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www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

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BY SILVIA FEDERICI

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Palestine is the World (2002)



Photograph by Nathaniel St. Clair

The Israeli invasion of Palestine is an act of aggression of such gravity that it is almost impossible for me to speak of anything else. When the population of six cities and many villages is tortured daily in front of the whole world, and when those perpetrating these crimes are granted total immunity, then we have to stop and speak up because new standards are being established as to what is permissible internationally, which put us all in danger.

My first point, then, is that we have to oppose this aggression, these Israeli war crimes, in any way we can and there is a lot we can do since it is our money that pays for them.

Without the United States Israel could not even function as an economy, much less have tanks to occupy every street in Palestine.

At the same time, we should not make the mistake of thinking that the situation in Palestine is unique. Palestine today is the image of what, in different ways, is occurring across the world.

The Israeli invasion of Palestine is a classic example of colonial conquest. In fact, the very creation of the state of Israel was part of the British colonization of the Middle East. This was acknowledged by Sharon when he told the president of France, Chirac, three weeks ago that : Palestine is our Algeria, with the difference (he added) that we are going to stay. Over the last two decades the same colonial relations have been re-imposed by Europe and the U.S. on every part of the former colonial world, this time in the name of the debt crisis, globalization or the war on drugs” and, more recently, the war on terrorism. The slogans change but the objectives and the consequences are the same: uprooting the local populations, turning them into refugees, into cheap labor for the global market, appropriating their resources, their lands, their assets, their oil, their waters, their labor, either by the use of tanks and bombings or through trade agreements, structural adjustment programs, currency devaluations, all means of waging war on the people and the lands.

Not surprisingly, the same destructive policies that Israel is implementing in Palestine, with the use of deadly force through land expropriation, the expansion of settlements, the theft of water, and now the systematic destruction of every infrastructure (like water pipes, roads, power plants, sewers, schools, houses) are also being implemented, with the same results, in Africa, Asia, Latin America.

What in Israel is destroyed by the IDF, in many African countries is destroyed by the World Bank, the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). In Palestine it is the Israeli tanks that bulldoze schools and houses. In Africa, it is structural adjustment, the defunding of the public sector, currency devaluation, but the effects are the same. In Palestine the sick, the wounded, the women giving birth cannot go to the hospitals because the Israelis shoot them. In Africa people cannot go to the hospitals, even without the Israeli bullets—although Israel has played havoc in Africa too, propping every dictator, from Mobuto to the white South African apartheid regime. In both cases, the results are populations of refugees, the transfer of lands from the local people to the new colonial powers, forwarding and protecting the interests of international capital.

Comparing the role of the Israeli government and the Israeli army with that of the World Bank, the IMF and WTO is not to underestimate what is taking place in Palestine or minimize its gravity, but it is to show the continuity between war and economic policy and between the aggression of Israel against Palestine and the many wars that are now bloodying the world.

President Bush has announced that fifty countries are on the US government list as candidates for bombings. But as a matter of fact an equal number has already experienced Americas warfare over the last two decades, to such an extent that it will take them decades to regain some degree of normalcy. Think of Chile, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Mozambique, Angola, Panama, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan. Many of these countries have been so devastated that they are now economically dis-functional or have been placed under the UN trusteeship.

Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that we are witnessing a new, extensive process of recolonization, with Palestine being the experimental field.

In the US as well, warfare is the rule with mass incarceration of black and Latino youth, the use of capital punishment mostly against black people, and the attack on healthcare, housing, welfare provisions, immigrant men, and women.

Capitalism is waging a war on the people of the world, a war that deprives us of all means necessary to reproduce our lives, a war that keeps seeking new names and justifications but at the core has one purpose: stripping us from our entitlement to the wealth of the world; turning us into refugees of one sort or another, homeless people who have no claim to this earth, allows us only to work and work when it suits our employers.

This is our destiny and the destiny of our children if we do not resist and if we refuse to become settlers, guards, policemen. Today the people of Palestine are being martyred, but we delude ourselves if we think that the destruction of their communities and their expulsion from their lands will have no consequences for our lives. Palestine is the world, and the blood it sheds—caused by the weapons and financial aid provided by the United States—will fall on us as well.

Silvia Federici presented this talk at the Socialist Scholars Conference, April 2002.

Silvia Federici is a scholar, teacher, and feminist activist based in New York. She is a professor emerita and teaching fellow at Hofstra University in New York State, where she was a social science professor. Her most recent book is Patriarchy of The Wage: Notes on Marx, Gender, and Feminism. (PM Press.)

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