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Palestine

Palestine: The "deal of the century" or a new attempt to liquidate the Palestinian question

- IV Online magazine - 2020 - IV541 - February 2020 -
Publication date: Monday 24 February 2020

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On January 28 in Washington, a so-called Middle East peace plan was presented by US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and in the notable absence of the Palestinian side. The outlines of the project were put together by Jared Kushner, Mr. Trump's son-in-law and advisor. He is also a big supporter of Israel and a defender of the Israeli colonial settlements, for which he even funded "educational institutions". This plan constitutes a veritable program for a new attempt to liquidate the Palestinian question, and is in violation of all the international resolutions passed by the United Nations and of international law.

Israel wins on all fronts

The US peace plan promises Israel total sovereignty and annexation of all of Jerusalem and much of the occupied West Bank (almost 40%), including the Jordan Valley, a strategic portion of land on the Jordanian border, which would thus become Israel's new eastern border, and most of the West Bank's fertile land and water reserves, with - obviously - territorial continuity. This plan therefore wishes to materialize politically the conditions that the Palestinians are currently already enduring. There is already a de facto annexation of the Jordan Valley and the rest of Zone C, which is already controlled exclusively by Israeli occupation forces.

The plan also supports the annexation of Israeli settlements in exchange for the transfer of sovereignty to a possible future Palestinian state of 14 Palestinian towns and villages from 1948 Palestine (with a population of Palestinians who hold Israeli nationality) inside the state of Israel. The status of these towns and villages, with their estimated population of 260,000, would become the equivalent of a Palestinian enclave on Israeli territory, as the separation barrier currently prevents direct connection of their lands to that of the occupied West Bank. Demonstrations have already taken place in these regions to oppose the content of Trump's plan.

East Jerusalem will remain the indivisible capital of the State of Israel in line with the decision to transfer the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem in November 2017. The capital of the future Palestinian state " should be in the section of East Jerusalem located in all areas east and north of the existing security barrier, including Kafr Aqab, the eastern part of Shuafat and Abu Dis, and could be named Al Quds or another name as determined by the State of Palestine".[1]

The possible Palestinian state would resemble the Bantustans of apartheid South Africa, with only a single direct "border" with another state, Egypt (in Gaza), over which Israel would have some forms of control through "specific arrangements" with Egypt. The Palestinian state will have to be demilitarized and would have no territorial continuity. Palestinian security forces will have to focus on preventing attacks on Israel, while more important security issues will be handled by the Israeli state. In this context, it is stipulated that the Palestinian Authority must in the meantime have dealt with the question of Hamas, in order to demonstrate its "clear rejection of terrorism".[2]

The Palestinians' right of return is once again completely annihilated because the plan encourages integration of Palestinians into the countries in which they reside (with the agreement of the host state), or the integration of 5,000 refugees per year for 10 years in member countries of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (with the agreement of these countries). The plan does foresee theoretically the possibility for some Palestinians of integration into the future Palestinian state, but only on condition that this "return" is regulated by a joint Israeli-Palestinian committee. Hopes are therefore very limited in light of Israel's racist and colonial policies.

In exchange for all of these Palestinian concessions, Trump's plan promises the Palestinians an investment of \$ 50 billion as a form of "compensation for their efforts to achieve peace". The plan does not make it clear who is going to pay the bill, and just talks about an international fund that would provide the promised \$ 50 billion. In June 2019, during its economic presentation of the plan in Bahrain's capital, Manama, the United States had however made it clear that it expected the Gulf monarchies to advance the promised sums.

The Omani, Bahraini and Emirati ambassadors to the United States were present when the so-called peace plan was announced at the White House in Washington. Emirati Ambassador to Washington, Youssef al-Otaibi notably distinguished himself by his remarks on Twitter, hailing a "serious initiative" and "the persistent efforts of the United States to reach a Palestinian-Israeli peace agreement". The Egyptian regime called on "the parties concerned to examine carefully the American vision to achieve peace", and encouraged them "to open the channels of dialogue, under the auspices of the United States, for the resumption of negotiations".

For its part, the Saudi kingdom has opted for a more ambiguous discourse, even if rapprochements with the state of Israel have taken place in recent years. King Salman reaffirmed the kingdom's commitment to the issue of Palestinian rights during a telephone interview with President of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas, while later a statement from the Saudi Foreign Ministry thanked the Trump administration for its efforts, encouraging "direct negotiations between Palestine and Israel", under the aegis of Washington.

Historical continuity with the Allon Plan

The details of the plan are therefore in line with the policy initiated by the Trump administration since coming to power and its willingness to strengthen the United States' alliance with Israel in the region. The United States had indeed decided to close the diplomatic representation of the PLO in the US capital in 2018, in the wake of the announcement of the suspension of financial aid to the Palestinian occupied territories and the American contribution to the budget from UNRWA, the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees.

In many ways, this peace plan aims to achieve the Allon Plan (named after Israeli general Yigal Allon when he was Deputy Prime Minister) implemented immediately after the Six Day War in 1967. This plan provided for the construction of Israeli colonial settlements and military bases, so as to ensure strategic control of the Palestinian occupied territories, without annexing the areas where the Palestinian population is concentrated (villages, cities, etc.), which would be under the control of a collaborationist Arab authority. Initially, the plan was to return these areas to the Jordanian monarchy. Then with the Oslo Agreement signed in 1993, the Palestinian Authority played this role. In many ways, the Oslo Agreement, which died with the outbreak of the 2000 intifada, was also part of the dynamics of the Allon plan.

It is no surprise then, that the whole Israeli political elite from Netanyahu's far-right to the so-called centrist Benny Gantz, support the US peace plan. Gantz asked parliament to vote for it and called Trump a "true friend" of Israel. This shows that no part of the Zionist Israeli political elite can be considered "moderate" or an ally in the struggle for the liberation of the Palestinian people. The various Israeli political organizations agree to continue the Israeli state's oppression of the Palestinians, debating on what different procedures to follow to better achieve their domination.

After declaring the breakdown of the Palestinian Authority's security coordination with Israel, which is highly criticized by a large majority of Palestinians, the president of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, softened his position during the following days, claiming that this was an "option" and not a measure already implemented by the Palestinians. It is not the first time that the Palestinian Authority has used the threat of a breakdown in security coordination with Israel to oppose political decisions. However, he never carried out this threat. The reason is as

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follows: the continuation of security cooperation with Israel constitutes also a protection in itself for the Palestinian Authority against the ever-growing criticism of its policies by the Palestinian popular classes.

The Palestinian popular classes rejected Trump's plan by organizing demonstrations in the occupied Palestinian territories of the West Bank, as well as in the Gaza Strip. These demonstrations have already claimed the lives of several Palestinians because of the repression of the occupying forces of Israel. Palestinian refugees in various neighboring countries have also mobilized to reject the Trump plan. At the same time, Israel continues its daily crimes and human rights violations against the Palestinians.

Faced with this new operation to liquidate the Palestinian question, let us reaffirm our support for the struggle of the Palestinian people for their emancipation and liberation against the apartheid, racist and colonial state of Israel. Let us promote solidarity campaigns with the struggle of the Palestinian people and particularly the BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) campaign which continues to be successful internationally.

Likewise, it is important to recall two fundamental elements in the context of the Palestinian question.

First, the need to dismantle the colonialism, apartheid and the occupation by the Israeli state, which only brought suffering to the Palestinian population and never allowed for the security of the Jewish population of Israel as its false propaganda claims. Instead, we need the establishment of a bi-national democratic, socialist and secular state in the historic Palestine of 1948 for all (Israelis and Palestinians) without any form of discrimination, and in which any Palestinian, whether an internal refugee or a refugee in foreign countries, has the right to return to the original land from which they were forcibly displaced in 1948, 1967 and after, and also receive financial compensation for what they lost and the pain and suffering they experienced. This must of course be part of a change in the regional political structures.

The second very important element is the need to support revolutionary processes and uprisings in the region in their struggle to overthrow all authoritarian and despotic regimes which are complicit in the suffering of the Palestinian people through their direct or indirect collaboration with the State of Israel. Authoritarian and despotic regimes in the region have all tried to suppress, dominate or control the Palestinian national liberation movement, and are trying directly or indirectly to bury the Palestinian question.

Solidary with the Palestinian and regional struggles for liberation and emancipation

February 16, 2020

[1] <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Peace-to-Prosperity-0120.pdf>

[2] <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Peace-to-Prosperity-0120.pdf>

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