

Colonialism exposed as Gaza resists and protests



Colonialism - the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country or people, occupying it with temporary or permanent settlers, and exploiting it economically or otherwise, not allowing the colonized to gain citizenship or determine their own fate, present or future.

The Great March of Return at the Gaza border in May 2018 brought into stunning focus the current realities undergirding the new IPMN study guide, *Why Palestine Matters, The Struggle to End Colonialism*.

The split screen US television coverage on May 14, 2018 featured the spectacular drama of colonialism unfolding in real time, with a terrible contrast:

On screen #1, the US administration celebrated moving the US embassy to Jerusalem, and unilaterally and in contravention of international law, recognized the contested city as Israel's capital.

On screen #2, unarmed and mostly non-violent protesters ran for cover in Gaza as tear gas rained down and Israeli snipers took aim at them.

The whole world watched the unabashed arrogance with horror as the powerful did as they pleased at the expense of the powerless. Reminiscent of the Sharpeville Massacre in South Africa, nonviolent demonstrations turned deadly, as Israeli snipers with orders of 'shoot to kill' quickly killed dozens of Palestinians, and shot at thousands more in the days to come. Here are some frequently asked questions:

What is the Gaza strip?

The Gaza Strip is a narrow strip of Palestinian territory along the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. Just 25 miles long and six miles wide, the tiny coastal enclave is one of the most densely populated places on earth and is home to approximately 1.9 million people, mostly refugees who trace their displacement to the creation of Israel in 1948.

What is Land Day?

The date of the Great March marked what Palestinians call [Land Day](#) which began as a [1976 protest](#) of Israel's appropriation of Palestinian land in the Galilee, inside Israel. Six Palestinian citizens of Israel who were protesting the land grab were shot and killed by Israeli border patrol. Since then, March 30 is commemorated as [Land Day](#) annually for a continuing, nonviolent fight for the land. The six-week nonviolent protest in 2018 began on Land Day.

How is it colonialism?

- Israel maintains control of Gaza's borders, airspace, and sea access, upheld through military incursions. Gaza's economy is captive to Israel.
- Israel is responsible under international law for the welfare of Gaza's population and controls everything that enters or leaves.
- Israel is the controlling power and exemplifies the worst kind of colonial overlord in modern times.
- The people are 'subjects' under the control of Israel but can never achieve citizenship.

Isn't Hamas to blame?

Contrary to popular opinion, Hamas was not the originator of The Great March of Return. The humanitarian crisis in Gaza has catalyzed Palestinian civil society there to action. The groups organizing the March include vibrant social groups and organizations, women's organizations, trade unions, youth organizations, sports clubs, etc. They have decided to march to the

fence at the 'border' to demand their Right of Return.

What is the purpose of The Great March of Return?

As is their right by international law, Palestinians have developed a robust and long-standing tradition of non-violent resistance. A current example of non-violent resistance, the 2018 Great March of Return intent was to highlight:

- the 70th anniversary of the [Nakba](#), or 'Catastrophe' referring to the expulsion of 750,000 Palestinians from their homes and land in 1947 and 1948 when Israel declared itself to be a Jewish state in historic Palestine.
- the Palestinian Right of Return, a right enshrined in international law according to [UN Resolution 194](#). Israel has never allowed Palestinian refugees to return but maintains the right of any Jewish person from anywhere in the world to.

As of June 3, 2018, Israeli soldiers have:

- killed 121 Palestinians, and injured over 14,000
- snipers alone killed 13 Palestinian children and injured 2,096 others, including 1,029 women
- 332 of the wounded Palestinians suffered life-threatening injuries
- 3,422 suffered moderate wounds 9,436 suffered mild injuries
- 5,572 suffered the effects of tear gas inhalation. [imemc.org](#)

for live links, see [theIPMN.org](#)

Why are the Palestinians in Gaza protesting?

More than 50 years of occupation and 10 years of blockade have made the lives of 1.9 million Palestinians living inside the Gaza Strip unbearable. That is why they are now protesting and risking their lives.

~Norwegian Refugee Council

1.9 million people are confined

Gaza is described by many Palestinians and humanitarian actors as the world's largest open-air prison, where 1.9 million Palestinians live behind a blockade and are refused access to the other occupied Palestinian areas and the rest of the world.

7 out of 10 are refugees

Most Gazans come from families who were forced to leave their villages in 1948. Many have also been forced to leave their homes due to war and violence. Four years after the Israeli attack on Gaza in 2014, 23,500 Palestinians in Gaza are still unable to return to their homes.

700 children have been killed

The oldest children in Gaza have lived through three wars that have killed more than 3,800 Palestinians. More than 700 of these were children. Many children have seen family members, relatives, friends or others be killed or seriously injured.

50% are traumatized by war

Half of all children have been psychologically traumatized by war, occupation and blockade. Close to 300,000 children need psychosocial help.

70% of all schools run double shifts

Close to 70 per cent of all schools run double or triple shifts due to a lack of schools. In addition, lack of electricity reduces the students' chance to learn or do homework. The blockade also stops young people from studying on the West Bank or abroad. According to the UNRWA, the UN's organization for Palestinian refugees, the large cuts in donations from the US may lead to the organization being unable to deliver diesel to 275 schools. These schools may be forced to close down if other countries do not contribute.

42% unemployment

The people in Gaza face the world's largest unemployment rate. 42 percent of the capable, adult population stand without compensated work. For those between 15 and 29 years old, the unemployment rate has risen to 62 percent. Today, the people in Gaza are 25 percent poorer than they were when the first part of the Oslo agreement was signed in 1993.

84% are in need of humanitarian aid

1.6 million, or 84 percent, of the population in Gaza need humanitarian aid. The number is increasing, and the UN calculate that more than two million people will need humanitarian aid by 2020. 41% have too little food

4 out of 10 families struggle to acquire enough food. In Gaza, more than 830,000 Palestinians need assistance in the form of food or nutritional supplements. According to UNRWA, the UN's organization for Palestinian refugees, the large cuts in funding from the US will cause the UN to have to reduce food support. Most of those who will be affected are already living below the poverty line.

98% of ground water is undrinkable

98 percent of the water in Gaza is contaminated and undrinkable. Gaza had beautiful beaches, but every day now, 24 million gallons of unfiltered sewage is pumped out along the shoreline.



Razan al-Najjar, 21-year old medical nurse shot dead by Israeli sniper on June 1, 2018 as she helped wounded protesters.

2 - 4 hours of electricity

The Gazan population cannot count on more than 2-4 hours of continuous electrical power a day. Every day, Gaza experiences up to 22 hours of power outage.

35% of arable land is unavailable

35 percent of the land eligible for farming is unavailable and fishermen are blocked from 85 percent of the waters on the coast of Gaza due to Israeli security zones.

7% of the children suffer from stunted growth

Poverty and lack of food has led to 7 percent of the children suffering from stunted growth due to long-term malnutrition. 60 percent of the children are anaemic.

45% are refused medical treatment outside Gaza

Those in need of specialized medical treatment must apply for permission from the Israeli government to leave Gaza. Many applications are declined, or at best delayed, and many risk dying while they wait. In October 2017, the World Health Organization reported that only 55 percent of the applications to leave Gaza for medical treatment were granted.

