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**Palestine**

# **Palestine: The Resistance**

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**Since 7 October, Palestinians in Gaza have been subjected to the worst military onslaught in the history of the enclave, with an unprecedented outpouring of force and violence. At the same time, Israel has been on the offensive in the other occupied territories: the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and now the whole region. The aim of this offensive, in all its configurations, is to increase colonial control, in particular by evicting and destroying homes, but also by deliberately and systematically killing those who resist - the Israelis call this 'mowing the lawn'.**

When the media talk about this situation - and it's not often - the Palestinians are often portrayed as extremely passive. It is true that on the surface the asymmetry of resources gives this impression. But Palestinian resistance is very much alive and kicking - armed resistance, peaceful resistance and legal resistance. However, one of the important aspects of Israeli colonisation is the fragmentation of Palestinian society: territorial fragmentation without geographical contiguity, administrative fragmentation and political fragmentation. This means that, de facto, each group of Palestinians does not have the same difficulties or the same opportunities for response and support.

## Palestinian civil society

Palestinians have not stood idly by. On the international stage, this resistance has led to important symbolic victories: condemnation of plausible genocide and condemnation of the occupation and apartheid by the International Court of Justice, recognition of the Palestinian state with observer status at the UN General Assembly.

In particular, this presence enabled sanctions against Israel to be included in the most recent resolution of this assembly. Palestinian civil society is also represented by the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign based in Ramallah, which continues the fight to delegitimize the state of Israel, its colonisation and its apartheid. At once political, ideological and economic, this campaign has scored a number of victories: AXA divestment, PUMA withdrawal and a number of event boycotts.

Organised from Palestine, the BDS campaign is the simplest point of entry for people wishing to support Palestinians outside Palestine. The leadership of the BDS campaign recommends pushing harder, particularly on banks such as BNP, because it considers that the Israeli economy is on the brink of collapse and that massive disinvestment by the banks could push it further into the abyss.

## The Palestinian Authority

The Palestinian Authority (PA) has found itself in an even more uncomfortable situation than in previous years, when the slaughter and oblivion of the Palestinians was carried out with little fanfare. Regularly - and quite rightly - accused of treason and of being suppletives of the Israeli army, the PA essentially controls a few towns in the West Bank and obviously the policy of resistance in international institutions. The PA is in a delicate position because it cannot continue its direct support for the offensive on Jenin, Tulkarem and so on and at the same time leave control to the radical elements. The fact that the PA is not negotiating the release of Marwan Barghouti is linked to the fact that he would de facto take over its leadership and purges would take place in the upper echelons.

The PA has a great deal at stake in staying in office. There are two million people in the West Bank and 250,000 people working for the PA, half of them in the security forces. Most of them are in zone A - Ramallah, Jericho and so on which are relatively unscathed for the moment. Even areas close to Ramallah such as Huwara are being targeted by settlers. The Israeli offensive is concentrated mainly on the poor refugee camps where there are autonomous armed groups. On the ground, apart from the usual protests, the PA has mainly acted as police force against armed groups in the West Bank, most of which come from these refugee camps. It therefore seems difficult at this stage to consider the PA as part of the resistance. [1]

## On the West Bank

However, Israel has begun an unprecedented offensive in the West Bank, no doubt judging that at this stage Western support has been secured and that increasing the land seizures can be included in the 'Gaza balance', i.e. as part of the general offensive against 'terrorism' and Hamas. For the moment, the settlers and the Israeli army are still doing the easy thing, killing demonstrators and children and destroying buildings. But organised Palestinian military resistance is more significant and, as already indicated, even the Palestinian Authority is finding it very difficult to control the will of groups around Islamic Jihad or Hamas and even from within its own ranks, such as the Al Aqsa Martyrs or other more radical groups such as the Lion's Den.

The emergence of new Palestinian armed groups is not a recent phenomenon. Such groups were formed during the first and second Intifadas, or during any period of escalating oppression or restriction of Palestinian rights under Israeli occupation.

A new generation of Palestinian armed groups with diverse strategies, tactics and objectives has emerged since 2021, particularly in the occupied West Bank, in response to repressive Israeli policies, increased violent raids, continued settlement and the absence of a political path. [2]

## Gaza

Gaza has always been a hotbed of resistance. The withdrawal of the settlements in 2005 was mainly due to the prohibitive cost of monitoring and protecting them - and also in order to focus on the West Bank. It is also the place where the Palestinian Authority had the least influence and disappeared completely after the inter-group wars of 2007 following Fatah's desire to overturn the election result.

Since the blockade of Gaza, the main political party organising life there is Hamas, which also has a military wing. On several occasions, Gazans have organised protests against colonisation and the separation wall. Several demonstrations took place last year. But since October, the resistance has been mainly military. Fighters from several armed groups continue to intervene against the Israeli forces. The main forces are the armed groups of Hamas (Al Qassam), Islamic Jihad (Al Quds), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and also Fatah (Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade).

These armed groups regularly intervene against the forces on the ground. This can be seen in videos of fighters in which targets are indicated by red triangles. These armed groups claim success against several thousand vehicles - tanks, bulldozers and troop carriers. Official figures indicate that since the start of ground operations in Gaza on 27 October 2023, 346 Israeli soldiers have been killed and more than 2,300 wounded. [Swords of Iron: IDF Casualties. [www.gov.il](http://www.gov.il)] ] [Given the frequency of the attacks documented by the videos, it would appear that this figure is greatly

underestimated - probably by ignoring the losses of the mercenary groups deployed in the area. [3]

In addition, despite the destruction and control of several areas in Gaza, dozens of rockets were fired towards the north (Ashkelon) and towards the Naqab (Beer Sheva). More than a military result, these rocket attacks clearly demonstrate the poor control exercised by the Israeli army over the armed groups. Clearly, it is easier to destroy buildings and fire on refugee camps. However, the Israeli army is continuing its propaganda about human shields to justify its massacres, such as that at the Nuseirat refugee camp, where the bombing to kill one of the Hamas leaders resulted in 90 deaths. As usual, every accusation is a confession: there is no proof of the use of human shields by Hamas and other groups, although this has been extremely well documented on the Israeli side. In any case, such proof would be pointless to establish, given the massive and indiscriminate nature of the Israeli bombardments.

## What prospects?

The main demands are for a ceasefire. The truth is that the main resistance factions in Gaza (Hamas and Islamic Jihad) have declared that they will accept any arrangement to govern the Gaza Strip after the end of the war, provided that this arrangement is Palestinian and not imposed by Israel. [4]

The Palestinian Authority has also agreed to play a role in the management of the Gaza Strip, provided that political unity is re-established with the West Bank. The Israeli government is the only one to have rejected all the proposals for the 'day after' and has not even specified a clear plan for that day, because it rejects the very existence of Hamas and any role for the Palestinian Authority, and refuses to include any political solution that guarantees even a fraction of the Palestinians' national rights.

Hamas and the other resistance factions have called for an end to the aggression against Gaza from day one, but they have always come up against Israel's refusal and inflexibility. As we have seen, Israel's desire to eradicate Hamas is nothing more than propaganda. For even if Hamas were to disappear, new armed Palestinian groups would continue to emerge to fight against the Israeli occupation, with an emerging consensus among rights groups who regard the Israeli regime as apartheid. Moreover, the violence necessary for a military operation to dismantle or weaken Hamas could prove self-destructive, spawning new forms of armed resistance and the creation of new Palestinian groups.

Indeed, Israel's approach to solving its security problems does not include a political solution, without which no military solution can produce lasting results. And at least in Gaza, the armed groups are paradoxically the force that is most preventing the massacres. [5]

Palestinian resistance and resilience demonstrate the impasse in Israel's military tactics. The ongoing war of colonisation has more to do with a headlong rush than with a political solution. By setting fire to everything, Israel hopes that, in time, its territorial gains in Gaza, Jerusalem, the West Bank and, why not, Lebanon, will become 'permanent'. As far as Gaza is concerned, total annihilation is probably not possible (even though the Israeli leaders obviously want it); Israel would be content with a permanent field of tents paid for by the UN, surrounded by barbed wire, corridors and buffer zones. This is why the negotiations for a cessation of hostilities must at the very least include withdrawal from Gaza in its entirety.

Having said that, armed resistance will not be enough to secure withdrawal without movement from the outside, whether it be boycott campaigns or direct pressure via mobilisation (the two are not mutually exclusive). 'For non-violence to work, your opponent must have a conscience. The United States has none', said Stokely Carmichael. The same goes for Israel.

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[1] Emad Moussa, 'Israel-PA security coordination: Protection for whom?' *New Arab*, 14 October 2021.

[2] Jessica Buxbaum, 'Amid Gaza's devastation, Israel wages another war in the West Bank', *New Arab*, 02 November 2023; Sally Ibrahim, 'A new generation of Palestinians is emerging to resist Israel', *New Arab*, 6 October 2022; Mat Nashed, 'How Israel's raids on Jenin only fuel Palestinian resistance', *Al Jazeera*, 2 June 2024 and Mariam Barghouti, 'How growing Israeli violence in the West Bank is fuelling Palestinian resistance', *New Arab*, 12 August 2024.

[3] 'Palestinian resistance movements fight back against Israeli occupation in Gaza', *Daily News Egypt*, 22 May 2024.

[4] Dario Sabagh, 'Why dismantling Hamas won't end Palestinian armed resistance', *New Arab*, 18 October 2023.

[5] Sébastien Seibt, 'Israeli army in urgent need of troops amid rising casualties in Gaza', *France24*, 19 June 2024.