

# Peace is more than pacification

Discussion with Mazin Qumsiyeh over the Israel-Palestine conflict, over Gaza disengagement, human rights, as well as the moral imperative of the one state solution  
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Published in German in the newspaper Junge Welt 8/13/05

<http://www.jungewelt.de/2005/08-13/028.php>

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Mazin B. Qumsiyeh, a Christian Palestinian American human rights activist and board member of The Association for One Democratic State in Palestine/Israel (<http://www.one-democratic-state.org>), offers in his book "[Sharing the Land of Canaan: Human Rights and the Israeli-Palestinian Struggle](#)" (Pluto Press 2004), an alternative vision. Website <http://qumsiyeh.org>

Q: To understand the injustice and current deadlock of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, one only needs to look at two maps. One that shows the Israeli wall, which, when completed, will become the de facto border of the so-called "Palestinian state": four walled-in Palestinian cantons (Northern West Bank, Southern West Bank, Jericho and the Gaza Strip) on about 12 percent of the territory of former Mandate Palestine. And a map of UNRWA, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, that shows the 59 Palestinian refugee camps spread out all over Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, West Bank and Gaza Strip, where over four Million Palestinian refugees live in forced exile, since Israel expelled them in 1948, destroyed their villages, confiscated their land and denies their Right of Return. The hype and the hope stirred up by the current Gaza disengagement plan, with Israel withdrawing merely 8.000 (two percent) of it's total 400.000 Jewish settlers in the occupied territories of West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, seems baseless in view of these maps. They expose the impracticability of a two-state solution and call for different strategies. Why did the Oslo Accords and the proposed two-state solution fail?

Amnesty International said that the reason Oslo and other "peace proposals" fail is because they ignore human rights. They argued that no durable peace could be accomplished without basic human rights such as the right of refugees to return to their homes and lands. The reality is that there was never really a genuine two state "solution" that is compatible with political Zionism. Zionism by its nature creates injustice and segregation and cannot compromise its long-standing position on such things as sharing Jerusalem or allowing refugees to return.

There were many "peace proposals": Hart, Zinni, Mitchel, Tenet, Oslo, Geneva, and most lately the road map. They all suffer from the same basic flaw: ignorance of human rights and basic tenets of international law. The facts on the ground confirmed by Israeli statements show that the envisioned Palestinian "State" under the Israel plans (both labor and Likud) will be analogous to the Bantustans/Ghettos under Apartheid South Africa. Israel continues to build the massive segregation/apartheid barrier around remaining Palestinian enclaves. All Israeli settlements in the areas occupied in 1967 are illegal per International law and the 4th Geneva Convention yet 400,000 settlers have been moved there and more settlements are being built. The latest "road map" (an offspring of the defunct Oslo accords) includes 2218 words but they are missing four key words: Human Rights, International law. Yet, Israel has

not agreed to abide by the provision that calls for an immediate (phase I) freeze on settlement activities.

Q: Gideon Levy described in the Israeli newspaper Haaretz the bitter irony of the Gaza disengagement: while the settlers of the Gush Katif bloc from the Gaza Strip are to be resettled on the coastal plain between Jaffa and Gaza, to live on the ruins of the destroyed Palestinian villages, the expelled inhabitants of these villages continue to be confined to the refugee camps in Gaza. Does the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip increase the chance for a viable "Palestinian state"?

No. Dov Weisglass, right hand man for Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was very clear when he explained the purpose for the talk about disengagements from Gaza: to prevent emergence of a sovereign Palestinian State, to put the peace process "in formaldehyde" (his words), and extract significant support from Washington. Also we should keep in mind actions on the ground. Israel in fact continued its colonial activities including land confiscation, building the apartheid wall, and building settlements in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem). Everyone plays a game of "let us pretend." We pretend that Israel is withdrawing from Gaza (it is actually merely redeploying" according to Israeli leaders). We pretend that this is going to help implement a road map that failed after Oslo failed. We pretend that the occupied and dispossessed will stop their resistance before their freedom is attained. We pretend that refugees will simply forget their rights to their homes, lands, and businesses. We pretend that settlements do not exist on confiscated Palestinian lands. We pretend that the Arab vassal regimes of Washington can keep the lid on their people's frustrations. We pretend that Israel, which doubled the number of settlers in the occupied areas after signing the Oslo accords will "deal with the settlements." And we pretend that all this talk will bring peace.

Q: What is the gain for Israelis and Palestinians in a one-state solution?

Stopping the significant loss of life (disproportionally being on the native Palestinians), there are going to be gains to all. Citizenship with equal rights and responsibilities regardless of religion is a much better concept of nationhood than the racist ideology that Israel is the country of Jewish people everywhere. Such helps grow economies and improve standard of living to all.

Q: Can a joint Israeli-Palestinian state diminish anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli sentiments in the Arab world, and contribute to an end of terror and disarmament of the Middle East?

Animosity during time of war is natural. War and conflict are not natural. People reconcile after conflicts (how many wars did Britain and France engage in). War is taught and peace can be taught. But peace must be based on truth and justice not simply "pacification." A key element of justice is equality and when people are treated equal, they have little incentive for hate. Anti-Jewish (commonly but mistakenly referred to as anti-"Semitism"), anti-Muslim, and anti-Christian feelings may persist in a tiny minority. But such solutions based on equality are the best remedy for the etiologic source of violence and hate: the disease of greed and control inherent in colonial occupation. Peace in one state could have wide implications for other struggles like the disenfranchised Islamic communities in the West who sympathize with the plight of the Palestinian refugees (Muslims and Christian).

Q: Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi advocates the one-state solution in his White Book "Isratine" (Israel+Palestine=Isra-tine). While a unitary state was advocated earlier by the

Palestinians, why is the two state solution dominant.

The Palestine national program from the 1930s until 1988 advocated one state solution. This change was by no means accepted by all Palestinian leaders. Many factions and leaders still advocate for a unitary state. As the two state myth recedes, more people will restart the struggle for unity and equality.

Q: The UN defines Israel, contradictory to it's own self-interpretation as a "Jewish state", according to UN-Resolution 181 and 194: a state for Jewish immigrants living together with the Palestinian natives - meaning a binational state. Israel was admitted to the UN only after giving assurances on the implementation of Resolution 181 and 194 - which it violated until today. Should the UN, consequently, declare now an official unification of Israel/Palestine - like it proposed the unification of Cyprus?

Israel is unique in the world in that it is not a state of its citizens but defines itself as a state for "Jewish people everywhere." Political Zionism always regarded "Judea and Samaria" (The West Bank) as part of the Zionist State. The dilemma was how to deal with the native inhabitants. The solution was for Israel to take their lands and natural resources (water) so that they will leave. The settlements were the tool used to get the maximum land with minimum Palestinians. When it became clear that many Palestinians stayed, other ideas were developed (like putting them in cantons).

Q: In Israel/Palestine the majority of the natives were driven out, as in South Africa, enclosed in refugee camps and cantons or townships and homelands. The South African archbishop Desmond Tutu said: "my visit to the Holy Land reminded me so much of South Africa. The apartheid is back, complete including segregation and Bantustans. History seems to repeat itself. But, if peace to could come South Africa, it can come probably also into the Holy Land." Is the ideology of the political Zionism comparable with the apartheid?

There are similarities and differences. Both systems (Apartheid South Africa, Zionist Israel) believed in manifest destiny with a religious blessing to redeem the land. In both cases, the settlers/colonists were not an extension of an existing empire like in colonization of Algeria or India but were collected from a number of other countries. They did get patronage of larger powers (Britain and the US). In both cases the natives were variably considered non-existent, sources of nuisance, and even cheap labor. Both developed laws to promote one group over others (in one based on skin color, in eth other religion). But differences also exist. The White regime in South Africa wanted black labor in far more numbers. Zionism, while using Palestinian labor, tried to develop colonial Jewish labor force; sometimes exploiting Mizrahi and Sephadi Jews in eth service of the Ashkenazi elites. In South Africa, blacks were relegated to Bantustans. In Palestine, remaining Palestinians are being squeezed in Cantons with high walls and fences while speaking of a "Palestinian state."

Q: To insure a Jewish demographic majority, Israel set up an "ethnic democracy", which gives Palestinians either no citizenship (refugees), third class citizenship (internal refugees or "present absentees") or second class citizenship. Which discriminatory laws should be addressed, to turn Israel/Palestine into a pluralistic democracy with equal rights for all it's citizens and refugees?

Israel has no constitution but a set of basic laws enacted by the Knesset. These laws dating to 1949-1955 include some significant ones that violate basic human rights. The "absentee

property law” ensures acquisition of the property of Palestinians removed from their homes and turning such property for use by Jews only. The citizenship laws deny Christian and Muslim Palestinians the right to citizenship after they are expelled from their homes and lands. The same laws allow automatic citizenship to Jews only (including converts to Judaism). A whole set of laws and regulations were implemented or selectively taken from Ottoman and British laws to effectively insure land is transferred from Christians and Muslims to Jewish ownership.

Q: As a geneticist you question the Zionist concept of "return", especially with respect to Ashkenazi Jews. Why?

Political Zionists like to claim Jewish common ancestry in Palestine justifying a “return” of “diaspora Jews”. But scientific evidence from archeology, history, genetics, culture, and many other fields clearly shows Jews to be a religious community encompassing various ethnicities, backgrounds, cultures, and languages. Evidence for example clearly show that many native Jewish Arabs are related to other Arabs who live in the same areas but all are rather distant from European (Ashkenazi) and Ethiopian Jews. Yemeni Jews are close to Yemeni Muslims. Ethiopian Jews are close to Ethiopian Christians and so on. For a glimpse of this discussion see <http://ambassadors.net/archives/issue11/opinions2.htm>

Q: This shows that Israel is composed of many people and to which a binational state would not be a threat. Arab Jews who constitute about half the population could be a cultural bridge in a Jewish-Palestinian state. Are they also natural allied ones of a Palestinian civil rights movement?

Palestinians in my opinion are natural allies to all people who yearn for equality and justice. Sephardic Jews suffered at the hands of Ashkenazi Zionists for decades. But it is also equally true that some Sephardic Jews joined in the oppression of the Palestinians and that some Ashkenazi Jews worked and spoke against political Zionism from Martin Buber to Albert Einstein to Hanna Arendt. So generalizations would be difficult.

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