

# Just Peace from the river to the sea

Victoria from Lebanon

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In Palestine, 'peace' has become a euphemism for the prolongation of the status quo and the Israeli occupation. Many peace activists prefer the term *just peace* [1] when talking about the conflict in Palestine and Israel. A just peace includes the end of Israeli occupation, equal rights for all citizens living on the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, and the right of return to all Palestinian refugees.

## An asymmetric conflict

When we talk about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, many people often have in mind a symmetric war between two entities, the Palestinian entity, and the Israeli entity that happen to coexist on the same land. However, although the conflict took different shapes throughout history, it was never symmetric.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict originated in the late 19th century when Jewish settlers, inspired by Zionist ideals, began migrating to Palestine to reclaim their biblical homeland. From 1917, Zionist activists, supported by powerful colonial forces such as Britain and the allies, aimed to establish a Jewish state in historical Palestine, displacing the indigenous Palestinian population. At that time, Britain had colonized historical Palestine and enabled the establishment of a Jewish state disregarding the presence of the Palestinian people.

Between 1917 and 1948, Palestine witnessed great waves of the arrival of European Jews escaping European antisemitism. The newcomers were a mix of refugees looking for a safe place and Zionists claiming the land and aiming to expel the Palestinians living there. 150,000 Europeans arrived and settled in Palestine during this period, representing around 20% of the overall population at that time. British military forces suppressed Palestinians' protests against British rule and the Zionist agenda with violence, imprisonment without charges, home demolitions, and collective punishment against villages and families [2]. In parallel, Zionist groups sometimes violently emptied Palestinian villages through violence or intimidation. By 1948, more than 200 villages were emptied.

Following the holocaust, the UN adopted a resolution in 1947 calling for the formation of an Israeli and Palestinian state, dividing the historical Palestine in two. Palestinians and other Arab countries were opposed to what they saw as a land grab from European colonial powers. Still, Jewish settlers unilaterally declared the formation of the state of Israel the following year. The independence declaration was accompanied by a war with Arab countries and the expulsion of the majority of Palestinians living within the borders of the new country. At least 750,000 Palestinians - over 80% of the population- were made refugees, losing their land, homes, and other belongings in what

became known as the "Nakba" ("catastrophe"). Thousands of Palestinians were killed in dozens of massacres, 500 Palestinian towns and villages were destroyed and or taken over by Israelis [2, 3]. Today, refugees displaced during Israel's creation and their descendants number approximately 7.1 million people.

## **One state, unequal rights**

Today, Israel is a powerful state that has almost complete control over the remaining majority of historical Palestine including the Palestinian territories.

Since the declaration of the state of Israel in 1948, Israel has been attacked several times by Arab states in support of the Palestinian cause. Each time Israel won due to the support of the US and took more land as a result of what originally was supposed to be the Palestinian state. Today Israel has almost complete control over most of the remaining Palestinian territory, imposing curfews, checkpoints, and illegal imprisonments of dissidents, and completely controlling the movement of people within the territory. Moreover, the Israeli state has been systematically supporting illegal settlements of Israeli people inside the Palestinian territories of the West Bank. These settlements happen at the expense of Palestinians living there, who are systematically expelled and their houses destroyed.

Practically, what Israel has created today is one single state that is in control between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. It's a state with great inequality, with some citizens having all the rights and others none.

## **The path to a just peace**

My perspective of peace is a democratic, secular, state where all citizens have equal rights. The journey towards this vision is a long one that starts with an urgent ceasefire of the Israeli war on Gaza which has already killed 28,730 as I am writing this article. It also involves halting Israeli government-backed settlements and settler violence in the West Bank, implementing policies to ensure equal rights between Palestinian and Israelis as well as enabling the return of Palestinian refugees.

Drawing parallels with South Africa's transition from apartheid to peace, three key pressures promoting peace emerge 1) Palestinian resistance against occupation and oppression, 2) Internal pressure from Israelis to end the occupation, and 3) International community pressure on the Israeli government.

Palestinians themselves have tried resisting in so many ways and forms and have been documenting their oppression both in Gaza and the West Bank. Here are some Instagram accounts to follow to get more familiar with the situation:

@mohammedelkurd – Palestinian writer from occupied Jerusalem

@sbeih.jpg – Palestinian posting resources and updates

@anat.international – Palestinian with family in Gaza right now – for education, sharing stories

@letstalkpalestine – For updates, history, and infographics

@byplestia – Palestinian journalist in Gaza

@wizard\_bisan1 – Palestinian journalist in Gaza

@motaz\_azaiza – Palestinian journalist in Gaza

@hindkhouday – Palestinian journalist in Gaza

Additionally, here is a compilation of political and cultural resources about Palestine:

[https://actionnetwork.org/user\\_files/user\\_files/000/098/772/original/All\\_Out\\_Palestine\\_Toolkit\\_3.0.pdf](https://actionnetwork.org/user_files/user_files/000/098/772/original/All_Out_Palestine_Toolkit_3.0.pdf)

<http://www.passia.org>

<https://palopenmaps.org/en>

<https://decolonizepalestine.com>

<https://www.visualizingpalestine.org>

As it is now, the Israeli public often remains uninformed about the extent of their government's policies, as mainstream media tends to dehumanize Palestinians, labeling them as terrorists. Realities, such as civilian casualties in Gaza, are downplayed, and journalists face threats from the Israeli government. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reports growing numbers of journalists arrested, killed, injured, or threatened by Israel[4]. Additionally, Popular social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook have been systematically censoring peaceful support of Palestine as documented by Human Rights Watch [5].

The international community's perception of Israel has shifted, with growing awareness of the ongoing occupation and oppression of Palestinians. Major cities have witnessed substantial protests advocating for a ceasefire and the end of the occupation. However, the global response to the current situation in Israel has been restrained, influenced by the unconditional support the U.S. provides to Israel and Germany's historical guilt from the Holocaust, which affects its stance on the Palestinian issue.

## **How can people from Japan contribute**

When it comes to such big violence, it is often hard for individuals to know how to contribute.

Some ways that can help from Japan are:

- 1- **Protesting.** Gather and distribute leaflets to explain the situation.
- 2- **Contacting elected officials.** Write letters and messages to the elected officials asking them to take a stance against Israel
- 3- **Boycotting Israeli products.** The BDS movement is an international campaign called for boycott, divestment, and sanctions against Israel by Palestinian citizens to end Israel's apartheid policy. The BDS movement uses targeted boycotts, a method that has been historically successful in many parts of the world, including the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, the civil rights movement in the United States, and the anti-colonial struggle in India.  
Initially, the BDS guidelines for Japan [5] include the boycott of Itochu Corporation due to its ties with a major Israeli defense company. Itochu received multiple calls from the civil society to end its collaboration with the Israeli defense company. In February, Itochu finally announced the plan to end the collaboration due to the ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) — the top court of the United Nations — and the guidance that is given by Japan's Foreign Ministry to observe the court's findings in "good faith".  
Additionally, BDS call for a boycott of Israeli agricultural products and processed products from Israel. It might also be useful to request major supermarkets that handle products from Israel to stop doing business with them by sending emails, inquiry forms, or protesting in front of the supermarket. Examples include ビック酒販, エノテカ, and リカーマウンテン which sell wine produced in Israeli settlements.
- 4- **Donating.** to associations helping on the ground such as Palestine Children's Relief Fund, [baitulmaal.org](http://baitulmaal.org), Doctors Without Borders
- 5- **Sharing information on social media.** Spreading awareness through social media could make other people curious to understand more the situation.

[1] Justpeace: "Peace based on justice, just peace." The word "Just" in Just Peace means "fairness and justice," but it includes not only fairness and justice in one's own region, but also fairness and justice in other regions, societies, and countries. In other words, "peace that is built at the expense of some people or regions is not just peace," and "peace that is built at the expense of others is not peace."

[2] Rashid I. Khalidi (2017) Historical Landmarks in the Hundred Years' War on Palestine, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 47:1, 6-17, DOI: 10.1525/jps.2017.47.1.6

[3] Pappé, Ilan. A history of modern Palestine. Cambridge University Press, 2022.

[4]<https://cpi.org/2024/02/attacks-arrests-threats-censorship-the-high-risks-of-reporting-the-israel-hamas-war/>

[5] <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/12/20/meta-systemic-censorship-palestine-content>

[6] <https://note.com/bdsjapan/n/n9fef3f7e00a4>

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