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زبانهای اروپایی

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26.10.2023

The Everyday Violence of Life in Occupied Palestine

Author Bio: *This article was produced by [Globetrotter](#).*

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Source: [Globetrotter](#)

Tags: Middle East/Israel, Middle East/Palestine, War, North America/United States of America, Biden, Time-Sensitive, United Nations, Asia/India, History

[Article Body:]

Driving along the Jordan River Valley in the Occupied Palestine Territory (OPT) of the West Bank is a stunning experience. The road is officially called Highway 90. The arable and irrigated land along this road is held militarily and [illegally](#) by Israeli settlers, many of whom are not actually Israeli citizens, but residents from the Jewish diaspora. A United Nations Commission [report](#) published in 2022 showed that this settlement activity is a crime against international human rights law (transfer of population into an occupied territory). Israeli settlers and the Israeli military that defend them call Highway 90 *Derekh Gandhi* or Gandhi's Road. When I first drove along that road over a decade ago, I was puzzled by Gandhi's name there. Mahatma Gandhi was a leader of the Indian freedom

struggle, and had on many occasions—such as in his 1938 [article](#), “The Jews”—offered his sympathy and solidarity with the Palestinian people. In fact, the road that slices through the West Bank—a crucial part of a proposed Palestinian state—is named after Rehavam Ze’evi, who was ironically given the nickname Gandhi.

Ze’evi led the National Union party, which brought together all the most dangerous currents of Israeli far-right politics. As the leader of this party, and, before that, of [Moledet](#), Ze’evi [advocated](#) the removal of Palestinians from what he considered to be Israel’s land (East Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank). He supported the creation of [Eretz Yisrael](#) that would stretch from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. In March 2001, Ze’evi—who would later be [accused](#) of sexual harassment and of being involved in organized crime—[told](#) The Guardian that “it’s not murder to get rid of potential terrorists, or those who have blood on their hands. Each one eliminated is one less terrorist for us to fight.” A few months later, Ze’evi showed that he did not distinguish among Palestinians, calling all of them a “cancer” and [saying](#), “I believe there is no place for two peoples in our country. Palestinians are like lice. You have to take them out like lice.” He was shot to death by fighters of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in October 2001. The name of the road that cuts across the West Bank—promised to a Palestinian state in the Oslo Accords of 1993—still bears Ze’evi’s name.

Ze’evi was assassinated by PFLP fighters because the Israeli army had killed their leader Mustafa Ali Zibri by firing two cruise missiles at his home in Al-Bireh (Palestine). The assassination of Zibri was not an isolated incident. It was part of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s [plan](#) to “cause the collapse” of the Palestinian Authority—created to manage the Oslo Accords—and “send them all to hell.” Apart from the murder of civilians on a punctual basis, from July 2001 the Israeli government killed four political leaders (Islamic Jihad leader Salah Darwazeh and Hamas leader Jamal Mansour in July, and then Hamas leader Amer Mansour Habiri and Fatah leader Emad Abu Sneineh in August). After the killing of Zibri, the Israelis assassinated Hamas’s Mahmoud Abu Hanoud in November. “Whoever gave a green light to this act of liquidation,” [wrote](#) military correspondent Alex Fishman in Yediot Ahronot, “knew full well that he is thereby shattering in one blow the gentleman’s agreement between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority; under that agreement, Hamas was to avoid in the near future suicide bombings inside the Green Line [Israel’s pre-1967 borders].”

Hot Violence, Cold Violence

For centuries, Palestinian Christians, Muslims, and Jews lived side-by-side in the lands

that would eventually be Israel and the OPT, including along the Jordan River Valley. Since the expulsion of the Palestinian Christians and Muslims and the arrival of European Jews, the legal apparatus—or the “cold violence,” as the writer Teju Cole [calls](#) it—worked alongside paramilitary and military violence against the Palestinians to create a fantasy of an ethno-nationalist state project (the Jewish State, as it was then called). The erasure of the non-Jewish Palestinians was key to this project, either by massacres ([Deir Yassin](#) in 1948) or the wholesale removal of the Palestinian population from their land (the Nakba of 1948). The massacres and the population transfers came alongside the denial of the *reality* of Palestine and the Palestinian people. The heir to Ze’evi, current finance minister Bezalel Smotrich [said](#) this March, “There’s no such thing as Palestinians because there’s no such thing as a Palestinian people.” This is not an opinion that can be dismissed as a far-right rant. Likud member Ofir Akunis, minister of science and technology, [said](#) three years ago, “There’s no place for any formula to establish a Palestinian state in Western Israel.” The phrase “Western Israel” is a chilling statement about the Israeli consensus on full annexation of the West Bank with disregard for international law.

A focus on Gaza is essential. The Israeli “hot violence” is extreme, with the death toll of Palestinians—almost half of them in Gaza of children—over 5,000. The Israeli land invasion has been blocked, for now, by the recognition of high morale among the Palestinian resistance. The latter will fight every Israeli soldier that goes into the ruins of Gaza. Before this Israeli incursion, 450 trucks [crossed](#) into Gaza with supplies for the 2.3 million residents; it was taken as a victory when nine United Nations trucks and 11 trucks of the Egyptian Red Crescent crossed into Gaza on October 21. Amnesty International looked at only five bombings of the Israelis and [found](#) evidence of war crimes, which should alert the International Criminal Court to re-open its [file](#) on Israeli atrocities. This should include the crime of collective punishment by cutting water and electricity to Gaza, and bombing access roads to the Rafah crossing into Egypt, and by bombing the Rafah crossing itself.

Large demonstrations across the world demand a ceasefire (at a minimum) and an end to the occupation. Israel is not interested. Its defense minister Yoav Gallant [told](#) parliament that his forces have a three-point plan—to destroy Hamas, to destroy the other Palestinian factions, and to create a new “security regime” in Gaza. The Palestinian people—not just the armed factions—are resolute in their resistance to Israeli occupation. The only way for Gallant’s new “security regime” to work would be to erase this resistance, which means to remove all Palestinians from Gaza either by massacres or by dispossession. The United

States is following along with this extermination plan: a U.S. State Department memorandum [says](#) that its diplomats must not use phrases such as “de-escalation,” “ceasefire,” “end to violence,” “end to bloodshed,” and “restoring calm.”