

Palestine: No State Solution

Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group

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Contents

Why is this so?	3
What is to be done?	3
The No State solution	4
Libertarian Communism	4

Since its inception, Israel has been oppressing and maltreating the Palestinian people. From its initial War of Independence in 1947–48, through the 6 Day War of 1967, through to the Gaza War of 2009, Israel has treated the Palestinians as inferior (and often as non-existent), expanded its territorial borders and used extreme brutality to suppress resistance. The violence against the Gaza Freedom Flotilla earlier this year was new only because Israel was seen to be giving people from other countries a taste of what it has been dishing out to the Palestinians on a regular basis for generations.

Why is this so?

The fundamental cause of the plight of the Palestinians was the decision of the Zionist (i.e. Jewish nationalist) movement, in the wake of World War II, to establish a “Jewish State” in the British territory of Palestine. All else has flown from this. Without the Jewish State, there would have been no need for ethnic cleansing, no drive for territorial expansion and no point to the discriminatory treatment of the Palestinians. There would have been other problems, but not these ones.

The “Jewish State” concept is problematic because it defines Israel as a state of the Jewish people, rather than a state of its citizens. It is the moral and political equivalent of a White Australia or an Islamic Republic. Israel’s national institutions systematically discriminate against the Palestinian people, with Palestinian citizens of Israel treated as inconveniences at best and, at worst, as an enemy within. A further problem is that, since Zionist ideology carries a particular idea of the territory of Israel (though different Zionist perspectives define the boundaries differently), there has been a constant drive to expand the State to claim the desired territory. Thus, both the settlements on the West Bank and the Apartheid Wall.

What is to be done?

Israel’s defenders point to the Nazi Genocide as a justification for a Jewish State, but two wrongs don’t make a right, even if the initial wrong is as uniquely evil as the Holocaust. Further, neither the appalling regimes of the Arab States nor the crimes of the Palestinian political leadership invalidate the rights of the Palestinian people, whether in Israel, in the Occupied Territories or in the Diaspora. What is required is a solution which provides justice for all. Justice for all includes justice for the Jewish Israelis who, despite everything, have rights as well. Though the Zionists have, like Australia, built a nation on stolen land, a nation has been built.

The essential starting point is that there can be no just solution to the Palestine Question within the confines of capitalism. Where there are interpenetrated peoples, as there are in Israel/Palestine, the vindication of the national rights of one people can only occur through the denial of the national rights of the other. Thus, any Two State solution would result in two or more pitiful Palestinian bantustans, leave the Palestinians within Israel as second class citizens, and abandon the Diaspora altogether. On the other hand, a One State solution would put the boot on the other foot, with Jews within a unitary Palestine being denied the self-determination they so strenuously claim.

The No State solution

The only way out of the dilemma on the Palestine Question is to abandon the concept of the nation state. National oppression in Israel/Palestine can only be abolished if there are no national institutions to fight over and no State to suppress one nation on behalf of another. Obviously, this also necessarily entails rejecting the capitalist system of which the nation State is an integral part, and which cannot exist without it.

The liberation of the Palestinian people, without merely reversing the terms of oppression, can only come about through a workers' revolution to abolish capitalism completely, to make the land and all social resources the common property of all, abolishing inequality and all forms of oppression. Given the present situation in Israel/Palestine, this is not on the immediate agenda, but it does not deny the necessity of the solution. In practical circumstances, the initiative will have to come from the outside, through workers' revolution in the surrounding Arab countries, most importantly Egypt, which has a large working class already. It is essential, however, for those workers' revolutions to transcend the nationalism of the countries in which they occur, since it is only internationalism which will allow the workers to defeat their own capitalist rulers; it is only internationalism which will allow Arab workers to reach out in friendship to the workers of Israel; and only internationalism which can break the Israeli working class from its Zionist rulers.

Libertarian Communism

The task before the workers of Palestine and Israel is thus no different from the task here. It is only to be conducted in more difficult circumstances. We must build a working class movement, based on liberty, equality and solidarity, and fight for a revolution which will re-make society on the same principles. We must abolish capitalism and its State, and we must recognise the folly of building another State in its wake. We must build Libertarian Communism.

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