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Palestine: The No-State Solution

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By James Herod, February 2009

Neither the two-state nor the one-state solution will solve the problem in Palestine. Only the no-state solution will.¹ The no-state solution calls for dismantling the Israeli state and abandoning any attempt to establish a Palestinian state. Rather, the peoples living in the territory of historical Palestine will progress to the advanced decentralized social form of an association of autonomous self-governing communities based on direct democracy. Representative government

¹William Bowles, “The Final Solution is a No-State Solution,” on the web at:

<http://www.creative-i.info/?p=4296>. This short article, which appeared on several web sites on the Internet on January 28-29, 2009, is not about the anarchist idea of a no-state solution, as discussed in this essay, but about the Zionist ideological connection with Nazism, and to a doctrine which seeks the eradication of “impure” persons from a population or territory. “No-state” as used by Bowles means that Palestinians will get neither the two-state solution nor the one-state solution. They will get nothing, no state. They will be eliminated or expelled, and “Israel” will be ethnically cleansed.

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will be abolished. This historic leap forward should also immediately encompass both Lebanon and Jordan, two artificial states created by Western imperialists upon the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.

The no-state solution would allow the inhabitants of Palestine to progress beyond territorial units governed by capitalist ruling classes, regardless of whether these classes defined themselves in ethnic, racial, or religious terms, or by the so-called civil rights of secular humanistic liberalism. The real problem is the nation-state itself, and not whether it is religious or secular, ethnically (or racially) homogenous or not, mono or multi cultural, liberal or conservative.

This beautiful anarchist proposal – an obvious solution – has unfortunately not even been on the agenda throughout the entire one-hundred year long attack by Zionists upon Palestinians. Why? For one thing, the historical victory of marxism over anarchism in the nineteenth century meant that anarchists have been marginalized and kept out of the political arena for more than a hundred years. For another thing, the capitalist-controlled nation-state system is so strong and entrenched that it is hard to think outside that framework, and hardly anyone has. Now, however, a few innovative voices are being heard in favor of the idea, for example, those of Bill Templer² or Uri Gordon.³

The trouble with the two-state solution is that it grants legitimacy to the Zionist state of Israel, and thus recognizes its right to exist. But Israel has no right to exist whatsoever. It was founded on the violent expulsion of the native inhabitants (and rightful owners) of Palestine (approximately 750,000 of them). The Zionists' terrorist campaign of ethnic cleansing, stretch-

²Bill Templer, "Reclaiming the Commons in Palestine/Israel: Ya Basta! / Khalas!" on the web at: <<http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/templer230708p.html>>.

³Uri Gordon, "Homeland: Anarchy and Joint Struggle in Palestine/Israel," Ch. 6 in his *Anarchy Alive!*

ing now for nearly a century, has been possible only because Western imperialist powers, especially the United States, have supported it, with massive amounts of military, financial, and political aid. To right this egregious historical injustice it is necessary to dismantle the militarist and racist state of Israel and establish the right of return for Palestinian refugees, who now number nearly five million persons.

And this has always been the intention of Palestine liberation movements, although not always of their leaders, or of certain Western intellectuals. As for the leaders, both the Palestine Liberation Organization and Hamas eventually came to accept the two-state solution. As for intellectuals, Noam Chomsky has always (and as recently as last month) endorsed the two-state solution. (How is it, by the way, that Chomsky, who purports to be an anarchist, never proposes an anarchist solution to any issue of current import?) So why haven't two states been established? Because Zionist Israel doesn't want a Palestinian state. Its goal from the beginning has always been to steal all the land of Palestine – and even more land from Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt – for a Greater Israel, and to cleanse the land of all non-Jewish inhabitants.

Furthermore, the Zionist theft of Palestinian land has proceeded unabated to such an extent that there is by now hardly any land left upon which to base a Palestinian state. Palestinians have been corralled and imprisoned in Gaza and in numerous tiny Bantustan-like isolated enclaves in the West Bank. They control nothing. Israel has effectively taken the two-state solution off the agenda.

Moreover, after Israel's ghastly and horrific massacres, bombings, and invasions in recent years of Jenin, Lebanon, and now Gaza, and after decades of its brutal assaults on Palestinians with targeted assassinations of their leaders, house demolitions, blockades, the Wall, random murders, destruction of orchards and olive groves, the theft of water, economic strangulation, imprisonment without trial, torture, starvation, theft of

moneys, restriction of travel, destruction of civil society, destruction of infrastructure, and so forth ad nauseam, who in their right mind could still contemplate Israel's continued existence in the Middle East. These crimes have been so beyond the pale as to totally destroy forever any claim some may have made for Israel's legitimacy, or any desire to live with the Israeli state in peace.

And so we come to the one-state solution, which is now being mentioned more frequently, and sometimes seriously argued for.⁴ Its proponents envision one secular state for historical Palestine in which the civil rights of all citizens would be guaranteed, and in which people from the various religions and ethnicities could live together in equality, freedom, and peace. Such a state would obviously mean the end of the Zionist project and so is vehemently rejected by Zionist Israelis.

In truth, the secular state should not be endorsed by anyone. Its supposed benefits are largely a mirage. There is hardly a nation-state anywhere that doesn't practice serious discrimination against internal racial or ethnic minorities, not to mention their seemingly ineradicable oppression of the female half of the human race, or their determined and universal exploitation of the working class. With rare exception the nation-states of the world are controlled by capitalists. Those few which fall into socialist hands end up colluding with capitalists anyway. For decades marxists have written detailed critiques of "bourgeois democracy," as they called it, exposing it as a fraud. So have anarchists. Kropotkin published a blistering attack on representative government 124 years ago in 1885.⁵ It's as though he had written it last year just for us. The era of representative

⁴Ali Abunimah, *One Country: A Bold Proposal to End the Israeli-Palestinian Impasse*; and Joel Kovel, *Overcoming Zionism: Creating a Single Democratic State in Israel/Palestine*

⁵Peter Kropotkin, "Representative Government," Ch. 13 in his *Words of a Rebel*

government is coming to an end. It is imperative that we make sure that it does end.⁶

This is why it is so important to push for the no-state solution in Palestine. The fact that this seems presently impossible is all the more reason to try hard to get the idea into the air, to get the proposal onto the table. This is the first step. Only in this way will we begin to see how it might be brought about. After all, a decentralized world, without capitalism or states, seems impossible everywhere. But it might not be. We have to start fighting for what we want, and for what is just, and not for what we think we can get. The social organization of the world must be changed in fundamental ways if we humans are to have any hope of surviving the unprecedented crises now facing us, and of creating a livable and sustainable society.

Useful Books

Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine*

Edward Said, *The End of the Peace Process* (revised and updated edition, 2002)

Norman Finkelstein, *Image and Reality of the Israel Palestine Conflict*

James Petras, *The Power of Israel in the United States*

Useful Web Sites

Angry Arab News Service

The Web Site of As'ad Abukhalil

<<http://www.angryarab.blogspot.com/>>

Electronic Intifada

<<http://electronicintifada.net/>>

Uruknet.info

<<http://www.uruknet.info/?p=-6/>>

New England Committee to Defend Palestine

<<http://www.onepalestine.org/>>

⁶A bibliography of literature discrediting representative government can be found online at: <<http://www.neanarchist.net/antielect08/bib>>, entitled "Resource List for the Anti-Elections / Pro-Anarchy Campaign"