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Op-ed

Israel-Palestine Conflict: the One-State Solution

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Publication date: Tuesday 5 December 2023

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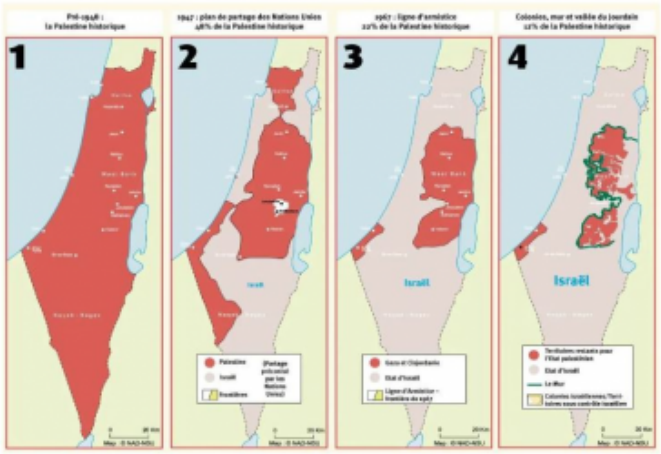
Murdering civilians - men, women, children, old folk - taking them hostage, gunning down a rave party, killing hundreds of young people enjoying themselves: that is horrible and totally unacceptable. Such acts, obviously planned, are not acts of war, or even "mere" war crimes, they are crimes against humanity.

But methodically bombing a crowded strip of land, making thousands of victims in the population enclosed there, that too is a crime against humanity, no less unacceptable.

To make an end to this tragic situation where one barbarous crime provokes another, a political solution is absolutely needed. What solution? Other states, including France, continue to advocate the Two-State solution. But can that happen now?

Clearly it cannot. The New York director of the UN Secretariat for Humanitarian Rights, Craig Mokhiber, said so in his resignation letter of 28 October 2023: *"The mantra of the two-state solution has become an open joke in the corridors of the UN, both for its utter impossibility in fact, and for its total inability to take account of the inalienable human rights of the Palestinian people."*

To be convinced of that, just look at the 1945 map of Palestine and the more recent ones.



Headings: 1. historic Palestine, before 1947. 2. UN sharing plan of 1947 - 48% of historic Palestine. 3. 1967 armistice line - 22% of historic Palestine. 4. settlements, wall and Jordan Valley, 12% of historic Palestine

Palestine as it is today, reduced like a shrinking skin to 12% of its initial size and divided between the Gaza Strip and a West Bank rump dotted with multiplying Jewish Settlements, would be an ungovernable land. Even with the 1967 borders [3rd map].

In fact only the borders of the very contested plan of 24 November 1947 could at a pinch offer a workable solution, in that the areas of the two states would be almost the same, and above all each would have geographical continuity - with passages north-south and east-west between the three "pieces" of Israel and between the three "pieces" of Palestine - thanks to two "neutralised" crossroads under the joint control of the two states and under supervision by the UN or some ad hoc international body.

However, it is scarcely thinkable that Israel, after applying all its efforts, at least since the 1995 assassination of

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Yitzhak Rabin, to occupying all the territory of Palestine, might now renounce its successive conquests and return to the 1947 partition situation, which the Arabs for their part did not want.

It follows that there is only one soluton, a single Israel-Palestine state, probably federal, certainly secular and inhabited by only one category of citizens, independent of their beliefs, origins and cultures. That is precisely what Craig Mokhiber proposes: *"We must support the establishment of a single, democratic, secular state in all of historic Palestine, with equal rights for Christians, Muslims, and Jews."* Having worked for thirty years for human rights wherever they are flouted, he deserves to be heard and heeded. Besides, that seems to be the preferred solution of numerous young Palestinians and Israelis.

Craig Mokhiber thinks also, correctly, that this process will need to include a disarmament process: *"We must advocate for the removal and destruction of Israel's massive stockpiles of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, lest the conflict lead to the total destruction of the region and, possibly, beyond."* But it is not conceivable for Israel to renounce unilaterally its weapons of mass destruction, especially the nuclear ones. Those other states that have them or could acquire them, like Iran, Iraw, Egypt or Saudi Arabia, will have to renounce them too. So negotiations need to occur among all concerned states, the negotiations required by Article VI of the NPT - whether those states have signed it, like the five permanent members of the Security Council, or have not signed, like Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea.

Such negotiations, though terribly complex, will have the huge virtue not only of calming down the Middle East and finally resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict, but also for resolving or preventing others in other regions of the world, including Ukraine and the Far East. War can be contagious, but so can peace.

Admittedly that solution, in today's context, seems unrealistic. Yet it is the least unrealistic option - it is the only one that can bring a lasting solution to the conflict and guarantee peace in the region. At the end of the process, Israel would no longer exist as a separate "Zionist entity", but the Jews would have a national home no longer subject to Arab attacks. This bi-national state, with internal and external peace, would be able to welcome the Jews and Palestinians of the diaspora (following limits and rules agreed by the parites). It would be a model of multi-ethnic and multi-religious cohabitation among Jews, Christians, Muslims, agnostics or atheists, between Semites and non-Semites, a model of freedom, equality and fraternity, respectful of human rights and of the spirit of the original kibbutzim too - saying a final goodbye to anti-semitic, anti-jewish and anti-muslim prejudice.

The interests and the very lives of Israelis, Jews and Palestinians coincide. The way forward is the creation and sharing of a single secular Israel-Palestine state, to be established by negotiations carried out in good faith by new leaders keen on peace. Such leaders exist on both sides. The two peoples concerned need to put them in power - and the so-called democratic states need to support these major changes, pushed by public opinion.

As Albert Camus said the day after Hiroshima: *"Given the terrifying perspectives that humanity faces, we can see even more that peace is the only fight worth fighting. This is not a prayer, it is an order that needs to rise from the peoples to the governments, the order to choose definitively between hell and reason."*

Paris and Tel Aviv, 30 Novembre 2023

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Op-ed published in the French online newspaper Mediapart on 2 December 2023

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