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Israel and the Right to Exist

Israel conceals the fact that its right to exist is based on denying it to the Palestinian people, falsely presents itself as threatened and presents its foundational, essentialist, supremacist and colonial political regime as unquestionable. Israel exists, but the world cannot allow the denial of Palestine.

An image of a bloodied Netanyahu among Palestinian and Al-Fatah flags, at a rally in Nablus. (Zain JAAFAR | AFP)

One of Israel's favorite propaganda maneuvers is to invoke over and over again – after each new outrage – its "right to exist," a formula that generates in the listener three synesthetic effects of great legitimizing efficacy.

In the first place, in this way, Israel asserts its existence as an incontrovertible, almost geological fact, since no already constituted state can claim its right – to this or that, to defence or to existence – if it does not already exist in fact. Israel is thus emphasizing, and not claiming, its existence, and this with the purpose of making us forget what that existence is based on: the denial of that of the Palestinian people.

Israel's "right to exist" has been designed so that we do not remember that there is, yes, a state that does not yet exist and that does not exist because Israel prevents it from doing so: the State of Palestine.

Second, through this trickery, Israel presents itself as small, fragile, threatened, or at least questioned in the eyes of the world. Let's be clear. Israel is not threatened: it has the fifth best-armed army on the planet and has the unconditional support of Europe and the United States. But it cannot even be said that no one questions its existence anymore.

In recent years, the historically hostile Arab environment itself, with its theocracies and dictatorships, has been establishing public ties with the State of Israel, including diplomatic ties, as in the case of the Emirates, Morocco and Sudan.

What's more, since 2017, when it reformed its founding charter in 1988, even the Islamist organization Hamas implicitly acknowledges its existence by accepting the 1967 borders. I am sure that almost all Palestinians dream – as bombs fall on their heads – of Israel's demise, but most of them realistically and resignedly assume that the territorial situation of 1917, the date of the Balfour Declaration, or that of 1947, the year of the partition of Palestine, can never be restored. They would be content with a little piece of the land of their ancestors where they could build their houses without fear of being torn down and with electing a government of their own without fear of being bombed.

'Right to exist'

Thirdly, finally, by making a trifling claim to its "right to exist", Israel not only underlines its existence, but affirms, as equally unquestionable, its founding political regime. I mean, that formula prevents us from asking ourselves the decisive question: their right to exist, okay, but to exist, like what? Did South Africa have the right to exist as a racist apartheid regime? Did France, England, Spain have the right to exist as colonial empires? Did Germany have the right to exist as a Third Reich?

For the same reasons, it is worth asking: does Israel have the right to exist as a "Jewish state" without recognized borders and based on an essentialist, supremacist and colonial project (Zionism) that has ignored sixty United Nations resolutions and systematically violates international law and humanitarian law? As we know, a few voices within Israel and many Jews around the world deny the existence of that Israel in which they do not recognize themselves and which they would like to refound on truly democratic foundations.

Israel, like almost all states, was born violently and unjustly. But Israel, in any case, exists; There is also an Israeli people; And its existence could only be denied and historical justice restored by introducing new injustices into history. It cannot and should not be done.

Now, we have the right and the obligation to know that history, which is recent and inseparable from our own, otherwise we give in to the illusion, as Israel wants, that the violence began on October 7 and that everything that happened after that (the murder of five thousand children!) is a legitimate response to Hamas's attacks.

Israel is the fruit and colonial prolongation of secular European anti-Semitism, which always alternated between two projects: one of expulsion and the other of extermination.

I've told it many times. Israel is the fruit and colonial prolongation of secular European anti-Semitism, which always alternated between two projects: one of expulsion and the other of extermination. The extermination was about to become a reality in the Shoah or Holocaust, when Hitler drove six million European Jews to the gas chambers. Expulsion was recurrent: France in 1182, 1306 and 1394; England in 1290; Austria in 1421 and 1670; Spain in 1492, etc.

Well, it can be said that the project of extermination failed, despite the very high number of victims, but that the project of expulsion triumphed, whose ultimate executor was the Zionist movement founded in 1897 by the Hungarian [Theodor Herzl](#). Against the assimilationist Jews who claimed their contribution to the construction of Europe, the Zionists, yes, fulfilled the old European dream of a continent empty of Jews. This is the first paradox; the second is that, once outside Europe, Israeli Jews were finally accepted as Europeans; they were eventually assimilated abroad as an extension of the Western colonial project in the Middle East.



The innocent victims were the Palestinians, whose lands were colonized with British complicity during the British mandate and whose villages were destroyed after the unjust partition of 1947. Israel, the project of European anti-Semitism, the "refuge of the Jews" that Europe had massacred, became the tragedy of the Palestinian people, who had never had problems with the twelve thousand Jews who lived there in 1880.

Europe Branch

Today, in Europe, historical anti-Semitism has been replaced by Islamophobia; In the Middle East, Israel, a branch of Europe, is prolonging European anti-Semitism, now with the Palestinians in the role of "Jews" to be expelled or exterminated. The support of Europe and the United States for the occupation of Palestine, half out of guilt, half out of interest, is constantly damaging the precarious international order built after World War II. This history is not Israel's past: it is Palestine's present; European hypocrisy, on the other hand, is the present of the world. If there is any threat to Israel, it is that which comes from its own history: no one can exterminate another people and celebrate it without succumbing to their own material and cognitive violence. A state based exclusively on the colonial negation of the other is not sustainable, as the Israeli historian Shlomo Sand recalled. As for European hypocrisy, it contributes to global de-democratization and radicalization at a time of great fragility in which the world itself is becoming increasingly unsustainable. We cannot afford the murder of 5,000 children in Gaza or the denial of Palestine; first, out of human decency; then, out of respect for international legality; but also because the alternative to human decency and law will never lead to justice for the losers, but to generalized war and global dictatorship.

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