Israel's terror should also be considered as a significant factor in Israel's decision to withdraw.

Since the creation of Israel in 1948 by Western powers, Israel has been financed and encouraged by the same powers to expand by way of dispossessing the Palestinians with vicious form of terrorism. The US and Britain (Israel's main backers) are said to be thrilled by Israel's 'disengagement' plan, the brainchild of the criminal Ariel Sharon, and the destruction of a few illegal settlements. The settlements were initially built with US taxpayers' money. The US is said to have paid about \$2.2 billion for the cost of dismantling the settlements and the evacuation of the illegal settlers.

Despite the well-publicised withdrawal, Israel is still in control of Gaza's borders, coastline, airspace, telecommunications, water sources, and electricity supply. US-made F16 fighter planes and Apache helicopters will continue as often as possible to rain their deadly missiles and bombs on Palestinian population centres there.

Just two weeks after the implementation of the Sharon disengagement, Israeli helicopters attacked Gaza population centres with missiles killing and assassinating scores of innocent Palestinian civilians, including political leaders. Israeli aircraft attacked Gaza infrastructure destroying electricity supplies, bridges and preventing children from going to school. In fact, the brutality of Israel's terror has increased since the evacuation of the illegal Jewish settlers.

Through terror and isolation, Palestinian identity will be further weakened by Israel's policy of fractionation. Palestinians in Gaza will be more isolated from not only the rest of the world, but also from the rest of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Jerusalem. As Ur Shlonsky, a professor of Linguistics at Geneva University in Switzerland wrote, Israel's aim is to "terrorise the civilian population, assuring maximal destruction of property and cultural resources". At the same time, "the daily life of the

Palestinians must be rendered unbearable: They should be locked up in cities and towns, prevented from exercising normal economic life, cut off from workplaces, schools and hospitals, This will encourage emigration and weaken the resistance to future expulsions” similar to that of 1948.

It was revealed recently that the Israeli Army is building a high tech complex to surround Gaza with the world's most impenetrable barrier. The barrier will include fences with electronic sensors, watchtowers mounted with remote control machineguns, and hundreds of videos and night vision cameras. The complex includes new army bases and 22-foot concrete walls around nearby Israeli settlements. Watchtowers armed with remote-controlled machine guns are to be built every 1.2 miles. Remote-controlled, unmanned vehicles will begin patrolling the area soon after the completion of the barrier. The barrier will run about 35 miles and will cost about \$220 million. The barrier will be completed by mid-2006. Egypt, which is well-known for its harsh treatment of Palestinians, has been given the role of Israel's enforcer on its border with Gaza. Israel will symbolically relinquish its control of Palestinian lives to remote-controlled aliens. Freedom of movement will disappear completely from the life of Palestinians.

The purpose of the 'disengagement' plan is to: (1) remove the Palestinians as a negotiation partner in any peaceful and just settlement; (2) provide Israel with a cover to steal more Palestinian land and built more illegal Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Jerusalem; (3) provide Ariel Sharon with US money to continue the dispossession of Palestinians; (4) allow Israel to continue the construction of the Apartheid Wall--declared illegal by the International Court of Justice (ICJ)--in the West Bank and Jerusalem; (5) prevent the establishment of a viable Palestinian state; and (6) enhance Israel's image in the US and Western capitals as a "peace-loving" people and provide the necessary publicity and sympathy for its violent and illegal Jewish settlers.

To dramatise the situation and gain sympathy for Israel's policy and the Jewish settlers in particular, Israeli and its supporters are showing a rare sensitivity for the human suffering of the oppressors playing the role of victims. "When tens of thousands of Palestinians were expelled from their homes, after their homes with all of their possessions were crushed by Israel Army bulldozers", wrote Israeli journalist Gideon Levy of *Ha'aretz* in Tel Aviv, "the hundreds of families whose homes were expropriated, the farmers dispossessed of their lands, the uprooted [olive and fruit] trees and the children who witnessed the brutality, [all] these were never given even a fraction of the media coverage the [illegal Jewish] settlers have received [in Israel and in the West]."

Since 1967, the Israeli Army has demolished more than 12,000 Palestinian homes. Further, during the Palestinian Intifada of September 2000 to March 2004, the Israeli Army murdered 2,859 Palestinians, including 527 children (below 18 years) and 308 in cold-blooded extrajudicial killings.

According to Sharon's adviser, Dov Weisglass, Sharon decided to disengage from Gaza to consolidate the illegal settlements in the West Bank and, more importantly, to prevent any future negotiation with the Palestinians. The 'disengagement' plan is the best pretext for the expropriation of about 58 per cent of Palestinian lands in the West Bank and Jerusalem, including all aquifers and fertile land, to build more illegal settlement. A criminal policy of land theft supported and financed by the current US administration.

Meanwhile, the reality on the ground for Palestinians is that Israel's policy of ethnic cleansing and Israel's expansion will continue and no 'disengagement' plan will change its brutal Zionist policy. The policy is leaving Palestinian communities completely cut off from each other by a network of Israeli-only roads, Israeli military checkpoints and tunnels, and the Apartheid Wall. The Wall is "being built at high speed, deep inside Palestinian [territories], while Israel's main supporters look away", wrote Meron Rapoport, a journalist with *Ha'aretz*. The Bush-Blair war on Iraq couldn't come at a better time for Israel. The new Palestine envisaged by Bush and Sharon will look like a collection of isolated ghettos dependent on the mercy of Israel's terror.

The Wall is not only imprisoning the Palestinian people, but also expropriates their land and fractionates the entire Palestinian civil society. Israel claim that the Wall is built to protect Israel is a fabricated lie. Its true purpose is to expropriate Palestinian land and water resources, weaken Palestinian identity, and at

the same time consolidate Jewish ethnicity over Palestine (Judaisation of Palestine). The aim is to create a 'demographically pure Jewish state'.

"[W]e are going to cleanse the whole area and do the work ourselves", said Benjamin Netanyahu, America's favourite terrorist and former Israeli prime minister and finance minister.

It should be recognised that the policy of ethnic cleansing, land expropriation, restrictions and violations of human rights of the Palestinian people have the strong backing of the US administration, Britain and most Western governments. The creation of Palestinian ghettos has similarity with the myth of Western "multiculturalism," where the "others" are isolated, dehumanised and subjugated to society's wrath.

On 3 August 2005, the United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) argued that the Apartheid Wall is a violation of Israel's human rights obligations. The commission's eight human rights experts, who visited Israel to assess the impact of the Wall on Palestinian lives, called on Israel to adhere to international law and "to stop construction of the wall." UNHRC also urged Israel to pay compensation to Palestinians for damage caused by construction of the Apartheid Wall.

The UNHRC said in a statement; "The wall violates important norms of international humanitarian law prohibiting the annexation of occupied territory, the establishment of settlements, and the confiscation of private land and the forcible transfer of people". The statement also reminded all nations that "they are under an obligation not to recognize the illegal situation resulting from the construction of the wall and not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the situation." In addition, the evacuation of 9,000 Jewish settlers from Gaza will turn Palestinian life in the West Bank "into hell," said former Israeli Education Minister Shulamit Aloni.

The 'world community' should be too familiar with Ariel Sharon genocidal policy not to abandon the Palestinian people to his "evil ideology" of destroying the Palestinian people as an independent political and social entity. Every nation in a civilised community has an obligation to reject fascism, and support the Palestinian rights of return to their homeland and self-determination. To trust Ariel Sharon disengagement plan is to be complicit in Sharon's history of crimes against the Palestinian people.

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