

The Palestinian Issue: A Humanitarian Crisis

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Abstract

The Palestinian issue represents a longstanding humanitarian crisis deeply intertwined with geopolitical complexities. This abstract explores the multifaceted dimensions of the Palestinian struggle and the role of the Muslim world within it. It delves into the historical and contemporary context of the conflict, highlighting the displacement, oppression, and marginalization experienced by the Palestinian people. Additionally, it examines the responses and actions of Muslim-majority countries and organizations in addressing the Palestinian cause, including diplomatic efforts, humanitarian aid, and advocacy initiatives. By shedding light on the intersection of human rights, international politics, and religious solidarity, this abstract aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the Palestinian issue and the imperative of collective action within the Muslim world to address this enduring crisis.

Keywords

Palestinian Issue, Muslim World, Peace, Humanity.

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Introduction

"Palestine" is that sacred land which has been blessed with the most prophets and where the honor of being the burial place of most prophets is bestowed upon. It is the land upon which the descent of blessed angels continues. It is indeed the holy land where Allah, the Lord of Majesty, designated as "Bait al-Maqdis."¹ This is the same sacred land where the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), led the congregation of prophets and then embarked on the journey of Isra and Mi'raj in the company of the angel Gabriel.² It is the blessed land where olive trees grow, inhabited by compassionate and hospitable people. It is the pure land where the tales of the glory of Muslims echo far and wide. It is the land whose walls bear witness to the determined yet triumphant manner of Hazrat Umar's (may Allah be pleased with him) conquest. It is where the echoes of the cries and takbirs of Salahuddin and the Ayubid dynasty are still heard today.

It is the blessed land where the long and endless series of sacrifices still continues to this day. It is a tale of perseverance passed down from generation to generation, soaked in blood. But it is a story that perhaps no human has the courage to narrate. Yet, those steadfast defenders of the sacred land are standing firm. Weak, perhaps, but filled with the zeal of faith.

The Issue of Palestine: An Overview:

Understanding the issue of Palestine requires delving into its past, evaluating its present circumstances, and contemplating its future trajectory. Let's endeavour to explore this brief article comprehensively.

1. The Territory of Palestine in the Context of History:

To comprehend the issue of Palestine and devise a framework for action, it's crucial to firstly delineate the borders of Palestine and secondly, briefly elucidate its significance in the context of Abrahamic religions.

1.1 Borders of Palestine:

Palestine, often referred to as the Levant, is situated in the south-western region of the Asian continent, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, also known as the Sea of Rome. It serves as a bridge between Africa and Asia, situated proximate to Europe. Lebanon lies to its north, a predominantly Islamic state, while Jordan to the east and Egypt to the southwest. The present-day area of Palestine spans approximately 27,000 square kilometres.

1.2 Palestine in the Teachings of Spiritual Religions:

The significance of Palestine transcends its geographical boundaries; it's revered as the land of prophets in Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. In Islam, Palestine, particularly Jerusalem, holds profound importance. Referred to as "Bait al-Maqdis" in Arabic, it's hailed as a blessed land in the Quran.³ It encompasses the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Islam's third holiest site, after the Kaaba in Mecca and the Prophet's Mosque in Medina. It is from here that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) embarked on his miraculous journey of Isra and Mi'raj.⁴ Islamic teachings also anticipate that the final battle between good and evil, preceding the Day of Judgment, will occur in this land. For Jews, Palestine holds immense religious significance as the Promised Land, as mentioned in the Torah. It's believed to be the land promised by God to the descendants of Abraham.⁵ Jews revere this land as the burial place of many prophets and consider it central to their historical and religious identity. Mentioned also in Quran:

وَلَقَدْ بَوَّأْنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مُبَوَّأً صِدْقٍ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ⁶

Jerusalem, in particular, is home to sacred sites like the Western Wall and the city of Hebron, significant to Jewish history. After explaining the provisions of Shariah and clarifying the

limits and boundaries of social life, Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was commanded to lead the Children of Israel to the Promised Land. According to the command of God, Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) selected one man from each tribe of the Children of Israel to assess the situation in the land of Canaan. After forty days, when they returned, they informed Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) saying:

"The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them." ⁷

Similarly, for Christians, Palestine is synonymous with the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. It is where Jesus was born in Bethlehem, preached in Jerusalem, and was crucified and resurrected. ⁸ Numerous Christian holy sites, including the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, are located in Palestine, attracting pilgrims from around the world.

The Ancient History of Palestine:

The ancient history of Palestine can be divided into two main periods:

- Pre-Islamic
- Post-Islamic.

1. Palestine...Before Islam:

Geographical and historical research has confirmed that the Canaanites were the first people to inhabit the land of Palestine, migrating from the Arabian Peninsula. This dates back approximately four and a half thousand years. The Canaanites introduced their culture and way of life to the region, which was then known as the "Land of Canaan." ⁹

As for the present Palestinian population, their lineage can be traced back to the Canaanites or to the amalgamation of various ethnic groups residing in the eastern regions of the Mediterranean Sea or to other Arab tribes who settled in the land of Canaan. Politically, Palestine has been under the rule of various nations. However, despite the rule of different nations, Palestine has remained populated by a single ethnic group the Palestinians themselves.

2. Palestine...After Islam:

Following the advent of Islam, the majority of Palestinians embraced Islam, and the Arabic language became predominant. Since the conquest led by Caliph Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) in the 15th Hijri century until today, the recognition of this land has remained synonymous with Islam. ¹⁰ Throughout the vast expanse of history, no other identity has been as pervasive in Palestine as Islam. Even though Jews were once a part of the indigenous Muslim population, they were compelled to migrate to other countries in 1948 due to the imposition of Jewish dominance.

The Genesis and Rise of Zionism:

It is commonly stated that the Zionist movement began in the 19th century. The pure aim of this movement was to partition Palestine and obtain a separate country for the Jews. In the Hebrew language, the term "Zion" refers to Jerusalem. ¹¹ Hence, it can be inferred that the Jews have always considered the acquisition of Jerusalem as the primary objective of the Zionist movement. Theodor Herzl is often regarded as the founder of the modern Zionist movement. ¹² The establishment of Israel is considered a culmination of this movement. Various nationalist and patriotic movements in Europe played a pivotal role in the development of the Zionist movement. Among these movements, the Jewish Question and Reform Judaism are notable.

Objectives of Zionism:

Internally, the objectives of this movement were extremely perilous, involving warfare, killings, plundering, and manipulation of Arabs, as well as influencing public opinion in Europe. All Zionists shared the same dream of establishing a separate state in Palestine.¹³ They claimed their rightful place on the land of Palestine, gathering Jews from various parts of the world to build a platform. They argued that they were rulers of the region two thousand years ago and were expelled, and now the time had come to reclaim their land. Therefore, at the time of the establishment of this state, Western colonial powers played a crucial role, with Britain at the forefront.

Establishment of the Zionist State and the Role of the United Nations:

In 1947, the United Nations passed a resolution in its General Assembly to partition Palestine into two separate states. One Arab region comprising 45% of the total land and one Jewish region comprising 54% of the total Palestinian territories, while 1% of the area (Jerusalem) was recommended to be placed under international administration.¹⁴ The partition plan itself was contrary to the Charter of the United Nations, which recognizes the right of self-determination for all peoples of every region and their right to decide their own future. Moreover, neither the people of Palestine were consulted nor was any plebiscite conducted regarding this resolution. The biased and unjust nature of this resolution became evident when a larger portion of the land was allocated to non-native Jews as compared to the indigenous population. Following the establishment of the Zionist state, the immediate aftermath for Palestine was dire.¹⁵ It is undeniable that the illegitimate Israeli state in Palestine is like a scar on the face of the Muslim world. It was a significant defeat for Muslims, exposing their helplessness and vulnerability. In just fifty years, the foundation of a new country, the influx of Jews from around the world into a devastated and desolate area, and the possibility of further expansion of their control over the region every year all point to the neglect and perhaps the helplessness of Muslims.

Additionally, the support of Western and several Eastern countries made their task easier. It is also important to note that until the early 21st century, over forty percent of the world's Jewish population lived only in Israel. From one perspective, this is considered the greatest success of Jews in the past two thousand years. It has never happened before in known history that a country has had more than ninety percent of its population immigrate, forcefully displacing the original inhabitants, and this unique event has only occurred in Israel.

The Palestinian Issue: A Humanitarian Crisis:

The Palestinian issue is not merely a political dispute it is a humanitarian crisis unfolding before the eyes of advocates for human rights. While developed nations discuss the rights of animals, here we have over sixty million oppressed individuals whose homeland has been forcibly taken from them. They live in refugee camps, suffering from hunger, poverty, disease, and oppression. They are homeless people whose tents have been replaced by towering buildings erected by the Jews, based on a claim that is entirely false. It's a claim that lacks historical truth, lacks evidence, and is not recognized in international law.

The Role of Muslim Rulers in the Palestinian Issue:

In this entire issue, the role of Muslim rulers must be considered. Apart from Qatar, the entire Arab world has maintained a strange silence. Meanwhile, Asian countries, including Pakistan, have somewhat engaged in raising their voices against this issue. The people of Gaza have always known that they are entirely alone among the five billion Muslims. The role of the Muslim world is undoubtedly regrettable and sorrowful. However, there is still a certain level

of enthusiasm and fervour among the masses, evident in actions like boycotting Israeli products, whether in Arab or Asian countries. The effects of these actions are becoming increasingly apparent.

Arab Countries & Palestinian Issue:

Arab countries are currently holding the same position at the governmental level. The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Dr. Abdullah bin Saleh Al-Obeid, expressed it as follows:

"According to historical documents, Al-Quds is a purely Arab city that has been of utmost importance since the beginning of history. It was populated by the Canaanites and Jebusites, who were Arabs. Throughout ancient history, Jerusalem has been the target of various nations' aspirations and ambitions. Israelis entered it in the 12th century BC. Then, in 586 BC, it was invaded by the Iranians. In 332 BC, it was captured by Alexander the Great, and in 70 AD, it fell under the domination of Roman Christians. However, its Arab residents repeatedly repelled invaders to keep the city purely Arab. During this period, the Jews' claim that Jerusalem is a Hebrew city is based on ignoring historical documents that prove that Jerusalem emerged as a city during the Bronze Age, when the Canaanites built it. This proves that Arab history in Palestine is 6,000 years old, meaning that Arabs have existed in Palestine 2,600 years before the Israeli assaults. This nullifies all Jewish claims that Jerusalem and Palestine belong to them, even though in ancient history, Jerusalem was never under Jewish rule for more than 70 continuous years."¹⁶

This position has also been accepted by some contemporary religious scholars and jurists. The renowned Arab scholar Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi stated:

"If we gather all the years that the Jews invaded and spread destruction in Palestine, it would not amount to as much time as the British spent in India or the Dutch spent in Indonesia. If spending such a duration in an area during times of poverty grants historical rights over that land, then the British and the Dutch also have the right to make similar claims. And if, due to a prolonged period of poverty, ownership rights are established over a region, then the Jews should claim Egypt instead of Palestine, where they spent 430 years, instead of Palestine, where they spent nearly 200 years, where they sent only two individuals but left as 70 people. The Jewish claim of historical rights over Palestine is utterly baseless. According to historical records, they were merely sojourners here. So, does any transient or traveler have the right to claim ownership over land just because they took refuge there for a moment or sat under a tree that provided them with temporary shade, so they have the right to claim ownership because they bought cheap goods there every hour?"¹⁷

Conclusion:

The state of Israel is an illegitimate entity founded on oppression and tyranny. The true rulers and inhabitants of Palestine are Palestinian Muslims, who are its rightful and indigenous heirs. Throughout the years, Jews have forcibly altered sacred sites like Al-Aqsa Mosque, turning them into symbols of oppression, and have unjustly displaced Palestinian Muslims from their land through the construction of apartheid walls.

The struggle of Palestinians is in accordance with the divine obligation of Jihad, which is entirely legitimate and their right. It is not associated with terrorism or extremism in any

way. The future is known only to Allah, but it is imperative for us to assist our Muslim brothers and sisters in every possible way in this issue so that we can play our part in this struggle, which is essential for us as Muslims. The lesson here is one of unity among the Muslim Ummah.

Furthermore, after the recent events like the Al-Aqsa crisis, the people of Gaza are filled with hope. They believe in the promises of their Lord. Even after burying their martyrs in mass graves, they continue to show their resilience. Despite their dilapidated conditions, they remain steadfast, with no complaints, only hope and trust in their Lord. They are demonstrating determination, hope, and steadfastness, teaching the Ummah that surrendering to falsehood is not an option.

Two generations have passed, and the third is growing up in this oppression. The people of Gaza will fight until their last breath, never backing down from their resolve, even if the whole world stands against them. Their epic saga of determination, courage, and sacrifices will echo through the ages, inspiring generations to come. People will listen in awe, their fingers pressed against their teeth, as the heavens boast of them with pride.

Recommendations:

- The love for Palestine and the sanctity of Al-Aqsa Mosque are deeply ingrained in the hearts of every Muslim, and it is essential to reaffirm this love and sanctity. The importance of this issue should be highlighted among future generations.
- The Quran has always highlighted the weakness of disbelief. Its power has been negated, and its military strength portrayed as inferior to boost the morale of Muslims, emphasizing hope rather than fear during such times. The importance of promoting hope over despair, strength over weakness, and victories over losses should be emphasized. Social media should avoid spreading despair.
- The current boycott against Israeli products is unprecedented in its scale globally. This boycott should not only continue but also intensify. It is a demand of our faith and honour.
- Currently, there are widespread protests against Israel globally, unlike ever before. Except for a few countries, most nations are vehemently protesting against Israel. These protests should continue regularly to keep the issue of Palestine alive in the minds of people.
- The faith, patience, steadfastness, reliance on Allah, resilience, and fervour for Jihad displayed by the people of Gaza have increased the faith of Muslims worldwide. The zeal for sacrificing for one's religion and sacred places has become widespread.
- These recommendations aim to reinforce the importance of the Palestinian cause, encourage continued solidarity, and emphasize the significance of perseverance and faith in the face of adversity.

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