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EDITORIAL

## From the Editors

AS THE MOST RIGHT-WING GOVERNMENT IN ISRAEL'S HISTORY TOOK SHAPE, an acrid stench of hypocrisy pervaded liberal hand-wringing in US media and policy circles. The November 2022 Knesset includes fourteen seats occupied by parties that openly call for the expulsion of Palestinians from their homeland. Religious extremists fill another eighteen seats. Thirty-two Likud deputies round out a solid majority that now explicitly espouses Jewish Israeli supremacy over democracy and the rule of law. Legions of apologists for Israel are suddenly full of fear and foreboding about this new government as a danger to Israeli "democracy." Certainly, secular, non-Orthodox, and queer Jewish Israelis are more vulnerable under this government. More certain still, the consolidation of a neofascist right promises intense confrontations.

And yet, this landscape is not entirely new. Every Israeli government since 1948 has been fundamentally committed to settler-colonial supremacy. Israel's foundation was built on the dispossession of 750,000 Palestinians. Since 1948, Israel has deprived millions of Palestinians of their right to return to their homeland. It has consigned Palestinians who constitute more than 20 percent of the citizenry in Israel to second-class status. That structural inequality was enshrined in the 2018 Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People, a measure with constitutional force that denies equal rights to Palestinians who hold citizenship. For fifty-five years, Israel has maintained a draconian military occupation depriving millions of other Palestinians of basic rights to movement, speech, education, assembly, and representation, as well as natural resources like water. It is, and has always been, a settler-colonial apartheid state. It is not today, and was never a democracy, neither for all of its citizens, nor for its colonial subjects.

The hand-wringing about the country's ostensible democratic integrity denies this history, erasing the settler-colonial character of the state and the ongoing dispossession of the Palestinians on which it is built. What liberal policy and media circles are most deeply concerned about is the shattering of the carefully constructed veneer of Israeli exceptionalism. The new Israeli government will make it far harder for the usual apologists to peddle threadbare myths of Israeli liberalism and tolerance that are only marred by an ostensibly benign occupation.

An analysis that foregrounds the Palestinians and their struggle reveals a looming confrontation between Israeli extremism on the one hand and new forms of Palestinian resistance on the other. The military occupation is more callous than ever, wantonly killing and maiming more and more young Palestinians: 109 West Bank Palestinians were killed in the first ten months of 2022, 30 percent more than in all of 2021, and over four times as many as in 2020. Israeli settler aggression has also escalated, with 459 attacks on Palestinians in the first ten months of 2022—a 25 percent increase over 2021 and exceeding 100 percent of the 2020 figure.<sup>1</sup> According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2022 was the deadliest year of the past fifteen in the West Bank, with 155 Palestinians killed by Israeli soldiers and settlers. Inside Israel, racist violence against '48 Palestinians has reached new heights. Finally, Jewish religious extremists are focused on transforming the Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem's Haram al-Sharif into sites of Jewish prayer, following a playbook first implemented decades ago in the phased takeover of the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron. This is

a totalized system wherein settlers, police, and the army enjoy complete impunity as they engage in the wanton killing and maiming of Palestinians and the theft of their lands, in open collusion with one another and with the legal system.

In the face of such escalation, Palestinians are consolidating new forms of resistance across the partitions of 1948, 1967, and 1993. Seventy-four years of deprivation of their rights for Palestinians inside Israel and refugees living in exile; fifty-five years of oppression under military rule in the occupied Palestinian territories; and thirty years of entrenched occupation and settlement expansion since the Oslo Accords have bred new imperatives, approaches, and visions. Unable to tolerate the calcified political options offered by their purported leaders, Palestinians are creating politics anew.

Novel forms of organization include the broad-based organizing of the Unity Uprising across Palestine's various colonial partitions, evidenced in multiple instances of holding ground against dispossession from the Naqab to Jerusalem. They also include spontaneous, grassroots armed resistance by Palestinian youth unaffiliated with existing organizations, which resulted in the killing of nineteen Israelis in the spring of 2022.<sup>2</sup> After Israel launched a massive military operation code-named "Breaking the Wave," the number of Palestinians killed in the West Bank reached heights not seen since the second intifada. In the operation's wake, there was a spate of attacks on Israeli soldiers and armed settlers in the occupied West Bank, with Jenin and Nablus in the northern West Bank, but also Jerusalem and Hebron becoming centers of the resistance. Israeli military curfews and sieges of villages, towns, and refugee camps that sometimes last for days collectively punish entire swaths of the Palestinian people.

This sporadic and spontaneous armed resistance, together with other initiatives launched by young Palestinians from Sheikh Jarrah to Masafer Yatta, is the direct result of decades of systematic deprivation of rights, land theft, and military oppression, combined with persistent disunity among Palestinian political factions and a dim political horizon. The new Israeli government, driven to colonize more Palestinian land and cripple Palestinian life further, will be even more repressive. In the medium and long term, this enhanced repression will produce more resistance, both violent and nonviolent. The history of resistance to colonial so-called counterinsurgency operations, whether in Ireland, South Africa, Vietnam, or Algeria, has long taught us this lesson. No amount of repression will prevent Palestinians from resisting their subjugation and dispossession. As Ze'ev Jabotinsky—founder of the Revisionist Zionist current that has produced six of Israel's last ten prime ministers—put it one hundred years ago, "every native population in the world resists colonists."<sup>3</sup>

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## Endnotes

1. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Protection of Civilians Report|11–24 October 2022," November 1, 2022, <https://www.ochaopt.org/poc/11-24-october-2022>.
2. Associated Press, "UN: 2022 Likely Deadliest for Palestinians in West Bank," *Voice of America*, October 29, 2022, <https://www.voanews.com/a/un-2022-likely-deadliest-for-palestinians-in-west-bank-/6811454.html>.
3. Vladimir (later Ze'ev) Jabotinsky, "The Iron Wall: We and the Arabs," first published in Russian under the title "O Zheleznoi Stene" in *Rassvyet*, November 4, 1923, 3, <http://en.jabotinsky.org/media/9747/the-iron-wall.pdf>.