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## Unity Above Else: The Only Road to the Liberation of Palestine



Image by Ian Hutchinson.

A new kind of unity around Palestine is finally finding its way to the Palestine solidarity movement worldwide.

The reason behind this unity is obvious: Gaza.

The world's first live-streamed genocide in the Gaza Strip, and the growing spontaneous compassion, thus solidarity, with the Palestinian victims, helped recenter priorities from the typical political and ideological conflicts back to where they should have always remained: the plight of the Palestinian people.

In other words, it is the sheer criminality of Israel, the steadfastness, resilience and dignity of the Palestinians, and the genuine love for Palestine by ordinary people that have imposed themselves on the rest of the world.

While many solidarity groups, despite their differences, have always found margins for unity around Palestine, many did not.

Instead of rallying in support of a Palestinian justice-based discourse, mainly focused on ending the Israeli occupation, dismantling apartheid, and obtaining full Palestinian rights, many groups have rallied around their own ideological, political, and often personal priorities.

This led to deep divisions and, ultimately, the unfortunate splintering of what was meant to be a single global movement.

Though many rightly claim that the movement has suffered the dire consequences of the Syrian war and other conflicts linked to the so-called Arab Spring, in truth, the movement has historically been prone to divisions, long before the recent Middle East upheavals.

The collapse of the Soviet Union, starting in 1990, has left permanent scars on all progressive movements across the world, where, in the words of Domenico Losurdo, ‘western Marxists’ retreated to their academic hubs, and ‘eastern Marxists’ were left alone fighting the scourges of the US-led ‘new world order’.

The balkanization of the socialist movement globally, but mainly in western countries, can still be seen in the view of many socialist groups regarding the events underway in Palestine, and of their proscribed ‘solutions’ to the Israeli occupation.

Whether these ‘solutions’ are pertinent or not, it is of very little value to the struggle of the Palestinians on the ground; after all, these magic formulas are often developed in western academic laboratories, with little or no connection, whatsoever, to the events underway in Jenin, Khan Yunis or Jabaliya.

Additionally, there is the problem of transnational solidarity. This type of solidarity is simply conditioned on the expected return of an equal amount of solidarity in the form of political reciprocity.

This notion is a misinformed application of the concept of intersectionality, as in various disaffected groups offering mutual solidarity to amplify their collective voice and advance their interests.

While intersectionality at a global level is hardly functional, let alone tested – interstate relations are usually governed by political strategy, national interests, and geopolitical formations – intersectionality within a national and local framework is very much possible.

For the latter to carry meaning, however, it requires an organic understanding of the struggles of each group, a degree of social immersion, and genuine love and compassion for one another.

In the case of Palestine, however, this noble idea is often conflated with negotiable and transactional solidarity, which might work at the political stage, especially during times of elections, but rarely helps cement long-term bonds between oppressed communities over time.

The ongoing Israeli genocide in Gaza has certainly helped many groups expand the margins of unity so that they may work together to bring the extermination of Gaza to an end, and to hold Israeli war criminals accountable in any way possible.

This positive sentiment, however, must continue long after the end of the genocide, until the Palestinian people are finally free from the yoke of Israeli settler colonialism.

The point here is that we already have numerous reasons to find and maintain unity around Palestine, without laboring to find ideological, political, or any other kind of common ground.

The settler-colonial Israeli project is but a manifestation of western colonialism and imperialism in their classical definitions. The genocide in Gaza is no different than the genocide of the Herero and Nama people of Namibia at the turn of the 20th century, and US-western interventionism in Palestine is no different than the destructive role played by Western countries in Vietnam and numerous other contested spaces all over the world.

Placing the Israeli occupation of Palestine in a colonial framework has helped many liberate themselves from confused notions about Israel's 'inherent' rights over the Palestinians.

Indeed, there can be no justification for the existence of Israel as an exclusively 'Jewish State' in a land that belonged to the native Palestinian people.

By the same token, the much-touted Israeli 'right to self-defense', a notion that some 'progressives' continue to parrot, does not apply to military occupiers in an active state of aggression or those carrying out genocide.

Keeping the focus on Palestinian priorities also has other benefits, including that of moral clarity. Those who do not find the rights of the Palestinian people compelling enough to develop a united front were never intended to be part of the movement in the first place, thus their 'solidarity' is superficial, if at all genuine.

The road for Palestine liberation can only go through Palestine itself and, more specifically, the clarity of purpose of the Palestinian people who, more than any other nation in modern times, have paid and continue to pay the highest price for their freedom.

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