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زبانهای اروپایی

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06.12.2023

The blackmail of European funding subdues Palestine



Sources: South wind [Image: EU High Representative Borrell and President Shtayyeh]

Once again, alongside statements about Israel's "right to defend itself", the European response to the war on Gaza focuses on financial leverage. Although the continuity of "aid" to the Palestinians does not seem to be in question at the moment, the announcement that control will be strengthened and certain expenditures will be deferred is a cause for concern in Ramallah. On 21 November, the European Commission met in Strasbourg to decide whether or not to resume European aid after being suspended on 9 October.

Controlling the funding to which the Palestinian people have access has been a momentous goal since the time of the British Mandate in Palestine. While the Zionist organizations of that time benefited from the significant financial resources provided by the Jewish diasporas in Europe and the United States, French and British colonial forces in the neighboring Arab region under their control repressed organized fundraisers to support

the Palestinian insurrection. At the same time, the Mandate Administration had pledged to help – without much success – the Palestinian peasants expelled by colonization as a means of extinguishing the hotbeds of revolt.

After the [Nakba of 1948](#), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for the Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA, 1949) was established as the main provider of humanitarian aid to Palestine refugees settled in camps awaiting "repatriation". The main donor of this aid until the 1970s, the United States, progressively surpassed In Europe, he wanted to contain first the communist advance and then the Nationalism and Islamism¹. On the other hand, the Palestinian structures organized in exile in the 1960s sixty found financial assistance in the Arab and Muslim states and in the United States. private supporters. Since the Israeli occupation of West Bank and Gaza Strip, part of these funds were channeled to support *the Sumud*, the slogan adopted by Palestinians, the meaning of which designates the act of "standing firm" in the face of the enterprise of Israeli colonization of the land and the dispossession of its inhabitants.

In the late 1970s, USAID (the U.S. Agency for Foreign Assistance) in turn launched a program aimed at improving the well-being and quality of life in the Occupied Territories. The goal this time was to break the influence of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and to promote an opinion more favorable to the Limited Palestinian Autonomy Agreement signed in Camp David between Israel and Egypt (1979). Palestinian society then denounced the political background to that aid². But changes in the global geopolitical context during the 1980s and The loss of their main Arab political and financial backers led to the the PLO to change its positions and accept political autonomy within the 1967 borders, the recognition of the State of Israel and the renunciation of armed struggle.

The inconsistencies of the European support

This is the context in which it intervenes European funding to the Palestinian people. In the early years the international community pledged to provide financial support to the peace process ratified with the signing of the Oslo Accords between Israel and Israel. the PLO. It was explicitly about making the "peace dividends" tangible to the Palestinian population, which had just emerged from the First Intifada, promoting the economic development of the Territories Busy. The European Union (EU) is by far the largest donor. His intervention is at the epicentre of European foreign policy and It responds to its objectives of "promoting security, democracy and good governance" as set out in the

"Euro-Mediterranean Partnership", the "Partnership for Peace" and the "European Neighbourhood Policy".

Between 1993 and 2020, the Territories Employed people would have benefited from \$46.4 billion (\$42.38 billion) of EUR (EUR 199) in development aid, of which about half come from of Europe³. In addition to collaborating with the Palestinian Authority's (PA) expenditure on civil servants' salaries; health expenditure and socio-economic support, this funding includes a number of of programs ranging from the construction of infrastructure and buildings humanitarian aid, institutional reform, training women's and youth's empowerment, and support for the private sector. Initially guided by the With the prospect of an imminent resolution of the conflict, this aid became very soon in a smokescreen to hide the failure of the "solution of two states," and in a palliative, palliative, in [the face of Palestinian economic collapse](#).

In fact, the peace process not only fails to It has not ended the occupation but accelerated colonization. The scarce prerogatives granted to the PA are constantly torpedoed on the ground by the Israeli administration, which retains control of the trade, monetary and financial regimes, as well as borders and most of the territories. Since the Second Intifada of 2000, Many observers have denounced the passivity of donors and their incoherence, first of all from the EU, whose aid has finally ended financing Israeli expansionism to the detriment of international law, and of any political solution⁴. Europe is not even able to prevent the Israeli occupation army from systematically destroys the institutions and infrastructures that create and They are maintained by Europeans and the wasted cost of which falls on their taxpayers. However, the raison d'être of European funding has not changed and has increased with each new outbreak of conflict.

Control Instrument and sanction

There are many occasions and many ways in which the EU and its members impose conditions on their aid to the Palestinians. The most emblematic – and controversial – example was undoubtedly the imposition of Israeli and international sanctions following the [Hamas's victory in the elections in 2006](#). Europe immediately suspended its budget support as well as with all cooperation projects with the Palestinian government, and concentrated its efforts to meet the strictly humanitarian needs of the population. A new support mechanism was put in place to induce the and local and international NGOs to take the place of the AP⁵. This diplomatic and financial boycott provoked a political crisis without precedents and the hardening of inter-Palestinian divisions. Several Attempts at national unity failed.

In June 2007, Hamas took over the exclusive control of the Gaza Strip by force, while [President Mahmoud Abbas](#) expelled to the organization of the West Bank government. The Israeli administration immediately declared the Gaza Strip "hostile territory" and tightened the restrictions on the movement of persons and the movement of goods across its border. A siege imposed by land, sea and air that has been maintained ever since. While emergency aid has continued, it has been demanded that humanitarian agencies on the ground cease all relations with local authorities. In practice, however, they maintain some form of to be able to carry out their activities through agreements that they are constantly renegotiated. There are many agencies that denounce that It is an ineffective and deficient exercise.

At the same time, at the beginning of 2008, the The EU activated a new financial mechanism (European-Palestinian Management Mechanism) of the Socio-Economic Aid, PEGASE) to support the "Plan for the Reform and development" of the government of Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad (2007-2013) in the West Bank. This former IMF official rigorously complied with the donor expectations: prioritized improving the tax system; He developed the banking and financial system, and promoted the private sector. Strengthening internal security was also a key element in the creation of an investor-friendly environment. However, nothing was provided for diminish Palestinian economic dependence on Israel. The PEGASE mechanism allowed for tighter control of spending by the Palestinian side in line with the Israeli and European demands for transparency, good governance and "the fight against democracy". against terrorism."

Increasing dependency

As the years go by, more and more Sections of Palestinian society have become linked to this economy Assisted. The Occupied Territories, particularly the West Bank, are home to a dense community of foreign organizations, UN agencies, local NGOs, financial institutions and private consultants operating in the fields of development, good governance and humanitarian aid. At the same time, the impoverishment of the Palestinian productive apparatus and the influx of funds Foreigners have made the PA a dominant socio-economic actor inescapable. The salaries and the different pensions you pay are the main source of income for many families. In 2021, there were 208,000 civil servants, the equivalent to 21% of the working population ⁶.

So the aid is a income significant enough to have an impact on programs, multi-beneficiary activities and agendas, and disrupt by therefore, their objectives ⁷. This situation explains the PA's eagerness to push through reforms aimed at "sanitizing" its

institutions and establishing a "balanced" market economy even though the territory under their control has been shrinking alarming. However, there are growing calls to disengage of the Israeli colonial economy and its modes of production, the dependence on Foreign funding is at the heart of misgivings⁸. By continuing to prioritize its goals of pacification and liberalization, aid Not only is it ineffective, but it ends up helping to assist and intensify the subjection of the Palestinian economy and society to the occupation.

Towards more control strict

Since October 9, several countries have been have announced the suspension of their programmes for a period of time in order to ensure that they are not used for the "financing of terrorism"; others foresee increase their budgets to deal with the "humanitarian emergency" in the Gaza Strip. So what is at risk of being affected is not so much the volume such as the location of the aid and the distribution channels in the sense of reinforcing their orientation and control.

This precipitous merger of the "Development and Peace Goals" with Counterinsurgency Concerns clearly illustrates the trap in which cooperation finds itself in the Occupied Territories. Whatever the amount of funds you disburse, if it does not take serious steps to curb Israeli expansionism, Europe is doomed to an awkward situation with regard to the real Palestinian concerns.

Of course, there will always be actors willing to take on the role that donors expect, and even to benefit from it. But the failure of this policy speaks for itself. The cost in human lives is too high not to rectify the situation. Palestinian aspirations are now expressed more strongly than ever. The division is also palpable; There are already those who are talking about boycotting the European partnerships and funding. For Help to Be Really Help It must no longer be complicit in the crimes committed against an entire people.

Notes:

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3. OECD data
4. Anne Le More, "Killing with Kindness: Funding the Demise of a Palestinian State", *International Affairs*, 2005, Vol. 81, No. 5, pp. 981-999

5. Couler l'Etat Palestinien, sanctionner son peuple: l'impact de l'asphyxie économique du Territoire Palestinien Occupé sur les droits de l'Homme, Fédération international pour les droits humains (FIDH). Rapport n°. 459, 2006 (mission international d'enquête).

6. Rapport sur l'assistance de la Cnuccd au peuple palestinien: évolution de l'economie du territoire occupé, Conférence des Nations Unies sur le Commerce et le Développement (UNCED), Geneva, 8 August 2022

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8. Jweremy Wideman et Alaa Tartir, "Unwilling to Change, Detemined to Fail: Donor Aid in Occupied Palestine in the aftermah of the Arab Uprisings", Mediterranean Politics, 19:3, 2014, p. 431-449

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Translation for south *wind*: Loles Oliván Hijós

Source: <https://vientosur.info/el-chantaje-de-la-financiacion-europea-somete-a-palestina/>

Rebellion 05.12.2023