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Ending Israel's Genocide in Palestine

A Call for an Inclusive State

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The One Democratic State Initiative proposes a democratic, inclusive Palestinian state in all of Palestine, granting equal rights to all regardless of ethnicity or religion. It opposes any exclusive state, Israel's violence in Palestine and urges adherence to the Genocide Convention.

On 5 December 2024, Amnesty International released a report which concluded that the Israeli state is committing genocide in Gaza in the strict legal sense of the term. On 19 December 2024, Human Rights Watch reported on how the Israeli state has intentionally prevented the population of Gaza from accessing water, a necessity of life, and concluded that this amounted to an act of genocide. These reports reinforce the opinions of dozens of Holocaust and genocide scholars, the South African government's testimony before the International Court of Justice, the court's own rulings, and "overwhelming evidence-photos, videos, and eyewitness accounts-documenting the destruction of essential conditions for life".

What we are seeing in Gaza today is the inevitable consequence of the model of European colonialism chosen by the original Zionists. This is not just occupying a colony and dominating it, or even an apartheid form of settler-colonialism that needs the indigenous people's labour, but a model of settler-colonialism that wants the land without the people, as in the Americas and Australia. The Zionist plan to create an ethno-religious Jewish state in a land where only 8% of the population was Jewish in 1914 required that 92% of Palestinians be removed from their land.

'Raphael Lemkin, who lost 49 members of his family in the Nazi Holocaust and who coined the term 'genocide,' had studied the phenomenon historically, and found that settler-colonialism which engaged in what was then called forced displacement and is now called ethnic cleansing, inevitably entailed genocide. Because how do you clear the land of the people living in it? As he knew from experience, by massacres and the threat of massacres, by taking away people's homes and livelihoods and herding them into ghettos, by subjecting them to conditions that make life impossible, and finally by killing all those who remain. This is exactly what has been happening in Palestine since 1948.

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Despite references to the so-called "two-state solution", it was evident from the beginning that the Israeli state had no intention of allowing a Palestinian state to be established on even a fraction of Palestinian territory. The intention of establishing an Israeli state over the entirety of Palestine has been expressed openly in recent years, with Benjamin Netanyahu displaying a map of the region in the United Nations (UN) in September 2023 with no vestige of Palestine.

The two-state solution was finally laid to rest by Israel's Knesset voting overwhelmingly to reject Palestinian statehood on 18 July 2024, making it clear that so long as the Israeli state exists, there will be no Palestinian state. Indeed, according to Finance Minister Belazel Smotrich, the Israeli state should encompass not just Palestine but also extend into Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia.

Given that around 95% of the land controlled by Israel has been acquired through the forcible expulsion of the original Palestinian population, it is not surprising that it rejects both international law and UN principles, which would rule out such a course of action. The participation and complicity of Western nations in these violations ensured the descent of ethnic cleansing into genocide. While the Israeli bombardment of Gaza after the Hamas attack of 7 October 2023 was targeting civilians and slaughtering thousands of children, Western leaders and the mainstream media of their countries justified it by citing "Israel's right to defend itself", or by trying to provide credibility to a flagrant lie.

To suggest that a thief has any kind of "right" to defend stolen property is ludicrous. That right belongs to the person fighting for its return, or the Palestinians who have been doing so every day since 1948. "Beyond the 5% to 6% of land the Zionist land purchasing agencies bought before 1948, the Israelis are living on, and in, stolen property. They will defend it but they have no "right" to defend

what by any legal, moral, historical, or cultural measure belongs to someone else."

So long as the Israeli state exists, its genocide in Palestine will continue, and so will its bombing and occupation of neighbouring states such as Lebanon and Syria. The war with Hamas will also continue, because resistance to genocide is inevitable, and if non-violent resistance is crushed, it will be violent. Israel has murdered peaceful demonstrators in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza, and Zionists in powerful positions in other countries have tried to shut down the non-violent Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement.

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They have arrested and beaten peaceful pro-Palestine demonstrators, including Jews, and punished people expressing support for Palestine by taking away their jobs or university places. In their zeal to crush non-violent support for Palestine, Zionists have teamed up with neo-Nazis like the Alternative for Germany (AfD) in Germany, putting Jews in greater danger of antisemitic violence.

Israel has never been a democracy; no ethno-religious or ethnic state-whether Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, or any other-can be a democracy, because those who do not belong to the dominant group will not have equal rights. At best, it will be an apartheid state; at worst, a genocidal one. In the past, however, Jewish citizens of Israel enjoyed a fair range of democratic rights, but these have been drastically eroded as the country has descended from apartheid to genocide.

Ofer Cassif, the only Jewish member of the Knesset from the left-wing Hadash Party, says, "Alongside genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes, atrocities, occupation, and persecution of Palestinians in their territories, there's also fascism growing stronger in Israel by legislation and by the persecution of citizens, arresting people, beating people, etc. Israel is on the verge of a full-fledged fascist regime." The Israeli state has become a menace even to its own Jewish citizens.

The solution proposed by the One Democratic State Initiative (ODSI) is a democratic, inclusive Palestinian state in the whole of Palestine, "from the river to the sea", in which all citizens will have equal rights regardless of ethnic or religious identity. They answer the question of why it should be called "Palestine" by saying, "For the same reason why Theodor Herzl, Arthur Balfour, the World Zionist Organization, the British Mandate, and the League of Nations called it Palestine, why the 'Jewish Agency for Israel' was originally called the 'Jewish Agency for Palestine', why they considered naming the Jewish state 'Palestine' (and only dropped it in anticipation of partition), and why Shimon Perez and Golda Meir held Palestinian citizenship-because 'Palestine' has been the land's name for over 2,500 years. Unlike the Hebrew word 'Israel', which is exclusive to Judaism and therefore exclusive of non-Jews, 'Palestine' refers not to an Arabic or Islamic identity, but to the geographical area where a democratic state can treat all its citizens equally, regardless of how they choose to identify."

Wouldn't this mean the ethnic cleansing or genocide of Israeli Jews? Not at all.

> Israeli Jews who were born in Palestine, or have parents who were born in Palestine, would have the right to be citizens of the new democratic state on the basis of equal rights.

"Although there is no universal consensus on the conditions that define one's belonging to a society, the principles of *jus soli* ('right of soil', the right of an individual born in a territory to be a citizen of its state) and *jus sanguinis* ('right of blood', the right of an individual to hold their parents' citizenship) are commonly applied. … In accordance with the above, … Palestinian citizenship will be extended to all native Palestinians, including all who were expelled over the past century and their descendants. Citizenship will also be extended to all who were born in Palestine and who wish to become citizens of the new democratic Palestinian state. … At no point shall religious, ethnic, cultural or other identity be a criterion for granting or denying citizenship or residency."

In other words, Israeli Jews who were born in Palestine, or have parents who were born in Palestine, would have the right to be citizens of the new democratic state on the basis of equal rights.

Doesn't the state of Israel have the right to exist?

"The Zionist project has disregarded the basic democratic rights of the (Jewish and non-Jewish) population of Palestine by effecting, with essential British colonial help, the mass immigration of non-Palestinians to Palestine prior to 1948 and by establishing a 'state exclusive to Jews' in Palestine in 1948 with no democratic mandate to do so. The continued existence of a state exclusive to Jews

rather than a democratic state of all its citizens means that the trampling of these democratic human rights is ongoing and is therefore not 'right'. A transition to a democratic state of all its citizens would right this century-old wrong and would be a historic step in achieving just and lasting peace in Palestine and the Middle East."

Is the establishment of a democratic state in place of Israel antisemitic?

"Claiming that a democratic solution is antisemitic implies that Judaism is antidemocratic, and that is antisemitic. … Zionism has used Judaism to justify its settler colonial project … and has effectively conflated Judaism and Jewishness with colonialism in the eyes of Jews and non-Jews alike. It is noteworthy that although Zionism is the only ideology to have succeeded at establishing a state for one identity over others in Palestine, the One Democratic State solution does not single it out as the sole ideology to aim at doing so, and is also opposed to the creation of a state exclusive to Arabs, Muslims, or any other identity."

> …[S]upporters of Palestine should carry on doing what they have been doing-taking part in demonstrations, educating themselves and others about what has been happening in Palestine… participating in the BDS movement…

Indeed, none of what has been suggested above is antisemitic according to the definition proposed by hundreds of Jewish scholars in the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism, provided "the same norms of debate that apply to other states and to other conflicts over national self-determination apply in the case of Israel and Palestine". Thus, for example, one would have to apply the same norms of debate that apply to Ukraine's struggle against Russia for self-determination to Palestine's struggle against Israel for self-determination.

The One Democratic State Initiative suggests that supporters of Palestine carry on doing what they have been doing-taking part in demonstrations, educating themselves and others about what has been happening in Palestine for over a century, participating in the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement, and so on. But, in addition, they emphasise that One Democratic State is the goal, and Palestine's backers must coordinate their efforts with others who share that goal.

Ending Israel's genocide in Palestine is a priority right now. The Genocide Convention has been ratified by 153 countries, but it is considered to be binding even on states that have not done so. Political leaders in all of them are under an obligation to prevent Israel from committing genocide by cutting off all relations with it and imposing full sanctions on it, and punish all those involved in it, from the Israeli political leadership down to every soldier. Failing this, they would be guilty of complicity with genocide, which is also a crime under the Genocide Convention.

We, the peoples of these countries, who have been watching in anguish the carnage which Holocaust survivor Gabor Maté compared to Auschwitz, are under an obligation to put maximum pressure on our political leaders to abide by the Genocide Convention. The Indian National Congress government of newly independent India made the correct decision when it voted against partitioning Palestine and establishing Israel in November 1947. India should reclaim that moral high ground.

Rohini Hensman is a writer, independent scholar and activist who has worked on labour movements, feminism, minority rights, globalisation, and democracy movements, and has been published extensively on these issues.