

World court on Israel's war crimes

Testimony of Samir AMIN

1. Israel is a very curious State, the only one of its type in the contemporary world. No other state has been created under similar conditions, no other state relates to the world system (of which it negates all rules) to the same extent.

Israel is a state which has been fabricated by the major Western imperialist powers, Britain and there after the United States. Israel is not the creation of Zionism which was only instrumental in the successive imperialist schemes aiming at the control of the Middle East for its geopolitical position (the "road to India", the southern border of the USSR, today central Asia as the *plaque tournante* to control Russia, China, Iran and India) and for its oil wealth. And Palestine occupies in that scheme an exclusive position, separating Egypt from Arab Asia, allowing eventually the control of the Suez Canal.

For these reasons and no other Britain had chosen during World War I to instrumentalize Zionism through the famous Balfour Declaration (1917). That declaration has no legitimacy, the colonial power having no moral or even juridical right to expropriate the indigenous people placed under its protection to the benefit of foreign settlers brought in with its permission.

In fact British authorities acted energetically to support the building of a "Jewish State within colonial Palestine". British authorities used all their strength to destroy by political and police-military terror the Palestinian liberation movement , without which the State of Israel would never have been able to come to existence.

2. Yes Israel was recognized as an independent new state by the United Nations in May 1948, at a time when very few African and Asian countries (almost all of them voted against the partition of Palestine) were represented in the new international system.

The Arabs were certainly ethically correct in rejecting the principle of partition and the Palestinians who struggled for a united Palestinian State with all its inhabitants, new settlers included, democratic and respectful to all communities, were long ahead of their time. Whether the rejection of the partition was tactically the most efficient choice or not remains subject to discussion, since it helped the foreign settlers to present their aggressive expansion war as a "defensive" action.

Yet Israel's admission to the United Nations was subject to the normal conditions i.e. that states must have recognized international borders. Israel's membership of the United Nations was therefore declared pending to that recognition from its government. That recognition never came , and therefore legally Israel should be expelled from the International community.

Not only has Israel not been expelled , but it was allowed to turn the positions upside down : it is Israel which does not recognize the legitimacy of the United Nations' resolutions, and it is the only State which is tolerated to do so. Israel has never accepted to submit to any of the United Nations resolutions since more than half a century. No sanctions whatsoever were decided to compel it to respect the law, while terrible sanctions (including massive bombing) have been used against others, for much less in a number of cases.

US imperialism later took over the "protection of Israel" and its instrumentalization . The 1967 war was planned in Washington as of 1965, with a view to destroying the nasserist attempt at an independent development. And not only did Israel always refuse to withdraw from occupied Palestine and comply with the United Nations resolution to that effect, it systematically established new settler colonies in these territories. No sanction was ever taken against this expansionist policy, no Western power has ever even reduced its financial support to that state which could hardly survive a few weeks any such action.

3. The Palestinian liberation movement, as represented by PLO, has nevertheless made gigantic concessions in order to reach a reasonable peaceful solution, recognizing the *fait accompli* – the existence of Israel.

The Palestinians have gone to the extent of accepting that most of their land (and the best of it) shall constitute the State of Israel, they signed an agreement stipulating that the Israelis should withdraw from the occupied territories according to a fixed calendar. None of the five successive governments of Israel since have ever respected the agreement they had signed in Oslo in 1993.

It is said that the then Israeli Prime Minister Barak made later a “generous offer” to the Palestinians in Camp David. What a lie ! This offer divided the Palestinian State into four distinct tiny districts, separated by blocs of new settlements, maintained the Israeli military occupation along the Jordan river and annexed almost the whole of East Jerusalem. This “offer” was an unacceptable step back from the Oslo agreement, it is still unacceptable today.

4. Ariel Sharon is a criminal whose responsibilities in the massacre of Palestinians in Sabra and Shatila are established. He normally, according to the principles admitted by the international community, should be arrested and judged by an International Criminal Court.

But Ariel Sharon shares George W. Bush’s “views” on almost everything. Therefore he has been in a position to take advantage of the confusions created by the events of September 11, 2001, and pursue the reversal of “the peace process” initiated in Madrid and Oslo by reoccupying Palestinian semi autonomous areas and, in the name of a so called “war against terrorism” proceed to further massacres of Palestinians in Jenine, Ramallah, Bethlehem and elsewhere, the target being the Zionist “final solution”, i.e. their deporting out of Palestine.

Sharon is not doing something absolutely “new”. As already said the process of reversing the peace process was already initiated by Barak. Israel was built and expanded on the basis of that continuous policy of expropriation and expulsion of the Palestinians to the benefit of the settlers in the new state. Ethnic cleansing has always ruled its daily policies and has been actively pursued by Labour governments no less than by the Right. That policy started very early, with the massacre of Deir Yacine (1948), Tantura and other places, followed by the massive expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to whom Israel denies the right of return, unanimously recognized by international law. The event happened only three years after the end of World War II during which so many European Jews had been the victims of Nazi barbarism. Only one conclusion from that sad observation : there is no vaccination which prevents victims to become in their turn butchers. From Deir Yacine to Jenine, the massacre is continuous.

But Israel, it is repeated, is a “democratic state”. What is the meaning of such a democracy if it is to operate on the basis of apartheid discriminating not only de facto, but de jure, against Arab Israelis citizens, developing a vision of the Palestinian authority as a submitted auxiliary police forcing the Palestinians to accept the status of a Bantustan (at best, awaiting their expulsion !). Israel is a racist, apartheid state. The mere fact that may be, in certain circumstances, a majority of its privileged population supports it is no excuse : many odious systems have been supported by majorities.

The only actual issue today is to require Israel to withdraw from occupied Palestine, and to recognize the right of return of Palestinians expelled from their homes.

The Bush-Sharon rhetoric has completely loaded the dices, focussing on the so called issue of “violence” and “terrorism”. Violence and terrorism of whom ? Israeli occupation and daily actions are fundamentally use of violence and terrorism. Violence used by Palestinians is only a response to it, and therefore is fully legitimate since it is resistance to oppression, one of the fundamental rights of peoples. And if the Israeli occupation army acts outside its boundaries, why should the Palestinians not act inside Israel ? May be some forms of the Palestinian actions could be up for discussion,

particularly from the point of view of their efficiency in the circumstances. But in no way can the violence of the oppressed and that of the oppressor be placed on the same footing. Calling both sides to “stop violence” and not calling for the prior evacuation of the Israeli army is simply aligning with the Bush-Sharon strategy.

5. Asian and African peoples naturally understand what is at stake in Palestine. Colonialism, white settlers, racism, apartheid (and Israel was a very good friend of the apartheid regime, not by chance) belong to their common historical experiences. Therefore in Asia and in Africa the support to the Palestinian struggle for liberation unifies.

Therefore when the 77 and the Non Aligned (the Third World countries) condemned Zionism as racism in the United Nations General Assembly, they only expressed a correct qualification of that official ideology of a “white settler” colonial state scheme.

This is unfortunately not the case in Europe. Why ? For two reasons in my view.

The major reason stems from the fact that the major powers ; i.e. the G 7 or the “Triad” (USA-Canada, Europe, Japan) share a common “collective imperialist” vision of their relations to the peoples of the South. This political choice is that of governments belonging to the “left” (in electoral terminology) as well as to the “right”, both in support of what they believe are the requirements of neo-liberal globalisation (which is in fact the defence of the interests of dominant transnational capital). They share what they believe are the same strategic interests (which imply the “control” of the Middle East), they accept the leadership of the US in this respect and therefore consider Israel as a useful ally in their enterprise.

This common option of the ruling establishments of the G7 (the “triad”) – until now – is far more important in explaining the attitude of these governments towards the Palestinian question than what is so often attributed to the weight of the “Jewish lobby” (which should always be labelled Zionist lobby since many people classified as “Jews” are not supporters of Zionism). Should the G7 develop another vision of their relations to the South the support to Israel would disappear the next day, in spite of the “Zionist lobby”.

The second reason for the confusion on the Palestinian issue stems from European history. Antisemiticism, which led to the crimes of the Nazis, is a European phenomenon. It produced Zionism as a reaction to it. Whether this reaction – at least understandable – was or was not the best response to the challenge is a matter of debate. But what is not object of an acceptable debate is that the full responsibility for this tragic history is that of the European peoples. Therefore if an Israeli state had to be created as a solution to the question it should have been located somewhere in Europe. The Palestinian people had no responsibility in that affair. Yet the Europeans did find it normal to expiate their fault at the expense of others and moreover use Zionism as an instrument for their own imperialist schemes. European (and North American), democrats have to understand that this attitude is not acceptable.

For sure the Zionist propaganda has proven efficient in exploiting the bad conscience of the Europeans. The “holocaust industry” so well analysed and denounced by Norman Finkelstein shows how it works to that effect. Yet the European-North American opinion is not the mere result of that propaganda which would not resist to a courageous stand of the democratic progressive peoples of Europe and North America.

May-be one could add to these major explanations the natural sympathy towards the Zionist colonisation scheme which reminds us of that historical US ideology whereby white settlers considered legitimate the extermination of native peoples. Yet I believe that if the US establishment did not see a strategic interest in their alliance with Israel that “natural sympathy” would have little effect. The US establishment has always been cynical enough and capable to find the adequate arguments. Should we forget that Eisenhower in 1956 took advantage of the British-French-Israeli

alliance to side at that time with Egypt, against Israel, with a view to eliminating the British and the French from the Middle East ?

6. Can Israel be different and accept another historical perspective than that of being the spearhead of Western imperialism ?

With respect to the past the matter can be subject for an interesting historical debate. I personally remember the Jews being welcome in Egypt when arriving as refugees during World War II, escaping from the horrors of the Nazis. Many people were saying : “If these people are unjustly rejected by the nations among whom they lived and if they wish to return to the East from which they originated, welcome. A million Jews in Palestine, why not ? But a million white settlers, no”. Unfortunately when reaching Palestine, organised and controlled by the Zionist establishment they were taught to behave as white settlers. And they generally did.

But now ? Now that the Palestinians accept a State of Israel, and if the Israelis would in their turn accept a Palestinian State (including if there is some need to “help” them accepting it through international action), could that new conjunction create the possibility for another evolution in the relations between the two peoples ? I believe this is so.

But let us conclude in clear words : nothing of this kind can eventually happen unless Israel first withdraws from all the territories it occupies in Palestine since 1967.

That is the only objective for which all democratic forces in the world and in Israel should mobilize.

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