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Cartography of Genocide: Why Netanyahu Erased Palestine from the Map



Image by Planet Volumes.

When asked why his latest map has erased the whole of the West Bank, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu retorted with the most detestable answer.

“I didn’t include the Dead Sea. It’s not shown on the map. I didn’t show the Jordan River. It’s not on this map. I didn’t show the Sea of Galilee,” was Netanyahu’s response.

The Israeli leader must have known that neither the indigenous population of Palestine, nor the occupied territories of West Bank and East Jerusalem – which are recognized as such under international law – are topographical or geographical phenomena.

It should be obvious that Netanyahu has deliberately erased the West Bank from his map, which he displayed on September 2, in another one of his tirades on why Israel must maintain ‘security control’ over Gaza. There are plenty of reasons to demonstrate that this assertion is true.

One, Netanyahu has erased Palestine and the Palestinians from his previous maps as well, with the prime example being his ‘New Middle East’ map, which he proudly held during a United Nations General Assembly speech in September 2022.

Two, because Netanyahu does not even recognize such a term as the West Bank in the first place. Even in his defense of why his latest map of Israel has swallowed the West Bank, he responded by saying that he “was talking about Gaza”, not “Judea and Samaria”.

The biblical reference to the Palestinian homeland fits perfectly into the prevailing Israeli political discourse, now championed by the most ardent far-right, ultranationalist extremists in Israeli society. Israel’s current regime simply does not believe that Palestinians have any historical claim or political rights and aspirations in their own land. Among a long stream of such comments, a few stand out.

For example, in March 2023, Israel’s far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich denied the existence of Palestinians during a private memorial service in Paris. There is “no such thing as Palestinians because there’s no such thing as the Palestinian people,” he said.

As for Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, the erasure of Palestinians requires action, violent action. On June 23, he said during a press conference: “The Land of Israel must be settled, and a military operation must be launched. (We must) demolish buildings, eliminate terrorists, not one or two, but tens and hundreds, and if necessary even thousands. The Land of Israel is for the people of Israel.”

And, of course, Netanyahu himself, who in March 2019, stated that Israel is “the national state, not of all its citizens, but only of the Jewish people.”

Such a discourse is backed by action, namely the constant expansion of illegal Jewish settlements, the slow ethnic cleansing of Palestinian communities from various regions in the West Bank and a government program that, in April 2020, agreed to annex large parts of the occupied region.

Three, Netanyahu rejects the very discussion on a Palestinian State. He even pushed a law at the Israeli Knesset that opposed the establishment of a Palestinian State because it would pose “an existential danger to the State of Israel and its citizens, perpetuate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and destabilize the region”.

The law represents the pinnacle of Netanyahu’s political career, which was largely dedicated to thwarting any attempt to achieve a negotiated solution based on international law. Palestinian hopes of establishing a sovereign State “must be eliminated”, Netanyahu said in July 2023.

So, it comes as no surprise that the Israeli leader does not see the need to demarcate any other entity in his delusional maps, aside from that of Israel.

Ironically, as part of his response to criticism, Netanyahu did mention the word 'Palestinians'.

"There is a whole issue of how to achieve peace between us and the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria," he said. Even then, his statement denied the Palestinian people any entitlement to peoplehood, let alone statehood.

For him, Palestinians are nomadic beings who, by mere historical incident, ventured into his biblical land, in which they have no claim or right.

But, even then, Netanyahu continued to lie, as he has done the exact opposite of 'achieving peace' with Palestinians. Instead, he is in an active process of exterminating them.

On May 20, Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Karim Khan requested the issuing of arrest warrants for several Israelis and Palestinians. Lead among them is Netanyahu himself, who is accused of "extermination", "willful killing" and other "inhumane acts as crimes against humanity".

In fact, Netanyahu's controversial map only highlighted the borders of Gaza, merely so that the Israeli leader may present a case of why his killing campaign in the Strip must continue. In his previous maps, even Gaza itself was erased.

We have long argued that Israel is a settler colonial entity that can only exist through constant expansion at the expense of the territorial and political rights of the indigenous population.

Now, most of the world can see this truth manifesting itself daily, everywhere in historic Palestine.

The international community must abandon its silence and hold Israel accountable to international law through active pressure and direct sanctions. Those who use genocide as a convenient political tool have no place among law-abiding nations.

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