

Briefing: The rights of the Palestinian people



Background

- On 15 May each year Palestinians commemorate the Nakba or catastrophe, when 750,000 Palestinians were forcibly displaced from their land in 1948 in order to create the state of Israel. By 1949, the Nakba had resulted in the ethnic cleansing of two-thirds of the Palestinian population, with Israel ruling over 78% of the territory.
- The West Bank and Gaza Strip have been under illegal Israeli military rule since they were occupied in the 1967 "Six Day War", and are now referred to as the Occupied Palestinian Territories. During that same conflict, East Jerusalem was also annexed illegally by Israel. Thus, for around 60 years now, the Palestinians have been denied the right to self-determination and statehood.
- Under UN Resolution 194, the Palestinians have the right to return to their homes, but Israel has always refused to implement the Resolution. Today, over 6 million Palestinians live as refugees, with hundreds of thousands of them still living in overcrowded refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as in neighbouring Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan.

Ongoing conflicts

- Resistance to the illegal occupation by Israel and unjust laws limiting the movement of Palestinians have resulted in two major protracted uprisings, or intifadas. In 1987, following the killing of a young Palestinian by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF), protests ignited and continued in various forms until 1993 and the subsequent signing of the Oslo Accords, which was supposed to bring about a comprehensive political settlement of the decades-old conflict within the framework of a two-state solution. In 2000, following provocative actions by then Israeli opposition leader, Ariel Sharon, a second intifada took place, which saw sustained resistance and action through to 2006.
- An estimated 5,000 political prisoners are currently being held in Israeli jails and since

1967 over 750,000

Palestinians have been detained by Israel.

- As an occupying power and signatory to the Geneva Convention, Israel is obliged under international law to treat Palestinian prisoners accordingly. However, in complete contravention of the Convention, Israel continues to detain prisoners outside the territory under its occupation; routinely subjects prisoners to torture and maltreatment; and applies harsh penalties and sentences against prisoners without having accorded them due process or anything remotely resembling a proper trial.
- Israeli 'settlements', built on land recognised internationally as Palestinian territory, continue to grow and are in fact encouraged by the current religious fundamentalist Israeli government. It is estimated that well over half a million so called 'settlers' are occupying areas of Palestinian land in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.
- So called 'settlements' are established through the intimidating of Palestinians into leaving their homes, through the serious threat or actual use of violence, followed by the demolition of Palestinian homes in order to build new 'settlements'.
- Israel has constructed a 25 ft high concrete wall, running through the West Bank, in order to separate Palestinians and Israelis, and enforces the restrictions upon Palestinian movement through a system of checkpoints, roadblocks, and segregated roads. Israel's practice of separating one racial group from another for the purpose of domination constitutes the crime of Apartheid under international law.

International responses

- The United Nations (UN) continues to oppose the illegal Israeli occupation, supports a two-state solution, and condemns the forced eviction and displacement of Palestinian families.
- In 2020, the United States (US) gave Israel £2.7 billion in military aid, part of a package

totalling £26.8 billion for the period 2017 to 2028. Since World War II, Israel has been the largest overall recipient of US foreign aid and is seen as its crucial and indispensable ally in the Middle East.

- US aid has helped Israel develop one of the most advanced militaries in the world, with the funds allowing them to build a sophisticated military-industrial infrastructure as well as purchase state of the art military hardware from the US.
- The United Kingdom (UK) is a major arms exporter to Israel and purchaser of Israeli weapons and military technology. The UK has licenced £442 million worth of arms to Israel since 2015.
- Much of the Israeli agricultural produce sold in the UK is grown in illegal Israeli settlements and benefits from preferential trade agreements with the UK.

Priority Demands

- An end to the ongoing brutal illegal siege and occupation of Gaza and the West Bank and East Jerusalem respectively, as well as the expedited and full implementation of the two-state solution in line with international agreements, including that reached in Oslo.
- An end to the ongoing settlement of Palestinian land, the return of all land expropriated since 1948, and the right of return for all Palestinians illegally displaced and exiled.
- An end to the use of violence, including the use of live ammunition, against unarmed protesters by the IDF.
- An end to the illegal blockade of Gaza which prevents access to essential food, materials, and medical supplies to support the daily lives of the population there.
- An end to the UK arms trade with Israel and a call upon the UK government to cut ties with companies trading weapons or military technology with Israel.

About Liberation:

Liberation opposes new forms of imperialism, or “neocolonialism” that intervenes and lays waste to the global south, perpetuating economic exploitation, inequality and racism. We work to address the legacies of colonialism. Democracy, human rights, peace and social justice are central to our goals. We reject foreign interventionism and militarism.

We support popular sovereignty. We believe international solidarity and co-operation are the means to make a better world. Our main focus is Britain’s former colonies and the Anglo-American sphere of influence. Liberation organises public meetings to raise awareness of current events and stimulate action. We run seminars, webinars and other educational activities.

We work with UK parliamentarians to influence UK foreign policy and engage at an international level through the UN Human Rights council. We publish a quarterly journal, and comment and analysis on relevant matters on our website, giving voice to progressive popular organisations in the Global South.