

# **DIALOGUE**

## **REVIEW FOR DISCUSSION BETWEEN ARAB AND JEWISH ACTIVISTS OF PALESTINE**

**IN DEFENCE OF THE RIGHT OF RETURN, FOR THE ONE STATE SOLUTION**

**END OF TERM REPORT PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH, ARABIC, HEBREW AND FRENCH**

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## Editor's Note

This latest issue of *Dialogue* has come out a bit later than planned, because the including of a discussion on the revolutionary movement and the profound shake-ups in the Arab countries seemed essential to us.

In a call for contributions on the subject, Dialogue sent out the following letter to its correspondents:

“The next issue of *Dialogue* will deal with the relationship between the revolutions and the revolts in the Arab countries and in Palestine. The Middle East peoples’ profound aspiration to democracy (which is the same aspiration of all the peoples of the entire world) runs deep in the Palestinian society, deprived of its fundamental rights for over 60 years now. The slogan chanted on the Tahrir Square in Cairo: “Camp David Agreements, Occupation Agreements!” echo the slogans that can be heard in Ramallah – when they are not being stifled by repression – “Oslo Agreements, Occupation Agreements!”

The magazine *Dialogue*, which for 8 years now has been linking the fundamental demand of right to return to the fundamental demand of one single democratic State on the historical land of Palestine, is soliciting your analysis of the situation, your own point of view.”

This analysis and the facts presented in this issue of Dialogue, speak for themselves. The profound aspiration of the peoples of the entire world to freedom, equality and simply the right to exist know no borders, no reasons of State, no ideology, no international timetable.

Concerning Palestine, would the real exercise of democracy be compatible with refugee camps, racial segregation and the fragmentation of the country? What is stopping the setting up of one single secular and democratic State on all the historical land of Palestine, within which all components would have the same rights?

This is the discussion that the editors of Dialogue propose to pursue.

*The editorial board.*

# Israel Is No "Island of Stability"

By **Miko Peled** (April 12, 2011)

**A**s the battle over the future of the entire Middle East rages on with popular protests demanding change on the one hand and reactionary forces fighting to suppress them on the other, we hear that Israel is being called an island of stability. Being an established democracy for over six decades the Jewish State is heralded as a shining example of a stable, free country the likes of which everyone would like to see all over the Middle East. However, this is merely a smoke screen and there can be nothing farther from the truth. Israel is no "Island of Stability." The struggle for democracy and human rights rages on in Israel just as it is all over the Middle East, and Israel is waging a brutal and bloody war against the forces of change and democracy not unlike its tyrannical neighbors. There is however one difference: Even though the non-violent Palestinian popular resistance movement that is demanding human rights, equality and protection under the law, all of which Israel denies the Palestinian people, has been going on far longer than the other than its counterparts in the region, it receives little attention.

Israeli governments have consistently been reactionary, conservative and highly reprehensible on the issue of civil rights and human rights of the non-Jewish population that they govern. Now that there is no longer a real option to partition historical Israel/Palestine into two states, a clear choice needs to be made: will Israel remain an ethnically racist state where only Jews have rights and non Jews, who make up half of the population, remain without rights or meaningful representation? Or will a democracy emerge that espouses human and civil rights for all who live within it, without regard for race or religion? Just as tyrannical regimes in other parts of the

Middle East need to make way for democracy, the same goes for Zionist Israel.

Not unlike its Western allies, Israel is happy to have corruptible tyrants at its service and to offer them favors and protection in return. In order to maintain its ruthless hold over all of historic Palestine and fight off the Palestinians resistance, Israel needs corrupt, unprincipled tyrants who are bribable and who will be at Israel's disposal. Hosni Mubarak and the Hashemite family are two examples as was the Shah of Iran in his day and these are the ones that are well known. Who knows how many other Arab tyrants are covertly bank rolled by the Zionist state.

There was no surprise that during the uprising in Egypt Israel supported Hosni Mubarak and lobbied heavily on his behalf in Washington and other capitals going against the pro democracy resistance in Egypt; contrary to the claims made by some that the popular resistance in the Arab world is a Zionist conspiracy, Israel will do all within its power to keep the ruthless dictatorships in the Arab world in place so that it can control the Arab world by terrorizing and bribing them. If and when democratic regimes are finally established in Egypt, North Africa, Jordan and Syria it is likely that Israel will not receive the tacit support it currently has on the issue of Palestine.

Since its establishment, Israel has engaged in brutal oppression on the rights of Palestinians. Thousands of Palestinians are imprisoned, beaten and tortured, children are taken from their beds and beaten by soldiers who are armed to the teeth. Now Israel is clearly frustrated by its inability to crush the new waves of popular resistance and as the resistance movement grows and gains more ground and support the Israeli brutality increases as

well. One challenge that still plagues the Palestinians is severe fragmentation.

In an interview on CNN Benjamin Netanyahu claimed that reconciliation efforts between the Fatah and Hamas, something for which Palestinian people have been yearning for a long time, is dangerous and must be jeopardized. Again, considering that consecutive Israeli governments have worked tirelessly to bring about the fragmentation of Palestinian society and politics and that they have been very successful, Netanyahu's statement is not surprising.

Having destroyed Palestine in 1948, Israel successfully created a split between Palestinians who remained within Palestine and those who ended up in the Diaspora. This it did by establishing a series of laws that prohibit Palestinian refugees from visiting their homeland and making it intolerably difficult for those who carry citizenships from countries that are friendly to Israel to enter when they come to visit their homeland. Then, Israel managed to create a separation between Palestinians who live within Israel proper and those in the territories occupied in 1967, the former being considered Israeli citizens, and to deepen the separation through laws that limit marriage between Palestinians in the two areas; then a rift between Palestinians who live in the West Bank and Palestinians in Gaza was deepened by forbidding travel between the two regions. Finally, Israel supported the creation of Hamas to counter Fatah and then fueling a bloody feud between the two. So there is no wonder that Netanyahu wants to maintain this fragmentation that has allowed Zionist state to further its iron grip on Palestine and its people.

The times are changing all around the Middle East including Israel. Like other

tyrants in the region, Israel cannot maintain the current level of violence against the Palestinian resistance without the support of its Western allies. Without the massive cooperation Israel receives from the West, Israel will not be able to maintain its exclusive hold on the land and the oppression of the people and will have to give up its control so as to allow an inclusive democracy to emerge in its place. Rather than let things escalate and allow for more innocents to die, progressive forces around the world need to join hands in condemning Israel and to support the forces that fight for change. What is called for now is a clear demand that all political prisoners held by Israel be released, the separation wall be torn down and that Palestinians be given full equal rights and freedom under the law and that Palestinians be allowed live and travel anywhere within Israel/Palestine.

Just as people of conscience around the world hope to see the old tyrants like Mubarak and Qaddafi toppled, so must they act so that Zionist Israel will be transformed into a secular, tolerant, pluralistic democracy. A democracy in which all citizens enjoy equal rights and have a say in their future. As the drastic changes in the Middle East took place with little warning, one may expect that little warning will be given and that change will happen within Israel/Palestine sooner rather than later. Those who stand beside Zionist Israel now will later come to regret it and the stain of shame will be hard to erase. As it is the Zionist state will go down in history as the lowest and most shameful chapters in the long history of the Jewish people.

**Miko Peled is an Israeli peace activist and writer living in San Diego. For comments or contact please go to [mikoled.wordpress.com](http://mikoled.wordpress.com)**

# Palestine And The Egyptian Revolution: A View From Gaza

By **Haidar Eid** (23 March, 2011)

**W**hen I was asked by a solidarity activist about the impact of the end of the Mubarak regime on the Gaza Strip, my immediate answer was that it would definitely mean the end of the deadly siege that has been imposed on Gaza since 2006. Yet, we in Gaza are still waiting.

The deposed Egyptian regime made it its duty to make sure that the Palestinians of Gaza be kept within the walls of the Israeli-guarded concentration camp. The foreign minister of the former regime, Ahmed Abou Elgheit, in whose presence Israel's winter December 2008-January 2009 war on Gaza was symbolically declared by the presence in Cairo of his then Israeli counterpart Tzipi Livni just days before the attack, became obsessed with "breaking the bones of those who trespass against Egypt's national security."

He was referring to the starving children, men and women of Gaza who, in an act of unprecedented heroism in January 2008, tore down the wall on the Egypt-Gaza border and flooded the streets of the Egyptian town of al-Arish to buy food, milk and medicine, and then went peacefully back to their homes. The old regime's spokespersons and political analysts shamelessly made it their duty to demonize Gazans in order to justify the closure of the Rafah Crossing, the only official border crossing between Gaza and Egypt. Accusations of "terrorism," "vandalism" and "threats to national security" were thrown around.

So fearful of his Gazan neighbors was Egypt's ex-minister of interior Habib el-Adly, who is now behind bars, that he indulged in the hysterical charge that the recent popular Egyptian revolution was caused by "some Hamas infiltrators." The same ruthless minister had also ac-

cused Palestinians from Gaza of being behind the bombing of a Coptic church in Alexandria on New Year's Eve, which killed 21 persons. Indeed now it is el-Adly himself, and Egypt's state security police, who are under suspicion and investigation of carrying out that and other sectarian attacks.

The Egyptian revolution has brought that political farce to an end. No one can deny that this uprising is a social revolution par excellence, one against corruption, despotism and tyranny. But this is Egypt after all, the heart of the Arab world, the pole of pan-Arabism. If Egypt revolts, then the Arab world holds its breath: the repercussions are immeasurable and will be felt for decades to come.

But Egypt itself is also "haunted" by the Palestinian question. One here tends to disagree with the prevailing view that the Tunisian revolution was the only catalyst inspiring the revolt in Egypt. This ahistorical approach ignores some social and geo-political facts about the cumulative nature of the factors leading to revolutions. The protests and strikes by workers at Mahalla undoubtedly played a crucial role in revolutionizing Egyptian consciousness, a consciousness that is known to be characterized by a very rich legacy of rebellions against oppression.

And the Mubarak regime relied heavily on tools of oppression provided by the United States. Not a single pro-democracy movement in the Arab world had been supported by the US, hence the confusion and contradictory statements made by US officials about the Egyptian revolution. It is, then, a revolution for democracy, personal and collective dignity, and against notorious levels of corruption and nepotism.

And yet, no matter how much the Muba-

rak regime and the Ramallah-based Palestinian Authority tried to silence and suppress the links of sympathy and affinity between the Palestinian and Egyptian peoples, these links have always been there.

And here is where I part company with those analysts who take the great Tunisian revolution as the catalyst behind the Egyptian uprising. When one-third of the Palestinian people -- those living in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank -- went to the polling stations in 2006, and voted against the Oslo accords and the racist two-state solution, and against the deformed mini-Arab regime to be created by these accords, in what most international observers considered the most fair and transparent elections to take place in the Middle East, bringing Hamas into office, questions were raised about the long-held orientalist idea of the incompatibility of democracy with Arab culture.

In a revealing climb-down from his June 2009 Cairo speech, US President Barack Obama has since spoken of democracy without ever affirming the right of the Palestinians to freely choose their leaders. But more serious debates and soul-searching questions had started in the Arab world itself, especially in the surrounding countries: if Palestinians, under occupation, could vote freely, why not us, then?

Needless to say, the outcome of the 2006 Palestinian elections was not what Israel, the US and their Arab allies were hoping for. Hence the imposition of an unprecedented tight siege on Gaza, out of existential fear of the spread of real democracy a la Latin America -- a democracy in which people are free to elect parties whose ideologies do not necessarily coincide with US and Israeli interests.

The fiercest rejection came from so-called "moderate" Arab regimes headed by the deposed Egyptian government. Israel decided to close the six gates to Gaza, and the Egyptian regime followed suit by closing Rafah, the only exit Gaza has to the external world. This blockade has, so far, caused the death of more than 600 terminally-ill individuals whose lives could have been saved had they been allowed entry into Egypt, not to mention the devastation it has caused to Gaza society and economy in so many ways. But the siege failed to force the Palestinians of the Gaza open-air prison to surrender, leading Israel to launch the genocidal war that was foreshadowed by Livni's presence in the heart of Cairo. None of the objectives of the war were achieved, to the dismay of "moderate" Arab regimes.

After the war, Egypt began to build with American supervision a monstrous underground steel wall blocking tunnels beneath the border, the only lifeline Palestinians of Gaza managed to create.

Attempts by the Egyptian regime to cover its collusion with Israel and the US were, alas, supported by the Palestinian leaderships' acceptance to start endless rounds of national dialogue in Cairo, again, sponsored by the Egyptian government. The failure of the Palestinian leaderships of all factions to dissociate themselves from the Egyptian regime and stick to the demands of the Palestinians of Gaza by declaring that, after the end of the war on Gaza, any national dialogue should be held in Gaza as long as it is under siege, helped, indirectly, to prolong the Egyptian regime's life.

This is a reflection of the elitist nature -- not to say short-sightedness -- of the Palestinian leaderships with their long-held belief that ties with regimes, rather than

popular forces and civil society, are the way forward. Hence the suppression of all signs of solidarity with the Egyptians in both Ramallah and Gaza in the early days of the revolution.

The Mubarak regime did not only close the Rafah crossing and erect the Wall of Shame, but also prevented any sign of solidarity and support coming from international solidarity activists determined to break the siege. The Viva Palestina convoy and the Gaza Freedom March were treated brutally by Egyptian security.

The only way for some supporters to reach Gaza was by sea, and nine Turkish activists lost their lives as a result of the cold-blooded massacre committed by Israel last May aboard the Mavi Marmara, one of the ships in the Gaza Freedom Flotilla.

But the question raised was about Egypt's indirect responsibility: had the crossing been open for all, those nine precious lives would have been saved. The massacre led to the Egyptian decision to "partially" open the Rafah gate without ending the siege altogether. This step, ironically, coincided with Israel's decision to "ease" the blockade by allowing more Swiss chocolate into Gaza!

The Egyptian people, with their lively grassroots movements, youth, syndicates and unions watched helplessly and with dismay as their Palestinian brethren endured a siege that UN Special Rapporteur to the Occupied Territories, Richard Falk, described as "a prelude to genocide," with the complicity -- if not direct participation -- of the Egyptian regime. But they also saw Palestinian steadfastness in the face of this assault.

The Egyptian regime's complicity un-

doubtedly played a crucial role in radicalizing Egyptian consciousness. The catalytic nature of Mubarak's collusion with Israeli oppression has, for understandable reasons, been ignored by mainstream media. The concept of dignity, collective and personal, as we grew up understanding it, was inspired by the fiery sayings of the late Egyptian revolutionary leader Gamal Abdel Nasser after the 1952 revolution against a corrupt monarch, King Farouk, and his allies, British colonialism.

The slogan "Raise your head, brother, for the age of subjugation is over," formed not only modern Egyptian consciousness and sense of national dignity, but that of the entire Arab world, in general, and of Palestinians in particular. Moreover, Palestine, for most Egyptians, is part of Egypt's national psyche, a deep wound that is yet to heal, in spite of all the babble about "peace" and "reconciliation," a fundamental part of the national self.

That, however, was supposed to change with former Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's gamble -- the 1979 peace treaty with Israel -- that left Egypt firmly in the American camp. Official Egyptian discourse laid the blame for many of Egypt's problems at the door of Palestinians, hence the unprecedented maltreatment of Palestinians, Gazans in particular, at the hands of Egypt's notorious state security. No wonder, then, that the last decision taken by the deposed government was to ban all Palestinians from entering Egypt.

Now the question that begs for an answer is about the future of the Egyptian-Palestinian relationship. The Rafah Crossing is "partially" open for a few passengers but no goods, food or medicine are allowed. Some Palestinians are turned back every day, and the decision taken by the previous government not to grant



Gazans entry via Cairo airport is still in force. The sentiment on the streets of Palestine has, naturally, been supportive of the revolutions in the Arab world and this is in spite of the position taken by the two controlling parties in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to ban all solidarity demonstrations.

Radical change in Egypt should mean radical change in Palestine as well: a pro-Palestine Egypt should mean the end of the siege. But when will we see that? Is it too much to ask? Do we have to "understand" the difficulties the new rulers of Egypt have to deal with, while we

are starving and still besieged in Gaza? If this is the case, why do we, Palestinians of Gaza, have to pay the price? Are all other Egyptian crossings and border posts "partially" open like the Rafah gate? And are we, by posing such questions, still considered "a threat to Egypt's national security?"

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# Democratic Uprisings in Arab Societies and the Palestinian Struggle

By **Jamil Hilal** (April 2011, 3rd)

**B**ecause the popular democratic uprisings in the Arab countries have not yet run their course, it is somewhat premature to make definite statements on the future shape of the region. The mass protests have succeeded, in Egypt and Tunisia so far, in removing dictators, but have not yet swept away the regimes they ruled, and this explains why the street protests have not yet stopped in these two countries. This does not deflect from the fact that a dawn of a new political era has descended and many political actors are wrestling to shape the future course of events. Regardless of the final outcome, it will mean the existence of a different Middle East from that which existed before January of this year. It remains to be seen whether the democratic wave that swept the Arab countries will stop at its procedural dimension (free and fair regular general elections for people to choose their representatives) or will encompass its substantive dimension that enshrines (in law and in practice) the principles of equality, social justice and dignity. This essay focuses mainly on how the popular democratic uprisings in the Arab world are likely to impact on the Palestinian national struggle.

It may be relevant to point out that the path, tempo and reactions of each regime to the popular uprising have been different, as they were (and are) informed by different factors and actors. The same applies to the regional and international reactions and actions towards each. What is common can be found in the overwhelming popular desire for democratic change and for putting an end to autocracy, repression and corruption.

## **Israeli leadership laments the departure of Arab dictators**

The democratic uprisings in the neighboring Arab states did not go unnoticed by the Israeli leadership. Netanyahu, the incumbent Israeli prime minister, likened what happened in Egypt and the region to an earthquake, and did not hesitate to express his sadness for the ousting of Mubarak. He warned of an "Iran next door" scenario in Egypt, and pledged to fence off Israel's peaceful borders with Egypt and Jordan. Many of the Israeli leaders who previously castigated Arab states for their dictatorships are now expressing fears regarding their overthrow in these countries, seeing in democracy a threat that is likely to sweep Islamic radicals into power (not only in Egypt but also in Syria and Jordan among others) and enhance the influence of Iran in the region rather than enhance democratic changes within it.

It is not difficult to see why the Israeli leadership is worried about democratic changes in the Arab world, particularly in its neighboring countries. First, Israel can no longer market itself, internationally, as the only democracy (albeit for Israeli Jews only) in the Middle East. Second, it realizes, as does the United States – its major uncritical champion and supporter – that democracy informs governments and does not (not for long periods anyway) over-ride the opinions of the majority of their citizens. The Arab dictatorships that the United States and Europe have been supporting for decades – in return for their subservience to the West – have either been overthrown, or are in the process of being so, or at least of having their power curtailed. Such changes are likely, sooner or later, to be reflected in changes in these countries' regional and international policy; such a policy is bound to influence their stands towards the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian question. This comes at a time when the world is

increasingly regarding Israel as it came to regard apartheid South Africa.

Israel's political class harbors an instinctive fear of any empowerment of the Arab street. Its foreign policy has been obsessed with the question of security (its own) without concern for the legitimate rights and aspirations of Palestinians and the rest of the Arab region. The Arab dictatorships provided Israel with the necessary "stability" that assured its security. This is why Israeli leaders praise democracy in principle but warn of its perils in practice. In March 2011 Barak, the incumbent Israeli defense minister, explained that "as much as they [Arab dictators] were unacceptable to their peoples, they were very responsible on regional stability. They're much more comfortable [to Israel] than the peoples or the streets in the same countries."

Indeed, the political class in Israel was thankful for the fact that Mubarak guarded its back when it fought wars on its eastern and northern fronts - as has happened many times. Even the Assad regime of Syria was appreciated because of the president's predictability, and his unwillingness to undertake risky confrontations. But there's a deeper motive underlying the Israeli attitude. It is an attitude that sees Israel as a western modern democracy existing in the midst of a backward region. This is the reasoning behind the description of Israel's regional situation by Barak as "a villa in the jungle" or as "an oasis fortress in the desert".

Until early 2011 it was the region's lack of democracy that Israeli leaders used to put forward as the reason for their reluctance to make peace with the Palestinians, Syria, and Lebanon. But, following the eruption of the democratic uprisings in the Arab world their new excuse

is the region's excess of democratic zeal. In response to what has happened in Egypt and elsewhere Israel's prime minister declared that he could not allow his country to agree to the risky "concessions" that a peace accord entails, and called for raising the share of the military in the budget. Mubarak was seen as one of Israel's most reliable and stable allies. He was very much valued by Israel and the United States for his role in containing Hamas, standing against Iranian policies, and in facilitating Israeli-Palestinian talks. In short, the political leaders of Israel (and in the USA) seem to think that democratization in the Arab world is only good if it benefits either or both countries first and foremost.

### **A divided national movement fails to utilize the ramifications of Arab democratic revolution**

Each of the two major conflicting Palestinian factions seems to have drawn beforehand its own conclusions from the democratic uprisings in the Arab region. Fatah, which dominates the political field in the occupied West Bank, has refrained from expressing support for these uprisings, particularly those in Egypt and in Tunisia where the two regimes have sided with Fatah against Hamas. On the other hand Hamas, which has come to control the Gaza Strip, has welcomed the overthrow of Mubarak (but only after his overthrow) whose regime took part in the siege of Gaza and sided with Fatah.

Hamas seems to believe that the coming presidential and legislative elections in Egypt later in 2011 will be heavily influenced by the Moslem Brotherhood movement as it is the most organized political group in Egypt, since the nascent youth movement which led the upri-

sing would not have had sufficient time to organize itself as an effective force for the elections. Hamas hopes that the new president and government in Egypt will be more forthcoming towards it and its policies than the Mubarak regime was. Yet there are no signs that the new regime will, in the near future, adopt policies that favor either Hamas or Fatah. Nor are there indications that the new system in Egypt will, in the near or foreseeable future, rescind the Camp David accords signed between Egypt and Israel in 1978 following which Egypt was neutralized with relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict, thus tilting the balance of power more radically to Israel's benefit.

The fall of Mubarak's regime, once the process is completed, will weaken Israel in that it increases Israel's isolation and empowers Palestinians and strengthens the negotiating position of Syria and Lebanon. Before Camp David accords Israel fought four wars against Egypt at a cost of tens of thousands of lives and at an immense economic price (subsidized by the USA). The Camp David accords effectively eliminated the Arab military threat to Israel altogether; indeed, with the exception of a few missiles from Iraq in the early 1990s, no state has attacked Israel since 1979. The wars that Israel has waged since then have been against non-state actors (PLO (1982), Palestinian Authority (2002) Hezbollah (2006), and Hamas (2008)). The peace treaty with Israel allowed it to reduce its defense expenditures to less than a third of the rate (of GDP) that it was in early 1980s, enabling it to invest heavily in economic growth.

But what the Hamas leadership needs to be aware of is the fact that the strategy of the new Egyptian leadership is not likely to be based on the same political considerations as those of Mubarak; this

means that Egypt's stance toward the Palestinian-Israeli conflict will be informed by the wider regional and international strategy it will articulate. Similarly Fatah should not wager on the reform movement in Syria leading to political changes that will substantively alter its strategy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict, nor will it be based, necessarily, on the factional interests within the Palestinian political movement.

The geo-political cum institutional present polarization between Fatah and Hamas power explains their attitude to the democratic uprisings in the region. Fatah, as was mentioned earlier, has refrained from openly supporting any of the uprisings, because it does not wish to interfere in the internal affairs of Arab states. Hamas similarly took a wait-and-see position towards the Egyptian and Tunisian uprisings but expressed openly its jubilation once the Mubarak regime fell. It also did not hide its support for the Libyan uprising against Gaddafi, but refrained from supporting the uprising in Bahrain, unlike Fatah, which allied itself with the monarchy after the Gulf States intervened militarily in its support. Fatah was, informally, more supportive of the uprising in Syria, while Hamas keep silent regarding what was happening there. Both have missed the significance of the democratic uprisings in the Arab world.

### **The democratic uprisings signal an urgent need for rebuilding the Palestinian national movement**

The impetus for the popular Arab revolutions was overwhelmingly democratic. It was directed against repressive regimes with widespread corruption, together with high rates of unemployment and poverty and a widening gap between the

rich and the poor. In addition there was a loss of what can be termed national self-respect, as most of these countries succumbed to the diktats of regional and international powers. Egypt lost its regional role after it signed the Camp David accords, and the Arab world became dominated internationally by the United States, and with no leaders of its own in the region, its major players were non-Arab (Israel, Turkey and Iran). The democratic revolution in Egypt has opened the way for Egypt regaining the leadership role it lost in the seventies of the last century.

The current geo-political and institutional polarization in the Palestinian political field seems to have disguised the fact that Palestinians have made their own popular uprising in the long fight for national self-determination and freedom. In 1987 they initiated a long intifada (a popular uprising) against the Israeli settler-colonial role, and another intifada erupted in the year 2000. Their national movement (embodied in the PLO as the all-inclusive national organization) had a built-in pluralism of political organizations with differing political, ideological and social underpinnings. The PLO sought, successfully until the very early 1990s, to represent and provide leadership to the various Palestinian communities inside historic Palestine and in the diasporas (shatat), and despite some serious defects and inadequacies (e.g. the quota system, bureaucratization, and over-militarization in the seventies) the PLO survived three precarious and highly tumultuous decades (sixties, seventies, and eighties of the last century), because it embodied national unity, represented the unified national identity and provided leadership to the Palestinians in their different communities. But with the Oslo accords the PLO began to rapidly lose those functions.

The Oslo accords marked the beginning of a new era for the Palestinian political movement: the PLO was, in actual practice, replaced by a self-governing authority (named the Palestinian National Authority) on parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which was to transfer itself into an independent and sovereign Palestinian state at the end of a five-year interim period. This never happened. Instead Israel, as the colonial settler state, used negotiations to expand its colonial settlements, and entered into a process of fragmenting the 1967-occupied Palestinian territory with settlements, military road blocks, and bypass roads for the Israeli Jewish settlers; it built a racist Separation Wall, turned the Gaza Strip into an enormous prison, and imposed a regime of ethnic cleansing over East Jerusalem.

In short the Palestinian Authority disregarded the all-embracing national institution (the PLO), without gaining a state on 22% of historic Palestine, and ended up dividing and fragmenting the Palestinian people. Despite this, the current Palestinian leaders have not drawn the lessons of 17 years of futile negotiations with Israel; nor have they read correctly the message of the democratic uprisings in the Arab world in order to realize the necessity of renovating and rebuilding the PLO, to review critically the so-called peace, and start a nation-wide dialogue for devising a new militant strategy to confront the Israeli settler-colonial and racist project.

Most Palestinians have come to realize that to continue negotiations without a clear well-defined and agreed upon objective is not only futile, but provides a cover for Israel to continue its colonization and creeping ethnic cleansing. Palestinians have also come to realize that to uphold the slogan of resistance without specifying what form it needs to take in

each of the many Palestinian communities (inside Israel, in camps in Lebanon, Syria, and in communities of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and for Palestinians living in the Gulf or in Europe, etc.) is meaningless. Given the Palestinian multi-varied situations and locations, different forms of resistance and forms of struggle are needed that include non-compliance, civil disobedience, mass protests, and boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS), among other forms.

### **Understanding the dynamics of change in Middle East**

The outcome of popular protests for democratic change in the Arab world will not arrive through a knockout blow, but will probably emerge through a war of positions varying in pace and intensity from country to country. What can be said about the emerging contours of the Arab world can be summarized at this moment in time as follows:

First, the USA and the EU can no longer rely on authoritarian and reactionary regimes in the region to guard their interests, as these regimes have either collapsed and been replaced or else destabilized and will be overthrown sooner or later. The West supported Arab authoritarian regimes to secure the stability of its interests there. To this end it ignored violations of human rights by these regimes. But the events that have unfolded since the beginning of the current year indicate that no Arab regime that has been shaken by massive street protests can remain subservient to Western interests and diktat, or can survive for long. The USA and EU have continued their double standards regarding violations of basic human rights and war crimes; they are ready to apply sanctions against the Gaddafi regime (before that the Iraqi,

and Iranian regimes), but not against Israel, or for that matter against autocratic client regimes like Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

The EU has emphasized in its relation with the Arab region, economic cooperation and migration management but totally ignored issues of democracy, national dignity and sustainable development. The USA has busied itself in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in the name of fighting terrorism, but brazenly uses its veto privilege to defeat any resolution in the Security Council that is critical of Israel, even when it commits war crimes against Palestinian civilians, as has been the case so many times. The West must leave Arab societies to sort out their problems and find their path to development without interference or harassment; it needs to cease its politico-cultural patronizing in the pursuit of its own narrow interests. Second, Israel will find itself, sooner rather than later, facing a region that is much more assertive in resisting its expansionist, belligerent, and racist policies. The new Egypt is more likely to seek a more independent foreign policy than that willed on it by the United States and Saudi Arabia. It is more likely, therefore to be supportive of Palestinian rights, and more ready to take on a leading regional role in co-ordination with Iran and Turkey. This will have an impact on the balance of power in the region which will reflect on the Palestinian struggle for self-determination.

The unprecedented popular uprisings in the various Arab countries have brought into the forefront a new political reality: an assertive Arab public opinion that can no longer be ignored. Any political proposal or plan will need the consent of the Arab public before it gains the approval of Arab political leaders. USA and Israel will have to get used to this new reality:

Arab public opinion which was considered to be nonexistent or irrelevant prior to January 2011 cannot be ignored. This raises questions about the present relevance of the Arab Peace Initiative in a new region which is leaving behind it the Saudi era. The emerging era is more likely to show genuine support to the Palestinian cause. Arab popular solidarity with the Palestinian struggle is not a secret.

Third, the democratization of the region has heightened - among the Palestinian youth inside historic Palestine and in the diasporas - the political debate on strategic issues of how to rebuild an effective national movement. We have seen insistent calls, as well as public activity, for national unity that did not ignore the disturbing repressive features acquired by the two political entities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as if Israeli repression were not enough. Recent weeks have seen incessant demands by Palestinians for abrogating the Oslo accords (that have been abrogated, in practice, by Israel years ago), and to refuse the humiliating practice of security co-ordination between Palestinian Authority security forces and Israeli security forces. The Majority of Palestinians would like to see a stop to Palestinian-Israeli negotiations unless Israel completely ceases all colonial-settler activity in the West Bank and the aim of the negotiations, and their legal basis is clearly stated.

Fourth, the recent democratic uprisings have, by the demonstration effect, accelerated the use of the social media as a means to connect youth (who compose a sizeable portion of Palestinians) in the various Palestinian communities (in the West Bank, including Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip). Palestinians in Israel, in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and elsewhere in Europe and the United States are creating a new momentum that is bound to en-

hance the process of re-building a new democratic and dynamic national movement.

Fifth, both of the two major opposed political factions (Fatah and Hamas) will have to read the significance of the democratic uprisings objectively. This does not favor either of the two contending parties (Fatah and Hamas), but demands changes from both. The major demand of the popular uprisings is the establishment of sovereign democratic civil states. The so-called moderate camp to which Fatah has allied itself has received a severe blow with the departure of Mubarak and Bin Ali, and with the upheavals in the Gulf and Yemen. But the so-called resistance camp to which Hamas has allied itself has also been called to account for the totalitarian nature of its rule in Gaza and the need for national reconciliation on democratic basis.

Fatah has to shape up to the Israeli settler-colonial occupation on many issues, including the demeaning security coordination and strategic concessions. Hamas has to understand that raising the slogan of resistance against Israel cannot in any way justify its repression of the opposition in Gaza or the enforcing of its version of Islam on society. The need for democracy, social justice should go hand in hand with the need to continue the struggle for self-determination and national rights. Islamic movements in Egypt and Tunisia have raised the issue of democracy and have come out openly in favor of building a civil state, and not an Islamic state. The demands by demonstrators in Arab capitals for democratization and freedom from subservience to external powers remove pressures that were exercised on Fatah and Hamas by Arab states, and should spur both parties to move towards reconciliation.

Sixth, the geo-political polarization that

has been institutionalized in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since the 2007 legislative elections under pressures from Israel, the Quartet, and Arab regional centers, have led to the two authorities adopting increasingly repressive measures against the opposition, and have undermined a concerted policy against Israel's colonial and racist policies. This has led to widespread frustration, anger and dissatisfaction among Palestinians everywhere. If the sectarian policies continue, then the demand for launching a third intifada against Israel ( already

suggested for mid-May 2011) could easily become to be directed against the two governments (in the West Bank and Gaza) as well as against Israel.

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# Israel: Stuck in the collapsing certainties of tyranny and corruption?

By **Haim Bresheeth** (April 2011, 5<sup>th</sup>)

**A**n important plank of the Israeli anti-Arab propaganda was the pretence that Israel, despite insisting on calling itself a Jewish State, and speaking of 'Jewish democracy', was somehow also the only secular democracy in the Middle East, while all other regimes were either fundamentalist Islamic states, such as Saudi Arabia, or confessional states, such as Lebanon. The pronounced illiberal nature of some of the Arab regimes, and their attitudes towards other religions and cultures, especially in the case of the Wahabis, was a persuasive argument in supporting Israel's westernised value-system. This was so despite the growing and swift Judaisation of the state, and its intensely unequal and racist policies towards the non-Jews under its control. It was a question of comparability – relative to the worst Arab states, Israel looked like an identifiable western democracy, especially to the uncritical eye of the western news media machine, with its *orientalist*, pro-Israeli bias.

It is of course too early to evaluate either the success, exact nature, or the longevity of the Arab Spring of 2011. The shockwaves of this political earthquake are still spreading as these lines are written, and will continue for some time, as the long-term patterns of change clarify and establish themselves. Some patterns are already evident, however, and could be discussed as surprisingly prevalent, and crucially important for any future developments.

The first is the fact that in all the protest movements in the Arab world, and also extending to Iran's Green Revolution of 2009, the Islamic parties and sentiments were all but missing from the process, and played either no roll, or a small and insignificant one in the movement for

change. This was not only in contrast to Israeli predictions, but also of those of the western intelligence community, strongly influenced by Israeli analysis and outlook. Their warnings of the Moslem Brotherhood being behind the Egyptian uprising were so clearly unsupported by events, that the Brotherhood's leadership has come under pressure from its members to play a larger role in the developments...

A related misapprehension, also strongly supported by Israeli propaganda, was the claim that the protest was mainly fuelled by anti-Israeli (and according to some deluded commentators, even anti-Semitic) sentiments, and would by its nature bring about anti-Israeli governments into being, and revive the Arab-Israeli wars. While it is clear that the Egyptian revolt was also directed at Mubarak's servile attitude towards Israel, and his role in enforcing the illegal Gaza blockade, acting as an agent of Israeli policy, the revolt was surely driven by the main complaints – the corrupt, undemocratic and oppressive nature of his regime, which was also what made his reactionary policies towards Palestine possible. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict as such did not play an important role in the Arab wave of protests. It is indeed probable that a democratically-elected Egyptian government is unlikely to continue the Mubarak policies towards Israel, but there was no sign of anti-Israel sentiment as the main driver of the protest. This was crucially an Egyptian protest, concentrating on Egyptian issues – freedom, justice, civil liberties, food and work, and an end to police brutality and the illegalities of the regime and the Mukhabarat.

The reaction of Israelis from across the political spectrum to the Arab Spring

was strikingly unified and telling – not a single voice from the political arena welcomed the incredible wave of democratic energy and action across the Arab world, and the speakers and writers have all voiced deep consternation and concern about the loss of their favoured interlocutors – the various tyrants they have been dealing with, and especially that of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt.

In a Guardian piece published at the height of the Libyan conflict, the Israeli editor-at-large of the liberal Haaretz daily, Aluf Benn, has clearly described the unified reaction:” Even in its third month, the Arab revolution fails to resonate positively in Israel. The Israeli news media devote a lot of space to dramatic events in the region, but our self-centered political discourse remains the same. It cannot see beyond the recent escalation across the Gaza border, or the approaching possibility of a Palestinian declaration of statehood in September. Israel’s leaders are missing the old order in the Arab world, sensing only trouble in the unfolding and perhaps inevitable change”<sup>1</sup>. As Israel has modeled itself as the servant of western interests in the region, it has set itself up as an opponent of the genuine interest of the Arab world and its citizens, by definition, and it finds it difficult if not impossible to shake this role off, to see the new region as an opportunity rather than a further threat. Benn points this out: No serious political figure in Israel has reached out to the revolutionaries, celebrating their achievement or suggesting we need to know them better since they might share values and ambitions with secular, liberal Israelis<sup>2</sup>. Democratic governments in the Arab world will, by definition, less reliable from the Israeli-Zionist point of view – they may, one hopes, be less corrupt and less pliable to pressure from Israel and its

western allies, less willing to serve its interests, and less willing to subdue the Palestinians on Israel’s behalf, as was done so dependently by Mubarak for long decades.

So, one result of the Arab Spring, a seemingly unintended consequence of this complex process of socio-political change, is the fact that unless Israel changes its priorities and behaviour radically, it will find its current *modus operandi* impossible to continue with, even with the level of support it currently enjoys from the USA, EU, and western allies elsewhere. It is no longer a question of presentation – Israel would indeed be unable use the old slogan of the ‘only democracy in the Middle East’, (which was a lie even in the past) but will also have to start behaving more democratically, or it will stand out from its neighbours in a most unwelcome manner. Its brutal and racist nature were indeed increasingly noted over the decades of the occupation post 1967, but were always ameliorated by the undemocratic nature of the region in which it was situated; this may no longer be a likely outcome – the comparison will be made with democratic states, rather than with tyrannies whose citizens are devoid of human and political rights. If Israel chooses, as seems most likely, to continue its illegal occupation and oppression of the Palestinian people, it is more likely to meet with international censure of its policies and actions, probably leading to a global campaign, resembling that of the Anti-Apartheid movement, with boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) being increasingly enacted against it, and forcing it to abandon those policies in the long run, under global pressure.

This putative result of the current conflagration is not only probable because of

Israeli action or inaction, but will be mainly forced as a result of the likely changes in power balance over the next few decades. With the decline of western, American and European power and the rising of the BRIC countries – Brazil, Russia India and China, one is also likely to see a marked rise in the political fortunes of Middle Eastern countries, which under future democratic leadership will find their just place in the pecking order. Egypt under Mubarak was a pawn of the west; Egypt under a democratic government will climb up from its insignificance and servility, to mention just one example. Such likely changes will also bring about changes in the way western powers relate to the Arab world, and are also likely to bring about long-overdue changes to the UN and its Security Council, where the out-of-date, undemocratic veto of the old imperial powers still pertains. A world where the US cannot easily and automatically veto any resolution relating to Israel, will be a very different proposition, and hence Israel's continued angst about the changes in the region and the world are to be understood in the context of the long-term trends, not just the short-term power changes in individual countries. In the long run, the Israeli mission of ridding Palestine of its indigenous population cannot prevail, when we take into account the direction of change.

Now, it would be interesting to examine the likelihood and potential for change in Israel, as the trends of global change must also be evident to Israeli politicians. Could Israel, voluntarily and willingly, offer a major change in its priorities, when faced with the new realities? This question was broached recently by Gideon Levy, writing on the day after Mubarak fell:” The news from Egypt is good news, not only for that country and the Arab world, but for the entire world, in-

cluding Israel. Now is the time to be happy for the Egyptian people, to hope that this amazing revolution will not go wrong. Let us lay aside all our fears - of anarchy, of the Muslim Brotherhood or a military regime - and let this great gamble have its say. Let us not wallow in the dangers; now is the time to bask in the light that shines from the Nile, after 18 days of popular, democratic struggle.”<sup>3</sup> One is left genuinely wondering if Levy has indeed believed in the possibility of such adulation as his own, being shared across society in Israel, or has written the piece ironically, knowing well the impossibility of such a change of heart. The almost palpable feeling of relief which was evident across the globe with Mubarak's departure, was evident by its total absence in Israel – a sentiment that Israel must have shared only with the rulers of Saudi Arabia and Yemen... Indeed what was evident is the opposite – a feeling of despair for the deposed tyrant.

This striking difference between the sentiments in Israel and the rest of the world can only be explained by the many decades of instrumental colonialism, where colonial reality forms consciousness, and where being dictates thought. One is what one does, after all, and it is impossible to continue to uphold liberal and progressive values if one is daily involved with brutalities and injustice. Many Israeli intellectuals try to fool themselves (and the rest of us), claiming that even after four and half decades of iniquitous occupation, they are still holding up human rights and liberal values. This is plainly untenable, and the total lack of fraternity towards the Tahrir Square victory over tyranny, is the clearest evidence of such emotional and intellectual *salto mortale* by Israeli 'liberals' being sheer nonsense. By its very nature, Israeli society has excepted itself from the

great mass of humanity which has expressed its elation with the fall of a brutal regime in Egypt, achieved by unarmed massed with the slogan 'Salmieh' ('peaceably' or 'peacefully') being the most common one. It seems certain that, like the South African Apartheid state before it, Israel will only relent under the most intense political, financial and cultural pressure from the world community. That pressure is now developing swiftly, and is now more likely than ever to lead to the collapse of the apartheid state in the Middle East.

- <sup>[1]</sup>Benn, A Israel is blind to the Arab revolution, in Haaretz, March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011, p. 31, and on <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/mar/23/israel-blind-to-arab-revolution?INTCMP=SRCH>, accessed on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011.
- <sup>[2]</sup>Ibid
- <sup>[3]</sup> Levy, G Israel Must Congratulate Egypt, Haaretz, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2011, and also on <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/israel-must-congratulate-egypt-1.343039>", accessed on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011

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# Peace with a Jewish Imperialist State in Palestine? Never! Peace in Palestine? Possibly.

By Lynda Brayer, lawyer (April 9, 2011)

**Dedicated to the memory of the  
martyr Juliano Mer-Khamis  
murdered 4 April 2011**

**W**ith the latest uprisings in the Arab lands, from North Africa through to Jordan, Syria, Yemen and Bahrain, many are holding their breaths for the uprising to begin in Palestine. They forget, it seems to me, that there were at least two major revolutionary uprisings in Occupied Palestine in little over twenty years: the first uprising or intifada beginning in December 1987 and the second intifada in September 2000. In both cases these were grass-roots uprisings, but the repression that rebounded on the people by Israeli forces was more than helped by the Palestinian leadership, which has always been against a people's revolution to create a government serving the population, rather than a bourgeois revolution serving the elite. The demonstrations following the Egyptian uprising were suppressed both in Gaza and in the West Bank by the Palestinian leadership. There continue to be local demonstrations in Palestine which are non-violent but which the Israelis are dealt with violently. What is even more disconcerting is that despite the low-towing of Palestinian leadership to both Zionist and imperialist capitalist interests, as the latest leaks on Palestine reveal, no Palestinian concessionary cooperation has ever been translated into any general Palestinian political or economic gains, although a miniscule number of the Palestinian elite have benefitted, for example, bourgeois Ramallah. Nothing Palestinians relinquish will ever be able to satisfy the Zionist appetite to make Palestine Arabrein politically and economically, if not physically, thereby disappearing into the trash can of history and allowing for a resurgence and flourishing of the Land of Israel. This term is now in

ubiquitous use on all the Israeli government sites. According to the internet site of the Israel Meteorological Service, a government service which is part of the Ministry of Transport, the mandate given to the British by the League of Nations in 1923, was for the Land of Israel and not Palestine. In other words, between the collapse of the Ottoman empire, and the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948, people lived in the Land of Israel, the a translation of the Hebrew term, Eretz Yisrael, with implicit reference to the bible, and used in place of Filistin, as in arabic or Palestina, as in Hebrew. The logic of this is quite clear: it automatically implies the non-existence of Palestine and hence the non-existence of Palestinians. This attitude is supported by long-established legal and social practices of the Israeli authorities. Arabs born in the territories of occupied Palestine are resident aliens who only have de facto domicile privileges if while they live in the territories. If they leave they have no de jure citizen or nascent citizen rights through the jus soli – legal birthrights in a territory – or jus sanguinis – rights to citizenship through descent. Therefore, in occupied Palestine they have no rights of residence, marriage, family unity, and property and none of the social rights such as the right to work nor the human rights of the rights to expression, freedom of movement, etc. With the latest additions to the Israeli legal system, the absence of Palestinian identity within the Zionist discourse has been reinforced whilst simultaneously, their history has also been obliterated! The Jewish state defines itself as Jewish and democratic - the former a specific term and the latter a universal one. This is an oxymoron, or contradiction in terms identical in form to an open secret . These laws include the deprivation of citizenship from any person committing treason against it, a move preceded by the 1935 Nuremberg

Laws of Germany against Jews. The deprivation of citizenship and the legal gap it creates, deprives a person of his capacity to live in society as he has no protection whatsoever. We know to where the Nuremberg Laws led the Jews and it cannot be presumed that the outcome in the Jewish state will be different, even if the means are different. Furthermore, these laws will deprive organizations of public funding if these values of Jewishness and democracy are not upheld or adhered to, a situation which will require thought police and a strengthening of the system of collaborators amongst the Arab Palestinian population in Israel. We can expect, therefore, that if the crunch in the region grows, we shall see even more reactionary moves against those who were once the loyal opposition, but who will now become dissidents – exactly as in the former Soviet Union. These attitudes and practices are not ephemeral nor merely notional, with the major and over-riding effect being that Palestinians have never been, and are not treated with the dignity befitting them as human beings: that is to say, Palestinians are not recognized nor treated as human. Despite the temptation to use the expression fully human I exclude the adverb fully to qualify the status of being human, because either one is treated as a human being or not. Unbefitting behavior is inhumane: it serves to undermine, weaken and destroy human lives and human society.

That this is both the practice and the result of the oppressing Zionist authorities and the existential reality of Palestinians is undeniable. Beginning from before 1948, plan Dalet, and the endless wars, up to and including the present conditions, one might well argue that both politicide and genocide have characterized Zionist attitudes and practices. For me, the extreme public example, the inhumanity of which bespeaks of barbarism and

can be taken as paradigmatic, was the unprecedented humiliation of Yasser Arafat who was left to both live and work in a half-destroyed building, because he refused to sacrifice Palestinian refugees on the altar of US-Zionist et al capitalist interests, despite all his other capitulations. The lack of respect to a political leader translates, by definition, into genocidal practices against a people, for the simple reason that the absence of a recognized political leadership, treated and respected as such, logically plays out to behavior that does not recognize the existence of a people, or population, which requires and has rights to, such a political leadership with all that entails. This is also seen in the criminal Israeli assassinations of many individuals in the Palestinian political and cultural leadership. Just to remind the readers, that this is not the past about which I am commenting, at the time of this writing, April 9, 2011, Gaza is being bombed by Israel, despite Hamas' reported request for a ceasefire. Once again many civilians have been killed – although I prefer to use the term murdered.

Given this background, it seems to me to be irrefutably necessary to try and identify what a useful political discourse and position should be, taking into account this history. That this is vital is to be seen that Therefore, in the light of this history, to speak of, hope or pray for peace in Palestine is meaningless, and even highly detrimental, if not accompanied by serious political and economic analysis. I should like to put the proverbial cart before the horse, by saying that I believe that peace is not possible in a Palestine controlled by a colonialist capitalist Jewish state backed by Western powers within the present constellation of forces. This Jewish state represents the interests of a world capitalist elite and uses real force and violence with its very real ar-

my while benefiting from real American and international financial backing. Jordan, Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the Maghreb are aligned with the capitalist powers, as is the leadership of Lebanon, Hezbollah and other Islamic groups not being specifically anti-capitalist, if anti-colonialist. Spearheaded, with pun intended, by the United States of America and its Western allies the Arab countries have been forced to come to terms with the Jewish state either through peace agreements or implicitly recognition, in that they have not taken up arms against it. In the latest rounds of war against Lebanon, the Zionist state has initiated the hostilities and therefore has forced a resistance, quite naturally. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were and are being conducted to both control the oil and natural gas and their distribution as well as to prevent the strengthening of any local power which is not pro-Western. Saddam Hussein was not killed because he was another Hitler - but rather because he had regional hegemonic aspirations. The Middle East is vital for Western capitalist development – it contains its main energy sources – oil and natural gas - and there is no replacement for them at the present time, primarily, if not only, because capitalist interests have seen fit to interfere with the development of other sources of energy. It is this reality which preserves and protects the colonialist Jewish state in Palestine, originally underwritten by Britain and huge Jewish financial backing and subsequently supported by the Western powers, and Soviet state capitalism. The discovery of oil in Mesopotamia, the British Raj in India, the Suez canal and many other capitalist interests, all contributed to the insertion of a foreign body, a colony, as per the entire history of western colonialism, in Palestine to serve foreign interests and suppress local ones.

There is an interesting hypothesis which seems to support fully this thesis. In an article highlighting and supporting the Zionist venture as one promoting and protecting capitalist interests, financial and British imperial, represented by both Jews and Gentiles, there is a reference by J A Miller in the November 6/7, 2004 issue of *Counterpunch*, *The Balfour Declaration Revisited*, to an author, I. N. Saad who, in 1970, apparently, wrote an article in arabic positing what lay behind the November 2, 1917 letter of Lord Balfour, the then Foreign Minister of the British government, to Lord Rothschild, the banker, and a leading member of English Jewish community, the so-called Balfour Declaration. According to him this letter was motivated by capitalist imperialist interests who wanted to offer, and did offer to world Jewry, an alternative politico-economic solution to the Russian socialist revolution. In particular, of course, it was directed towards Eastern European Jewry, the majority of whom had been living in the Pale of Settlement under Russian sovereignty with its severe restrictions on freedom of movement, occupation and expression, as well as experiencing pogroms from time to time. The original letter was finally written just before the October Bolshevik Revolution (Julian calendar) but only published directly thereafter. Its background lay in the Menshevik February Revolution of 1917, a popular front government which included both socialists and bourgeois factions. It had overthrown the Czar and his government, with the support of the Bolsheviks, but it had continued the Czar's war obligations which was not supported by the peasantry as it was destroying the country, and it dithered as to the nature of its government, with the Bolsheviks adopting the position that the workers would carry the revolution beyond a bourgeois revolution of the nature of the French Revolution,

towards a socialist, anti-capitalist revolution. Such a government stood in diametric opposition to the Western imperialist powers. It was no secret that many of the leading socialist Marxist intellectuals were also Jews as were a majority of the Jewish proletariat. The vast majority of politically aware Jews were socialists and given the economic situation in which they found themselves it was only natural. The Balfour declaration therefore, deliberately expressed a political option which it hoped would attract Jews, drawing them away from a socialist commitment. Saad posits that the Declaration was written precisely to draw away support by Jews of the Russian anti-capitalist revolution by offering them their own playing field in Palestine. I confess that this proximity of these two events: the Russian Revolutions of 1917 and Lord Balfour's Declaration, had not crossed my mind, although if one takes account of Zionist machinations during the preceding years, it is obvious that the Declaration did not come out of the blue but rather as a result of many contacts and negotiations over the years. One thing is certain, is that Britain and France were losing the war by 1916 and needed American intervention to save them, whilst much Jewish financing was bankrolling the German war effort. Although many have connected the Declaration it to the attempt by the English to attract Jewish finance and American support for its war effort, this does not exclude Saad's hypothesis, which seems to me to be quite apposite. This article by Winston Churchill three years later confirms this hypothesis as actuality. (<http://library.flawlesslogic.com/ish.htm>) But what the declaration did intend is that a Jewish homeland as the Declaration so sweetly puts it, would or could become a bulwark for capitalist imperialist interests in the Middle East. And the rest is history! From a Jewish homeland in Pa-

lestine morphing first into the State of Israel and today into a Jewish controlled Land of Israel, the Zionist state is not only an integral component of world capitalism, but an imperialist state to boot! It exports its capital to Third World countries where it engages in the super exploitation of workers, while drying up the manufacturing of the Jewish state. This internal conflict of Jewish capitalist interests versus Jewish worker interests has not yet erupted but could eventually do so.

To support the thesis that the primary function of the Jewish state is to promote capitalist imperialist interests, it is necessary, if not sufficient, to take account of the geographical placement of the Jewish state which, whether by design or by accident, is shaped as the tip of an arrow piercing into the very heart of the Arab world, separating Arab North Africa and Egypt from the Arab Near or Middle East thus destroying territorial contiguity between these regions, which historically have considered themselves conjoined religiously and ethnically, linguistically and culturally. In this regional context the Jewish state functions as a foreign implant both within Palestine and within the wider Arab world, which because of its nature, undermining, fragmenting and destroying what it can – both for its own and wider imperialist benefit. It has destroyed, and continues to destroy, the matrix of unity expressed in the shared cultural and social features of the region: the arabic language, Islam and Christianity, shared histories, and that overall ethnic-socio-cultural unity, if not actual union, known by the term *watany*, or people hood.

To understand the reactionary nature of the Jewish state in the region, and its horrendous effects, one merely has to imagine what would happen were there to



occur the removal of the barriers set up by the Jewish State in all of Palestine and the dismantling of the Zionist army and its agencies. There would be no separate Gaza or the West bank, nor would there be Israel, the Jewish state. Instead, the free movement of people would create a reality which today it is difficult to imagine. No longer would Jewish Zionist interests take precedence over ordinary human lives and needs but the fluidity of movement would actually erase those notional categories of differences which have been produced in order to justify privilege and protection denied to others. Such fluidity would work in favor of Arab union, rather than Arab fragmentation, and no doubt would contribute to sweeping away the present pro-Western Palestinian political structures.

If this is a realistic vision and hope for a decent human future, why should or would any Arab or Palestinian want a two-state solution which, by definition, can and will only perpetuate fragmentation of the Arab world, serving as a break on its own, and the regional, development? The only people who could be interested in such a solution, are those who would benefit from it, and the only people who could benefit, are those who would be in power and their sycophants. Yet this power would and must be completely subservient, as it is today, to both Zionist and capitalist interests – because it presumes no weakening of the Zionist state military entity nor a weakening of foreign capitalist power.

If I am correct in my understanding, how should those who oppose a Jewish Zionist state develop a strategy for its end? My first observation is that any analysis which does not take account of this colonialist imperialist reality undermines any possibility of serious understanding of the situation and a subsequent move to

resistance and change. In this regard, I would like to bring five discourses which serve to debilitate and undermine resistance to these foreign destructive powers either by centralizing or stressing issues which are incidental or merely symptomatic, and thus missing the central point, or by leaving out or ignoring the elephant in the living room completely. The first three discourses combine into a triple critique of Israel which is completely isolated from the question of imperialist capitalism. They assert the following, either separately or together as follows: a) support of the Jewish state is contrary to America's real interests, b) the huge funding to Israel could be better spent in the United States and c) the US is perceived as a victim of Israeli interests, forced upon it by the nefarious doings of the Israel lobby and the Israeli government. I have never found out what the American interests are that are being harmed through American support, unless these critics think that American can have all the benefits of the Jewish State while suffering none of its consequences, which would mean that the Arab masses would love the Americans – no doubt for their democracy. And yet, there are no American interests harmed by its support for Israel because the nature of the American imperialist capitalist beast is against the people by definition. At the same time, none of these critics mention the benefits to the USA in this transaction which include, amongst other benefits the following:

- 1) the inestimable value of the geopolitical fragmentation as mentioned above;
- 2) the biggest base camp in the Middle East without the need for one American ground soldier;
- 3) the best training and testing ground for new equipment;
- 4) that foreign aid is spent inside the United States and paid to American corporations;
- 5)

the US enjoys shared intelligence with the Israeli intelligence forces; and 6) that the Jewish state is a completely reliable strategic ally, and etc.

Yet these critics consider themselves American patriots who promote, whether explicitly or not, American exceptionalism and purity, while abstaining from condemning American war making and its undermining of democracy all over the world. Their lack of understanding of the political and economic framework of American actions in the world, serve merely to sustain such actions.

The fourth argument is the moralistic criticism of Israel's wrongdoing and concentrates on the evil deeds that the Zionist entity perpetrates against the Palestinians, yet once again without putting this critique in any overall, and comparative, political and economic framework. It is to be found amongst so-called Leftist Jews, many of whom remain Zionists, and some Christian groups. Some of this moralistic criticism is contextualized using the Bible to counter Zionism's biblical claims and to show up Israel's bad behavior. Most of the American and European-based moral criticism does not put its own country's atrocities within the same basket as that of Zionism, thus missing out on the integral relationship between the Western powers and Israel. Furthermore they fail to understand the necessity of these atrocities in order to maintain control and hegemony by and for capitalist interests. These people wish for a kinder and more democratic Israel. What is not understood is that the Jewish state, qua imperialist colonialist state, cannot reform itself into a decent democracy - and one questions whether such an animal exists within the capitalist framework. Its purpose was, and remains the defense of capitalist interests and if it were to suddenly morph into a Kingdom

of Jesus, the United States and NATO would bomb it into smithereens – not unlike Iraq.

Finally I would like to tackle the discourse of national liberation and the purported freedoms which it is expected to deliver. I do not wish to belittle the throwing off of the shackles of colonialism, but the history of the second half of the twentieth century has proven that without independence free from the capitalist stranglehold, the only beneficiaries in the liberated ex-colonies are the elites of the colonized. The case of South Africa, where the ANC reneged on its Freedom Charter, provides the latest example of the hollowness of the promises of liberation when it does not disconnect itself from capitalist imperialist interests. Most Black South Africans supported the African National Congress because they thought that the Freedom Charter's socialist program reflected the ANC's political program on taking power. Little did they dream that the ANC had sold out to capitalist interests even before the public negotiations began, the results of which were then justified as a historic compromise which prevented bloodshed. What is never mentioned is the continuing toll in human lives that the profit motive of capitalism incurs, nor the destruction of lives that it leaves in its wake. The statistics indicating standards of living and well-being in South Africa are worse at this time after liberation than they were under the apartheid government. The failure of all of the nationalist movements which arose following the capitalist state's loss of their colonies, was owing to neo-colonialist actions, such as the use of financial instruments, together with physical force, which the former colonialist governments used against the newly liberated nations. In this sense Cuba was an exception, but it is feeling the crunch at this time. What we have

seen therefore, In this connection, that the democratic option is a bourgeois capitalist option, not a socialist option, the institutions of which, such as courts, the legislature, the banks, the police and the economy all promote only bourgeois interests, that is, capitalist interests, as opposed to the promotion of the well-being of the entire population.

The implications therefore, are that national liberation can only truly take place outside of the capitalist framework, and in order to theorize productively we have to use not only marxist tools of analysis, which are the only tools we have to critique capitalism and imperialism, but we must especially, develop a theory of power, its structure and application against bourgeois capitalist power. There is much anti-capitalist writing today, but it seems to me that we have not yet cracked the nut of the nexus of power that is able to counter bourgeois power and institute an organic system, in the way that capitalism works as an organic system – which is to say, above and beyond the wishes of individuals. This new theory must go beyond the doctrinaire dogma of the messianic proletariat which has not pro-

ven itself to be the class, or force, which can, or has, managed to overthrow capitalist power. To merely repeat the mantra that the proletariat is the expected Messiah does not accomplish this task.

Finally, it seems to me that as human beings who can, do and must think, each one must decide how he or she wants to be human: in co-operation sharing this world with others, or in competition against others, each one accumulating wealth and resources and power to the best of his or her ability and to hell with the world. The first option involves societies built on cooperation and recognition of mutuality between persons, that is to say, on principles which promote, protect and nurture human life and our planet, while the second option sacrifices human life and our planet to Mammon – the Golden Calf which today stalks the world like the Angel of Death.

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# An independent homeland or bantustan in disguise?

By **Haidar Eid** (04 May 2011)

**T**he induced euphoria that characterizes discussions within the mainstream media around the upcoming declaration of an independent Palestinian state in September, ignores the stark realities on the ground and the warnings of critical commentators. Depicting such a declaration as a “breakthrough,” and a “challenge” to the defunct “peace process” and the right-wing government of Israel, serves to obscure Israel’s continued denial of Palestinian rights while reinforcing the international community’s implicit endorsement of an apartheid state in the Middle East.

The drive for recognition is led by Salam Fayyad, the appointed prime minister of the Ramallah-based Palestinian Authority. It is based on the decision made during the 1970s by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to adopt the more flexible program of a “two-state solution.” This program maintains that the Palestinian question, the essence of the Arab-Israeli conflict, can be resolved with the establishment of an “independent state” in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital. In this program Palestinian refugees would return to the state of “Palestine” but not to their homes in Israel, which defines itself as “the state of Jews.” Yet “independence” does not deal with this issue, neither does it heed calls made by the 1.2 million Palestinian citizens of Israel to transform the struggle into an anti-apartheid movement since they are treated as third-class citizens.

All this is supposed to be implemented after the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the West Bank and Gaza. Or will it merely be a redeployment of forces as witnessed during the Oslo period? Yet

proponents of this strategy claim that independence guarantees that Israel will deal with the Palestinians of Gaza and the West Bank as one people, and that the Palestinian question can be resolved according to international law, thus satisfying the minimum political and national rights of the Palestinian people. Forget about the fact that Israel has as many as 573 permanent barriers and checkpoints around the occupied West Bank, as well as an additional 69 “flying” checkpoints (“Promoting employment and entrepreneurship ...,” Food and Agricultural Organization, 2010). And you might also want to ignore the fact that the existing Jewish-only colonies and roads and other Israeli infrastructure effectively annex more than 54 percent of the West Bank.

At the 1991 Madrid Conference, then Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir’s hawkish government did not even accept the Palestinian “right” to administrative autonomy. However, with the coming of the “dovish” Meretz/Labor government, led by Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, the PLO leadership conducted behind-the-curtains negotiations in Norway. By signing the Oslo accords, Israel was released of the heavy burden of administering Gaza and the seven crowded cities of the West Bank. The first intifada was ended by an official — and secret — PLO decision without achieving its interim national goals, namely “freedom and independence,” and without the consent of the people the organization purported to represent.

This same idea of “independence” was once rejected by the PLO, because it did not address the “minimum legitimate rights” of Palestinians and because it is the antithesis of the Palestinian struggle for liberation. What is proposed in place of these rights is a state in name only. In

other words, the Palestinians must accept full autonomy on a fraction of their land, and never think of sovereignty or control of borders, water reserves and most importantly, the return of the refugees. That was the Oslo agreement and it is also the intended “Declaration of Independence.” No wonder, then, that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu makes it clear that he might agree to a Palestinian state through negotiations.

Nor does this declaration promise to be in accordance with the 1947 UN partition plan, which granted the Palestinians only 47 percent of historic Palestine even though they comprised more than two-thirds of the population. Once declared, the future “independent” Palestinian state will occupy less than 20 percent of historic Palestine. By creating a Bantustan and calling it a “viable state,” Israel will get rid of the burden of 3.5 million Palestinians. The PA will rule over the maximum number of Palestinians on the minimum number of fragments of land — fragments that we can call “The State of Palestine.” This “state” will be recognized by tens of countries — South Africa’s infamous bantusan tribal chiefs must be very envious!

**By creating a Bantustan and calling it a “viable state,” Israel will get rid of the burden of 3.5 million Palestinians.**

One can only assume that the much-talked about and celebrated “independence” will simply reinforce the same role that the PA played under Oslo. Namely providing policing and security measures designed to disarm the Palestinian resistance groups. These were the first demands made of the Palestinians at Oslo in 1993, Camp David in 2000, An-

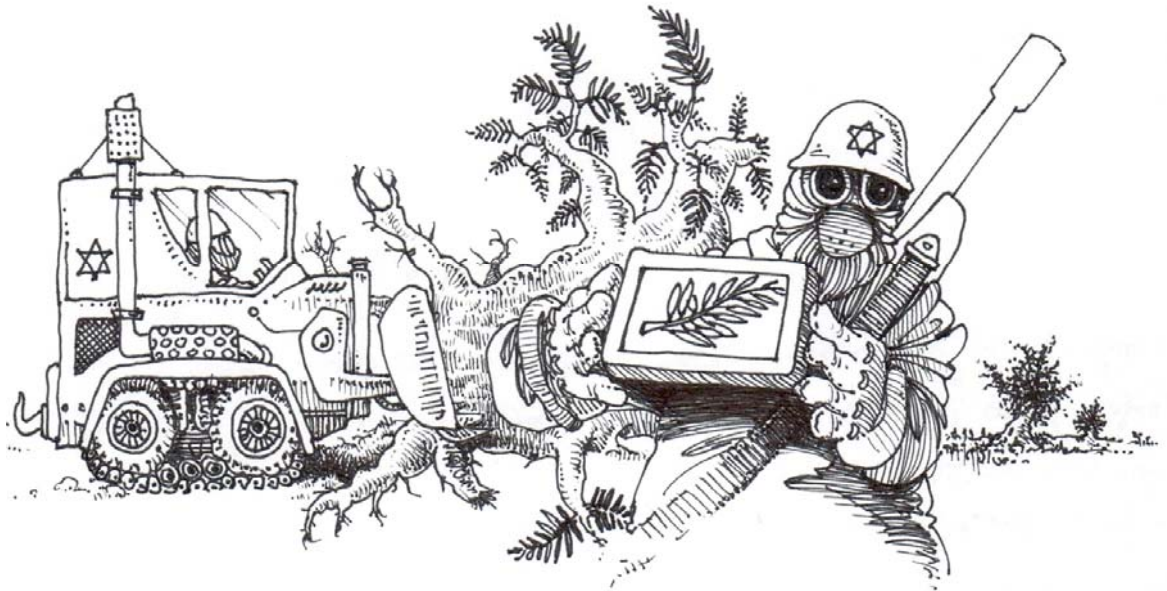
napolis in 2007 and Washington last year. Meanwhile, within this framework of negotiations and demands, no commitments or obligations are imposed on Israel.

Just as the Oslo accords signified the end of popular, nonviolent resistance of the first intifada, this declaration of independence has a similar goal, namely ending the growing international support for the Palestinian cause since Israel’s 2008-09 winter onslaught on Gaza and its attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla last May. Yet it falls short of providing Palestinians with the minimal protection and security from any future Israeli attacks and atrocities. The invasion and siege of Gaza was a product of Oslo. Before the Oslo accords were signed, Israel never used its full arsenal of F-16s, phosphorous bombs, and DIME weapons to attack refugee camps in the Gaza and the West Bank. More than 1,200 Palestinians were killed from 1987-1993 during the first intifada. Israel eclipsed that number during its three-week invasion in 2009; it managed to brutally kill more than 1,400 in Gaza alone. This does not include the victims of Israel’s siege in place since 2006 which has been marked by closures and repeated Israeli attacks before the invasion of Gaza and since.

Ultimately, what this intended “declaration of independence” offers the Palestinian people is a mirage, an “independent homeland” that is a bantustan in disguise. Although it is recognized by so many friendly countries, it stops short of providing Palestinians freedom and liberation. Critical debate — as opposed to one that is biased, demagogic — requires scrutiny of the distortions of history through ideological misrepresentations. What needs to be addressed is an historical human vision

of the Palestinian and Jewish questions, a vision that never denies the rights of a people, which guarantees complete equality and abolishes apartheid — instead of recognizing a new Bantustan 17 years after the fall of apartheid in South Africa.

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By Albert, for the review Dialogue

# There will be no Palestinian State, but rather the Decomposition of all the Peoples of the Region

By **François Lazar** (April 28, 2011)

**I**n the same vein as his predecessors, Mr. Alain Juppe (the French Secretary of State) has just taken his turn at making a declaration favoring the constitution of a “Palestinian State”. In fact, he announced during a colloquium on April 16<sup>th</sup> that “the aspirations of the Palestinian people were no less legitimate than the aspirations of the other peoples of the southern Mediterranean. Israel also has the right to live in peace. That is why, in the coming months, the idea of a democratic, viable, continuous Palestinian State living in peace and security alongside the State of Israel need go from oft-repeated incantation to reality (...)” A little over a year ago, in February 2010, Bernard Kouchner expressed his belief that a “rapid” constitution of a Palestinian State – putting the creation of a Palestinian police force as well as economic aid from the European Union first (and we know what that means: the setting up of special economic zones that are totally deregulated). Flying in the face of a reality that sees the control of the Israeli state imposing itself more and more on the territories that are still Palestinian, that sees the daily murders, exactions and humiliations that are committed against Palestinian women, men and children, all of our ministers and heads of State are lining up to speak of hope and equality.

The content of the State that Mahmud Abbas — the non-elected president of the Palestinian Authority — defends in each of his diplomatic tours, remains an imprisoned police State. It is imprisoned in that it is surrounded by an eight-meter high wall, impassable barriers and military check-points. It is a police state because, in order to contain the hopes of the refugees to their right to return, to freedom and to the equality of the rights of the Palestinian population of the West Bank, which are incompatible with the

existence of a predator and racist Israeli State, the United States and the European Union have furnished the Palestinian Authority with an over-equipped police force whose essential function is to supplement the Israeli army and to protect the occupant against any revolt or protestation by the occupied. The State that we are talking about could not include the Gaza Strip, under the control of Hamas — whose only demand is to be at the head of the Palestinian Authority, instead of the corrupt leadership of Fatah. With or without the Gaza Strip, it would be without geographic contiguity and, as such, a sole and unique case in the entire world.

As for the Palestinians on the inside, subjected to profound racial and social segregation, they simply don't exist for the likes of Obama, Juppe and Kouchner. A State without an airport, a State without sovereignty, an “archipelago” State made up of Bantustans like so many dotted islands without geographical contiguity, is not a State. The proclaiming of this State, however, does serve several objectives: first, keeping in place the mafia-like regrouping, backed by the IMF and the European Union, that is currently in power in Ramallah; secondly, doing away “officially” with the unity of the Palestinian people, wherever they are, by denouncing any claim to the right to return; and thirdly, preserving the State of Israel.

This last point needs some clarification. In a Middle East that is unpredictable and unstable from imperialism's point of view, the State of Israel is not only a factor of order. It represents the regional outpost of a society based on the private ownership of means of production, whose connections with the American economy and political class have become inextricable. Confronted with revolt and

revolution in the Arab countries — which are regional expressions of a universal movement against oppression and exploitation — the State of Israel, which is rightly considered by the Arab peoples as the military arm of the USA in the region, has been seriously shaken. It remains only the more dangerous, for its neighbors as well as for the Jewish populations living there. The problem is that Israel can only transform itself within the framework of Zionism... and Zionism is Israel.

Mahmud Abbas, flanked by his Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, a former senior executive of the IMF who never changed partners, only acts with the specific agreement of the White House. As direct agent of imperialism, he doesn't have a free hand. Hamas, whose essential strength in the isolation of the West Bank, remains the favorite bogeyman of the Israelis. Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister who is preparing a trip to Washington to denounce any unilateral recognition of a Palestinian State, has invoked the lack of results of a "peace process" that never existed and will not break with the Zionist settlers, whose representative he is. Facing upcoming presidential elections in America, Obama cannot afford to even suggest re-opening negotiations that at best will never result in anything but a temporary status quo. Not only is it a total impasse, but also it makes the State of Israel — founded on the negation of the Palestinian people — more and more appear to the eyes of the whole world as what it has always been: a colonial type of State, a foreign body in the region, a warmonger.

Here a major question appears: in what way would the fundamental democratic aspirations of the Palestinian people be incompatible with the aspirations of the Jewish populations living in the region?

In Tunisia, in Egypt, the regimes of Ben Ali-Mubarak (corrupt torturer regimes based on the looting of the peoples for the account of the multinationals) were justified as being the ramparts of "Islamism". For the leaders of this world, any justification is valid when it comes to defending their interests and their profit. The media under orders have for a long time now specialized in acknowledging this political necessity.

**The "Palestinian State" has only been devised to enable the maintaining of the Israeli State, within which a growing number of Jewish populations are sinking rapidly into poverty and the worst uncertainty**

The "Palestinian State" has only been devised to enable the maintaining of the Israeli State, which does indeed exist and within which a growing number of Jewish populations are sinking rapidly into poverty and the worst uncertainty. Democracy and equality of rights are not divisible. The main obstacle to the establishing of a single democratic and secular State over all the historical area of Palestine, a single structure in which all the components of the region could live in equality, is the perpetuating of a failed mode of production — that of capitalism — based on making people believe that they are bound to the interests of their leading class. The revolution led by the Tunisian people, the revolutionary mobilization of the Egyptian people have once again revealed all the lies of this enslaving vision, whose goal is to divide the people amongst themselves for the greatest profit for a handful of thieves.

**François Lazar is member of Dialogue editorial board**



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