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Middle East

Trumps nightmare for Gaza based on longstanding Zionist hope

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Roland Rance explores the continuity between Trumps outrageous proposals for Gaza and the longterm approach of all currents of Zionism

Donald Trump's proposal to remove all Palestinians from Gaza and turn the region into a beach resort has received near global condemnation. The objections have pointed out, correctly, that this idea is both outrageous and impractical; but they generally ignore the fact that it does not originate from Trump, but has long been a part of Zionist plans for the Middle East.

Theodor Herzl, the founder of the Zionist movement, was initially unclear whether his future Jewish state should be in Palestine or in Argentina. He confided to his diary in June 1895, regarding the indigenous inhabitants of such a state "We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our country". Prior to expulsion, he proposed that "If we move into a region where there are wild animals to which the Jews are not accustomed—big snakes, etc.—I shall use the natives, prior to giving them employment in the transit countries, for the extermination of these animals."

Under Ottoman, and from 1917 British, rule the Zionist movement evicted thousands of peasants from their lands. Yosef Weitz, director of the colonising body the Jewish National Fund and one of the architects of this policy, wrote in 1940 (again in his diary, and not intended for publication) "It should be clear to us that there is no room in Palestine for these two peoples... The only solution is Palestine, at least Western Palestine, without Arabs... The way is to transfer the Arabs from here to the neighbouring countries, all of them, except perhaps those from Bethlehem, Nazareth and the Old City of Jerusalem. Not one village, not one tribe should be left".

The wars that established the state of Israel in 1947-9 created the opportunity to forcibly remove Palestinians not just from their homes, but from Palestine itself. In the course of these wars, some 750,000 Palestinians — about 80% of the total population — was "spirited across the border", accompanied by countless massacres and atrocities. One of the most notorious of these was the July 1948 massacre in Lydd, where scores of Palestinians died after they were imprisoned in a mosque which was then shelled by an Israeli tank. About 70,000 survivors were then forced to walk through the desert towards Ramallah; hundreds died in what became known as the Lydda Death March. The officer who gave the order for these crimes was Yitzhak Rabin, later hailed by many as a hero of "liberal Zionism".

Another Israeli unaccountably regarded as a "liberal Zionist" is historian Benny Morris, who in an interview with Haaretz in 2004 criticised Israel's first prime minister David Ben-Gurion for not going far enough: "If the end of the story turns out to be a gloomy one for the Jews, it will be because Ben-Gurion did not complete the transfer in 1948. Because he left a large and volatile demographic reserve in the West Bank and Gaza and within Israel itself... The non-completion of the transfer was a mistake."

A later opportunity came in 1967, when Israel occupied the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, and expelled a further 300,000 Palestinians. Israel's Chief of Staff responsible for this was, once again, Yitzhak Rabin.

Since 1967, Israel has expelled many hundreds, if not thousands, of Palestinians, while the establishment of illegal settlements has deprived very many more of their homes and land. Although associated with the so-called Zionist right, much of this activity originated with and has been carried out by people professing to be liberal or even socialist Zionists. While the open fascists, such as Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and former National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, publicly proclaim their desire to remove all Palestinians from Palestine, others have been quietly pursuing the same agenda while publicly dissociating themselves from the idea of forcible expulsion.

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Trump's proposal, therefore, is not as outlandish as it may at first seem. Much of the ground for this has been established over the past 77 years of dispossession and expulsion. Any attempt to implement it will meet with mass Palestinian resistance, which will be supported by consistent anti imperialists in Israel – but it seems unlikely that a significant number of Israeli Jews would take any steps to prevent this further crime against humanity.

We insist that if Palestinians in Gaza are to be resettled, it should be to their former homes, towns and villages in Palestine, from which they have been excluded for many decades.

[AntiCapitalist Resistance](#). 9 February 2025

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