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United Against Israel: Time to End World's Longest Occupation



Image by Ehimetalor Akhere Unuabona.

Left to its own devices, Israel would never grant Palestinians their freedom.

In the past, some, whether ignorantly or not, claimed that peace in Palestine can only be achieved through 'unconditional negotiations'.

This mantra was also championed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, when he cared enough to pay lip service to the 'peace process' and other US-originated fantasies. Back then, he spoke about his readiness to hold unconditional negotiations, though constantly arguing that Israel does not have a peace partner.

All of this was, of course, 'doublespeak'. What Netanyahu and other Israelis were, in fact, saying is that Israel should be freed from any commitment to international law, let alone

international pressure. Worse, by declaring that Israel has no Palestinian peace partner, the Israeli government has essentially canceled the hypothetical and ‘unconditional negotiations’ before they even took place.

For years – in fact, for decades – Israel was allowed to perpetuate such nonsense, empowered, of course, by the total and unconditional support of Washington and its other Western allies.

In an environment where Israel receives billions of dollars of US-Western aid, and where it grew to become a thriving technological hub, let alone one of the world’s largest weapons exporters, Tel Aviv simply had no reason to end its occupation or to dismantle its racist apartheid in Palestine.

But things must change now. The genocidal Israeli war in Gaza should completely alter our understanding, not only of the tragic reality underway in Palestine, but of past misunderstanding as well. It should be made clear that Israel never had any intentions of achieving a just peace, ending its colonialism in Palestine, that is, the expansion of illegal settlements or granting Palestinians an iota of rights.

To the contrary, Israel has been planning to carry out a genocide against the Palestinians all along.

Israel has already carried out terrible war crimes against Palestinians, during the Nakba in 1947-48, and in successive wars, ever since. Each crime, large or small, was always accompanied by a campaign of ethnic cleansing. Over 800,000 Palestinians were ethnically cleansed when Israel was established on the ruins of Palestine 76 years ago. An additional 300,000 were ethnically cleansed during the Naksa, the war and ‘setback’ of 1967.

Throughout the years, mainstream Western media did its best to completely hide the Israeli crimes, or minimize their impact, or blame someone else entirely for them. This process of shielding Israel remains in place to this day, even when tens of thousands of Palestinians have been killed since October 7 and when the majority of Gaza, including its hospitals, schools, mosques, churches, civilian homes and shelters have been erased.

Considering all of this, anyone who still speaks of ‘unconditional negotiations’ – especially those conducted under the auspices of Washington – is, frankly, only doing so to help Israel escape international legal and political accountability.

Luckily, the world is waking up to this fact and, hopefully, this awakening will mature sooner rather than later, as Israeli massacres in Gaza continue to claim hundreds of innocent lives every single day.

This collective realization that Israel must be stopped through international measures is also accompanied by an equally critical realization that the US is not an honest peace broker. In fact, it never was.

To appreciate the ruinous role of the US in this so-called conflict, just marvel at this fact. While practically every country that participated with a legal opinion and a political position in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) public hearings from February 19 to the 26, formulated its position based on international law, the US did not.

“The Court should not find that Israel is legally obligated to immediately and unconditionally withdraw from occupied territory,” the acting legal adviser for the US State Department, Richard Visek, embarrassingly said on February 21.

76 years after the Nakba and following 57 years of military occupation, the US legal position remains committed to defending the illegality of Israel’s conduct throughout Palestine.

Compare the above stance to the rounded, courageous and legally grounded position of almost every country in the world, especially of the over 50 countries which requested to speak at the ICJ hearings.

China, whose words, and actions seem far more consistent with international law than many Western nations, especially now, went even further. “In pursuit of the right to self-determination, Palestinian people’s use of force to resist foreign oppression and complete the establishment of an independent state is (an) inalienable right well founded in international law,” Chinese representative Ma Xinmin told the ICJ on February 22.

Unlike the cliched and non-committal position of the likes of UK Foreign Minister, David Cameron, on the need to start an “irreversible progress” towards an independent Palestinian state, the Chinese position is arguably the most comprehensive and realistic articulation.

Ma linked self-determination to liberation struggle, to sovereignty, to the inalienable rights of people, which are all consistent with international laws and norms. In fact, it is these very principles that have led to the liberation of numerous countries in the Global South. Considering that Israel has no intention to free Palestinians from the grip of apartheid and military occupation, the Palestinian people have had no other option but to resist.

The question now is, will the international community continue to defy the US position in words only, or will it formulate a new approach to the Israeli occupation of Palestine, thus bringing it to an end by any means necessary?

In his statement to the ICJ on February 19, British barrister Philippe Sands, who is a member of team Palestine, offered a roadmap on how the international community can force Israel to end its occupation: “The right of self-determination requires that UN Member States bring Israel’s occupation to an immediate end. No aid. No assistance. No complicity. No contribution to forcible actions. No money. No arms. No trade. No nothing.”

Indeed, it is now time to turn words into actions, especially when thousands of children are being killed for no fault of their own but for being born Palestinian.

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