

Gaza withdrawal about consolidating occupation of the West Bank

British anarchist analysis

Anarcho

August 23, 2005

The withdrawal of Israel from Gaza is a step towards consolidating the occupation of the West Bank, not peace.

No one looking at the media recently could have failed to notice the coverage of events in Gaza, namely the removal of illegal Israeli settlers. This media frenzy was absent when evictions were conducted there previously. The difference, beyond them being more violent and conducted on a larger scale, was that it was the Israeli Army evicting Palestinians rather than Israelis.

Where were the media and the sympathy when the Israeli army was bulldozing Palestinian families from their homes in Gaza and the West Bank to create “security zones”? In these evictions there was no transport for those made homeless, no ample notifications of the event, no, no generous damages for the destruction of their homes, no promises of government-subsidised alternative accommodation. Palestinian families were usually given a maximum of five minutes warning before their houses, and life savings, were crushed by Israeli armour-plated bulldozers. If they turned round or delayed, they risked being shot. Needless to say, anyone who resisted the troops were not given the sympathetic coverage and accolades the media strew upon the racist right-wing fundamentalist Israelis who protested the ending of the 38 year old occupation of Gaza.

Over 13,000 Palestinians were made homeless in the Gaza Strip in the first 10 months of last year alone — in comparison, the Israeli settlements being closed down held 8,500. Of course, this destruction rained upon the Palestinians has been reported, usually when some foreigner who tried to stop or record them got in the way and was killed (most famously, Rachel Corrie). However, such coverage was never as impressive as for the removals of the Israelis — the illegal occupiers, never forget, who had been handsomely subsidised by the Israeli state to help themselves to a large part of the land and resources there.

The reason, like the withdrawal, is clear. The Israeli state wanted to draw attention to the process in order to justify its land and water grab in the West Bank. Showing the world the agony and difficulty of moving nearly 9,000 settlers from Gaza makes the case that removing 400,000 from the West Bank and east Jerusalem would be impossible. By so visibly giving up Gaza, the Palestinians (it is hoped) will be expected to give up the parts of the West Bank Israeli settlers have

either already illegally taken or want. The wall being built in defiance of the International Court of Justice's ruling that it was illegal will continue to enclose Palestinian land and water supplies. Sharon has made it clear that West Bank settlements will be expanded and more Palestinian homes will be destroyed. The West Bank will become more like Gaza than it already is. With the drain on Israeli's economy caused by Gaza's security gone, funds can be used to consolidate the occupations in the West Bank.

Not that Gaza will be free. The Israeli state is retaining control of all land, air and sea borders. In effect, the 1.4 million inhabitants of Gaza are prisoners in a giant prison whose electrical and concrete fences are manned by an Israeli army which retains the authority to invade Gaza at will.

All in all, this was policy as spectacle, a show to allow further Israeli expansionism in the West Bank.

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Retrieved on 28th October 2021 from www.anarkismo.net

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