

**Our grief can go to anyone. Our solidarity
must go to the oppressed: Anarchists,
Palestine and October 7th**

**An anarchist critique of die Plattform's statement on the October 7th attacks
and the ongoing genocide in Palestine**

Anonymous

January 30th, 2024

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Introduction

On December 6th, 2023, the German anarcho-communist organisation *die Plattform* published the statement *Zur aktuellen Lage in Israel/Palästina: Erklärung der Plattform*, ("On the current situation in Israel/Palestine: Statement from die Plattform"). We, three members of an anarcho-communist collective based in Scotland, who were in Palestine in the summer of 2023 working alongside Palestinian activists, produced a response to die Plattform's statement, outlining our deep disagreement with their position. We did so in the form of an open letter, which we sent via email to die Plattform on December 15th. We wish to make our critique publicly available, to foster the necessary discussion on Palestine and anarchists' position on the current situation.

"The most violent element in society is ignorance." - Emma Goldman

Dear Comrades,

We are writing on behalf of our anarcho-communist collective based in Scotland. We consider ourselves part of the platformist tradition and are keen to at some point set up a specific anarchist organisation. In this aspiration, die Plattform has been a great inspiration to us. However we are writing to you with a lot anger and disappointment regarding your recent statement on the situation in Palestine. Overall, we consider it a piece of shocking misanalysis of the situation that can be considered part of the repressive tapestry. Several members of our collective were in Palestine this summer, where we worked alongside numerous brave Palestinian activists as well as Israeli Jewish activists, who daily risk their lives to fight against the occupation. Your analysis of the situation does not fit with any of the dialogues we had with them. Rather than being a balanced commitment to liberation of both Jews and Palestinians, your statement reads as a pathetic attempt to appeal to the hegemonic racist culture in your country. You insult the anti-racist and anti-colonial work going on on the ground in Palestine with your misdirected attempts to condemn so called Palestinian antisemitism. The following are specific points that we would like to raise. However, if this statement is symptomatic of the culture and analysis around Palestine within die Plattform, we strongly suggest that dealing with this becomes a priority. As we said, three of us spent time in Palestine this summer and would happily enter into a longer term dialogue with you about this. Below are our major objections to the piece.

Missing the Point

We are witnessing a genocide against the Palestinian people. It is a genocide that is the direct product of the settler colonial project of Zionism, under the leadership of a state which is increasingly showing fascist tendencies. This project is directly propped up by hegemonic imperial interests. These are unequivocally the most important facts. Unless something has been lost in translation, your article contains no mention of genocide against Palestinians, colonialism, zionism or fascism and only the most fleeting mention of imperialism. This is a very serious problem. It is crucial to acknowledge the violence and unspeakable sadness that has been experienced by both Israelis and Palestinians since the 7th of October. But without locating the recent events within this frame of imperialism, colonialism and (more recently) fascism, you completely obscure both the potential risks and the underlying power dynamics of the situation.

However, it goes further than this; the blatant imbalance in emotive language that you have chosen to use when describing the suffering that has happened on both sides is shocking. When talking about the casualties on the Israeli side you refer to them as “old people, parents, young adults, children”, the Palestinian side you refer to simply as “civilians”. The word “helpless” is used twice to describe the Israeli population and not once to describe the Palestinian population. The description that you offer about the situation in Gaza does not come close to the horror being experienced there. Lacing this tepidness with phrases such as “what exactly is happening is difficult to say with certainty through the fog of war” is despicable. There is no fog to look through. The genocide is being shown by Palestinian witnesses, journalists and international organisations, as well as streamed live by Israeli soldiers and announced by Israeli politicians and army generals celebrating their own war crimes. They are bombing hospitals, targeting ambulances and rescue teams, abducting doctors, torturing prisoners, shooting down refugees and displaced people. It is a genocide. While reading your sentence referenced above, we truly wished we could find an explanation for it other than the cowardice of someone who does not wish to see a reality that conflicts with their own preconceptions and in doing so parrots the narrative of the oppressor. Either way the effect is the same - another stone removed from the path of the fascists. The disparity of emotive language has been a key tactic of the mainstream media to distort understanding of the situation, making your assertion to “stand against the propaganda of the bourgeois press” laughable.

Mis-characterisation of the October 7th attack

The fundamental characterisation of the October 7th attack as an antisemitic attack rather than an anti-colonial one is extremely ignorant. It is undoubtedly true that antisemitism is present in the ranks of Hamas (and it is the responsibility of progressive forces in Palestine to challenge this, and the responsibility of internationalists to support those progressive forces). But to claim that it was this that drove the attack, and not the century of unspeakable injustices and indignities at the hands of the colonial regime, is delusional.

The historical context that you have chosen to situate the October 7th attack in is the Holocaust. It is undeniably one of the darkest episodes in human history, but the emotive effect of mentioning it here - when its analytical use is clearly minimal - can only be to silence (or at least diminish) real dissent to the Israeli colonial regime. The fact that you have chosen to mention this genocide and not the Nakba of 48 (perpetrated by the exact same forces that exist in Israel today) - is evidence that trying to develop a serious and historical analysis of the contemporary situation is not a priority for you. We agree with your condemnation of the German politicians' rhetorical misuse of their own history, but accuse you of the same.

As we know all too well, anarchist solidarity with the Palestinian resistance is complicated and by no means easy - especially given the increasing hegemony of authoritarian forces (partially due to Israel's own actions to bolster these as a way to undermine the leftist resistance). We too, are worried about this, and are especially concerned with the increasing support for the Iranian regime. A critique of Hamas from a revolutionary anarcho-communist position is crucial. But it cannot come before a recognition of the fact that the Palestinians are a colonised people and their fight for self-determination must be supported. This does not mean we have to support all their methods. The authoritarianism, patriarchy, and some of the violent tactics of Hamas, as

we are sure we would all agree, are morally deplorable. This analysis must be maintained but it cannot precede or obscure our calls for an end to the colonial regime. Furthermore, it should not manifest in solidarity with the settler-colonial population, but rather a solidarity with the forces in Palestine that stand for people's power. Again we acknowledge that this is difficult in Palestine at the moment, but it is not impossible, and not attempting to keep in accordance with this position, will always end in a reactionary analysis.

It is also crucial to remember the milieu into which you project your analysis. It is common knowledge that the German left has serious problems with Palestinian solidarity. This massively increases your responsibility, as principled anarchists, to emphasise the legitimacy of the Palestinian struggle for liberation, and only to deal afterwards with the problematics of its actors. We are shocked this is not obvious.

Shallow understanding of colonialism

To extend your solidarity to the Israeli population, reveals an extremely shallow understanding of colonial dynamics. Some of the victims of the October 7th attacks were Israeli peace activists, and even those who weren't did not deserve to be killed as they were. As anarchists, we feel anguish and anger for every human life that is lost due to the structures of domination and exploitation we live in, including when that violence befalls the people benefiting from those structures. We can express these feelings. But extending solidarity to the whole "Israeli civilian population" and to the "Palestinian civilian population" equally, as if they were both victims of a conflict between comparable sides, is in our view a symptom of a failure to understand colonialism and apartheid. Here by 'comparable' we do not refer to military strength, or even to the scale of suffering – although the latter surely is important and revealing – but to the opposing political and moral positions. At this very moment large swathes of 'civilian' Israeli citizens, take part in the theft of Palestinian land, as anyone who has experience in the West Bank will know. The non-army settler population contain large amounts of armed militants who harass Palestinians on their fields and in their villages, who assault and sometimes kill Palestinians, all with near-complete legal impunity and often while being protected by the regular army. But whether or not an Israeli citizen takes part in this active colonisation, every Israeli living on stolen land is a part of the colonial project. The violence suffered by Israelis is the horrible, tragic result of the colonialism and ethnic cleansing of the Zionist project - which the small population of Israeli peace activists have not yet been able to stop, and the rest of Israeli society facilitates, takes part in, and benefits from.

The violence perpetrated by the colonisers and the violence perpetrated by the colonised are qualitatively different, and to your credit you (quietly) acknowledge this by recognizing that "violent and armed resistance [is] morally justified". The violence suffered by the colonisers and that suffered by the colonised are equally different. We believe that solidarity to the whole colonising population – especially one that is worded exactly as the solidarity extended to the colonised population – is unwarranted.

As for all other cases of colonialism and brutal apartheid that have marked history, "both-ways" solidarity to the colonisers and the colonised is indefensible. The examples from the past are too many to consider – every single anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggle that we can

think of has resulted in the (usually deliberate) killing of civilians belonging to the settler population – so we will give only one.

During the bloody slave rebellions that saw enslaved black people rise up against their oppressors in Virginia, unarmed whites, including children, were also butchered. Of course, the revolts were then crushed with extreme violence and dire consequences – including collective punishment and escalating torture – for the whole enslaved population. No anarchist (or precursor of anarchism) could have extended solidarity to the entire white population of Virginia – even phrasing this solidarity exactly alike the solidarity granted to the enslaved people – and still called themselves abolitionist. And to our knowledge, no serious abolitionist did.

We are allowed to express our pain, anger and condolences for any death, as well as the rage we feel for the unjust killing of those who were undoubtedly innocent. But this pain cannot be divorced from a thorough analysis of the different moral and political positions at play, which can only bring us to one conclusion: the root cause of the October 7th attack is the oppression, the colonialism, the apartheid. Our grief can go to anyone. Our solidarity must go to the oppressed.

Similarly calling for a solidarity between the Israeli working class and the Palestinian working class is evidence of a lack of understanding. These sort of copy and paste solutions to national liberation struggles are extremely unhelpful, if it not coupled with an actual understanding of the situation. As has been comprehensively analysed in numerous places (for example, *Not an Ally, The Israeli Working Class* by Daphna Thier), the Israeli labouring class, have been a crucial tool of the settler colonial project, and are, in the majority of cases, its most ardent supporters. On a theoretical level, there is simply no material solidarity of interests between the Indigenous Palestinian population and the labouring classes in Israel who are often direct beneficiaries of the primitive accumulation that comes from the constant land theft. On a historical level, the main union in early zionist days, MAPAM was one of the biggest feeders of the racist militias Haganah, who were a crucial rung of early genocidal pushes by the regime. On top of that there has never been a single episode of Israeli strike action to challenge the racist nature of the Israeli regime - national loyalties have always triumphed over class loyalties and there is absolutely no evidence that this is likely to change (the contemporary mass base of the far right parties are the Israeli working class). Lastly, with the waves of austerity that swept Israel, the war economy and particularly the IDF is the most significant way that the working class benefit from large amounts of military aid that is poured into Israel by the imperial powers. Meaning that their interests are directly tied to the maintenance of the occupation. To paraphrase Thier, given these realities, it is like calling for solidarity between prisoners and prison guards.

Lastly, the consistent position for anarchists and anti-authoritarians in the imperial core is to be supportive of the political currents that most resemble our own in other contexts. This is something that die Plattform have been vocal about, and so we are curious why that does not extend to Israel and Palestine. There are anarchists and anti-authoritarians in both Gaza, the West Bank and within the borders of 48, and a number of them risk their lives on a daily basis against the the colonial regime. The tone and analysis in this article (which doesn't even once mention colonialism!) is worlds away from the way they understand the situation. In fact, it was anarchist Israeli comrades who asked again and again for us to make clear the distinction between antisemitism and anti-zionism - by not doing this, your statement not only disrespects their work, but contributes to the risk that they face on a daily basis. It is crucial that you deal with this blindspot.

Misplaced analysis of antisemitism

You are correct in pointing out that antisemitic attacks are on the rise. This is a cause of serious concern and should be emphasised. It is our duty as anti-racists and anti-fascists to fight against this. However, it is extremely clear that by far the biggest cause of this rise is the fascist right and not those struggling for Palestinian liberation (even if some of the far right adopt the rhetoric of Palestinian liberation, though it is far more common for them to be adopting pro-zionist, islamophobic positions). To blur the two relatively distinct contexts undermines our ability to successfully deal with the far-right and erodes the popular legitimacy that the Palestinian cause deserves.

To reiterate the earlier point, there is nothing more important than emphasising the difference between antisemitism, which is akin to racism, and anti-zionism which is akin to a rejection of the colonial project. Clarity on this point is what both Palestinian and Israeli comrades are asking of us, as the purposeful confusion around it has been, and continues to be, one of the most effective ways that the Israeli state has avoided responsibility for its crimes. In Palestine we were told by a Palestinian comrade that the most important thing we could do for their cause is (1) to argue their case in our own countries and (2) to fight antisemitism in our own countries. It is the historical and present day threat to Jewish existence in Europe that the largest component of the propaganda used to justify colonisation of Palestinian land. We cannot accept that Jewish people need Israel to be safe. Jews must be safe everywhere. If this is not an understanding that die Plattform has internally, we would suggest it as a first starting point.

In the final section, where you point to tangible actions for people to take, you suggest reaching out to and making contact with synagogues. This is of course good work and should be encouraged. Unless there is something that we have really not understood though, the fact that there is no mention of mosques honestly borders on active islamophobia. There is not a genocide of Jewish people happening right now, there is a genocide happening to the people of Palestine - the vast majority of whom are Muslims. We simply don't understand why you would not suggest reaching out to Muslim communities, partly because some of them will likely be from Palestine, and partly because that is where a lot of the organising for the Palestine solidarity movement is happening. To reiterate our earlier point, a broader political analysis also points to the fact that it is racialised islamophobia, and not antisemitism that is the current focus of all the largest contemporary far right movements. Islamophobia of course uses the language of "muslims" but targets non-muslim people of South West Asian and North African descent as well. It is crucial to add that in the UK people have been arrested for holding signs in Arabic, Arab students have been called terrorists and come under anti-terror policing for supporting Palestine. Not materially extending your solidarity to the Palestinian diaspora or the Muslim/SWANA community in times like these really calls into question your anarchist principles. Again, to reiterate, we are not making the case that we should stop emphasising the importance of combatting antisemitism, but to do that at the expense of combatting the colonial zionist project and contemporary islamophobic tendencies is very dangerous.

What really distinguishes revolutionary organisations from reactionary ones is their capacity to accurately discern who is the oppressed and who is the oppressor - and to act accordingly. This article contains no evidence that die Plattform is able/willing to do this.

We acknowledge that this report was the product of consensus in a nationwide organisation, with such a problematic national discourse on the subject, we do not underestimate how difficult

the process of putting it together must have been. But if a specific anarchist organisation does not hold actively anti-racist and anti-colonial positions then we suggest that changing this internal culture becomes an overwhelming priority for the time and resources of its members. If not it means that your path to liberation will involve stepping on the bodies of other oppressed peoples.

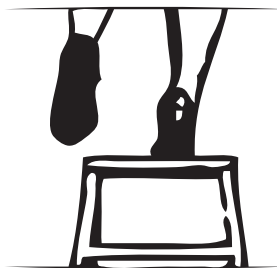
In the introductory paragraph you asked for our “solidarity, constructive criticism and feedback”. Here we have offered you our constructive (we hope) criticism and feedback, but at this stage we cannot offer our solidarity, as this statement is a victory for Israel and its colonial project.

We know die Plattform is full of good comrades and good analysis, we urge you to cut out this violent blind spot. While we do not have these contacts ourselves, we encourage you to reach out to anarchist Palestinian comrades such as the organisation Fauda. In turn we are happy to help in terms of arranging contact with other Palestinian progressive forces as well as Israeli anarchist comrades, recommending resources and keeping channels of communication open.

We look forward to your reply.

Jack, Carl & Pietro.

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January 30th, 2024

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Authors of this text go under generic pseudonyms (Jack, Carl, Pietro) and the group is not definitively named within the text. It can be implied due to the Libcom OP's username that this collective might be named "Edinburgh Libertarian Socialists".

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