

Quds Day Message: The Occupied West Bank Is NOT Israeli Heartland

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Another Quds Day has passed. People around the world took to the streets to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian People, and to condemn the ongoing Zionist occupation of the Palestinian homeland. Their message was clear: the Occupied West Bank is not the Israeli heartland.

Established in 1979 by Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic, Quds Day provides an annual opportunity for Muslims and other people of conscience to express their outrage over the more than 70 years of ongoing Israeli injustice to Palestinians. In sharp contrast, U.S. President Donald Trump and his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, seem intent on legitimatizing the Zionist land grab of occupied Palestinian territory, which has even been referred to as “the heartland of Israel” in a Texas department of agriculture news release.

The last half-hearted effort against illegal settlements on Palestinian lands occurred during the administration of George H.W. Bush, who withheld loan guarantees from the Israeli entity. “We have a longstanding policy that feels that settlements are counterproductive to peace,” Bush insisted. “This is a longstanding policy, and I am determined to see that that policy not be altered.” Unfortunately, successive U.S. administrations have not shared even this lukewarm level of political determination, and, of course, under the auspices of the current Washington regime, the number of illegal Israeli settlements has mushroomed.

The U.S. state of Texas seems to be a haven for Christian Zionist supporters of the Israeli Apartheid regime. Governor Greg Abbot of Texas has even gone so far as to proclaim, “Any anti-Israel policy is an anti-Texas policy.” Striving to steer the discourse from condemnation and censure to outright approval and overt political support for Israeli policies of illegal settlement expansion, these evangelical extremists believe they have found another “Cyrus” personified in Donald Trump. At a recent gathering of like-minded militant Christians in San Antonio, former U.S. Congresswoman Michelle Bachman speculated that Trump was an agent of God in fulfilling Biblical prophecies.

Demonstrating his unabashed approval, Texas agriculture commissioner Sid Miller has signed an agreement to open trade relations with the Shomron Regional Council, which provides services to 35 illegal settlements in the Occupied West Bank. An Israeli official enthusiastically praised Miller, who also serves as an elder for the Cowboy Church of Erath County in Stephenville, Texas, for understanding that “there is no dispute about this region in the eyes of God.” It appears that Miller does not understand the prohibition against using state funds for personal trips, however, and has been slapped with a \$500 fine by the Texas Ethics Commission.

“I think we have a lot in common with Israel,” said Miller, who was also an adviser to Trump’s 2016 election campaign. Apparently, he views Texas as a mirror image of the Israeli entity, complete with apartheid walls and likewise under constant threat of invasions by the “other.” Mohamad Fattouh, an executive board member of Students for Justice in Palestine at the University of Houston explained, “We put such heavy emphasis on our law enforcement here [in Texas], on ICE, on securing the border, a wall; all things that are mirrored in Israel.”

Growing in strength each year, the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement seeks to impose an economic penalty on the Israeli regime for its intransigent and uncivilized behavior towards Palestinians. As BDS has gathered momentum, Zionists have pushed back aided by right-leaning, evangelical Christian Zionists, such as Robert Jeffress and John Hagee, who view the Israeli entity as a fulfillment of Biblical prophecy. Pastors Jeffress and Hagee, the former being a senior leader of the 13,000-member First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas and a Fox News contributor, and the latter being the founder of the extreme anti-Palestinian Christians United for Israel, led prayers at the opening of the U.S. embassy in Al Quds in May of 2018.

An indicator of the success of the BDS movement is the draconian legislation being pushed by the Zionist lobby in its strategy to conflate criticism of the Israeli regime with anti-Semitism. Laws have been passed in 27 states, and are pending in 14 others, requiring individuals and companies doing business with the respective states to disavow any and all activity in, or in support of, boycotts targeting the Israeli entity and Israeli companies. In Texas, speech therapist Bahia Amawi, who personally boycotted Israeli products, was forced to sign a pledge that she would not take any action “intended to penalize, inflict economic harm on, or limit commercial relations with Israel.” To her credit, Amawi refused to sign a new contract with the Pflugerville, Texas Independent School District, but lost her livelihood in the process.

Particularly galling are those firms producing goods and services for the benefit of settlers in the Occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem Al Quds. These firms, by profiting from wares produced in Palestinian territories, are complicit in the apartheid policies of the Zionist regime and its illegal occupation. The United Nations Council on Human Rights has identified 206 such companies operating in Occupied Palestinian Territory. While the so-called “blacklist” has yet to be disclosed, the following firms are among those already known to be operating in occupied Palestine: Caterpillar, Hewlett Packard, Motorola, Flir Systems, Honeywell, L3 Communications, Schneider Electric, Siemens, United Technologies, Valero Energy and Volvo, to name a few.

Moreover, the Israeli entity, by being the largest recipient of U.S. foreign military aid, is connected economically to the American arms industry. For example, Lockheed Martin in Texas has produced F-35 warplanes, which were sold to the Israeli Air Force. At a cost of \$5.57 billion USD for 33 of the advanced jet fighter planes, spare parts and simulators, the Zionist regime will pay for this from the U.S. military assistance money it receives. This satanic economic symbiosis, according to Lockheed Martin, results in the F-35 being “responsible for more than 220,000 direct and indirect U.S. jobs.” And no wonder, for the F-35 contract is distributed over 1,400 suppliers in 45 U.S. states and Puerto Rico.

As a result of this intertwining of U.S. arms makers and the Israeli entity's interests, U.S. politicians are caught in a sinkhole of moral compromise. For obvious political reasons, they support favorable local policies towards the arms makers because of the high-paying jobs these companies bring to their communities. But then they are forced to vote for military aid for the Israeli entity, since in so doing, these funds eventually return to their communities to stimulate the local economy by providing good-paying jobs with the arms makers. Over time, voting against military aid for the Israeli entity becomes more and more difficult, making public criticism of the Zionist regime and its abysmal human rights record, virtually impossible.

Palestinians in Gaza have been enduring a Zionist siege since 2007 that bans the free movement of persons and goods in and out of the enclave, which amounts to collective punishment and is a crime against humanity under international law. Beginning on March 30, 2018, Palestinians in Gaza began peaceful protests concentrated at five locations along the eastern border fence of the Israeli entity, which responded with typical blood-curdling violence.

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Against this sanguinary scenario in Gaza, the perpetually self-absorbed occupant of the White House is preparing to roll out his "deal of the century" proposal, the details of which have already been leaked to Israeli news media. First and foremost, Palestinians would have to concede defeat in their 70-plus year struggle for their right to return to their homeland. Second, Arab states would be obliged to engage in land swaps, something which, no doubt, seems reasonable to the former real estate tycoon currently in the Oval Office. Third, Arab countries would be required to grant full citizenship to Palestinian refugees, as well as to absorb the cost of implementing this stillborn solution to this festering 7-decades-old dilemma.

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Realistically, we cannot expect a reasonable proposal for resolving this core Middle East issue from a rogue regime whose dealmaker-in-chief and loyal son-in-law have already moved the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Al Quds, gleefully celebrating the grand opening while Israeli Occupation Force snipers were busy gunning down Palestinians in Gaza. According to the Gaza Ministry of Health, 55 were killed and 2,770 were injured while peacefully protesting the embassy opening on Nakba Day. As if that were not enough, the current occupant of the Oval office has brazenly and in defiance of international law recognized Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, Syrian territory seized by the Zionist regime in 1967.

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When asked if he thought Palestinians were capable of governing themselves, Jared Kushner, Trump's Middle East envoy, arrogantly responded, "That's one that we'll have to see. The hope is that they, over time, will become capable of governing." Rather than doubting the Palestinians, it would appear that the U.S. and the Israeli entity not only lack abilities for governing themselves, but also are demonstrably incapable of coexisting peacefully in the community of the civilized nations of the world.

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