



## ARE PALESTINIANS CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD?

It was Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu who said: "When you surround an army, leave an outlet free. Do not press a desperate foe too hard."



Had the rightwing regime in occupied Palestine led by Benjamin Netanyahu heeded this advice, more than 1 200 Israelis killed under the heavy rains of rockets fired by Hamas militants this past weekend would probably be still alive. But Netanyahu and his junta kept on squeezing the Palestinians to a point where they feel that they have nothing to lose if they embark on an unprecedented attack on Israel. Palestinians who live in Gaza essentially live in the biggest prison in the world. They are not allowed to move out of Gaza. They are subjected to arrests and random killings by the Israeli army. Their homes get demolished on a regular basis as the Jewish settlers continue to encroach on what is left of Palestinian territories. These are conditions that breed martyrs. People who feel that it is bet-

ter to die fighting than to live waiting to be killed for no reason other than that you demand your land and freedom.

But the upsurge of attacks by Hamas gives Netanyahu and his rightwing government a perfect excuse to reduce Gaza to "rubble".

The war will likely increase his popularity and totally defocus the Israeli population from Netanyahu's corruption charges. Netanyahu will position himself as the champion of security for the Jewish people by his brutal suppression of the quest of self-determination of the Palestinian people.

Just over two weeks ago, Netanyahu met United States of America President Joe Biden and showed him a new map of Israel. The map had erased Palestine from the atlas.

According to a news report by Al Jazeera, despite Netanyahu's claims of pushing for peace with Palestinians, he held up two maps of the Middle East with Israel highlighted in blue. "Both maps showed the occupied Palestinian territories – the West Bank and Gaza – as well as Syria's occupied Golan Heights as being part of Israel."

The report further states that Netanyahu is presiding over one of the most rightwing governments in the history of Israel, which has been intensifying violence and home demolitions against Palestinians while expanding illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank.

Netanyahu has been suffocating the Palestinian people with renewed intensity. The more than 2,2 million Palestinians living in the ever-shrinking Gaza strip of just 365 square kilometres cannot even leave Gaza which has effectively become a concentration camp. And when Hamas leaders observe Netanyahu's arrogance of telling the world that Palestine does not exist, they feel that he is pushing them to the limit. When Israeli soldiers continue with their reign of terror in the occupied territories supposed to be under control of the Palestinian people, Hamas leaders feel that they have been pushed to the limit and resolve to launch the most aggressive attack on Israeli targets. Within 48 hours, the death toll of Israelis, which includes soldiers, had reached more than 700. Israel also launched a counterattack offensive, dropping missiles, hitting anything and everything in occupied Gaza, leading to the killing of more than 400 Palestinians.



Hamas has done the impossible. They have taken the war to the occupying force and they are hitting the occupying force hard. Never before has Israel's security been breached this badly. Security analysts are still trying to find answers how Hamas pulled this operation off. They cannot understand how Mossad, the Israeli security agency, did not know and was caught off guard.

Of course, the focus by the so-called international community is on calling for peace. And as Peter Tosh said, everybody is calling for peace but no one is calling for justice. The real problem that gave rise to the killing of hundreds of people is the occupation of Palestine by Israel. This is the crux of the matter that any efforts to find lasting peace should take into account. The quest for

freedom, hunger for the repossession of the land, the pursuit of self-determination is so fundamental to a people that it cannot be suppressed through violence. Not even a nuclear bomb can suppress the aspirations of a people to be free.

But how did it start?

The common narrative is that after the end of the second world war which claimed millions of Jews during the Nazi orchestrated holocaust, there was a general feeling that the Jews had been vulnerable because they did not have a country they could call home. Towards the end of the war, on November 29, 1947, the United Nations passed resolution 181. The resolution also known as the Partition Resolution would divide Palestine, which was a British colony, into Jewish and Arab states in May 1948 when the British mandate over the territory was scheduled to end.

Other analysts argue that while the Jewish holocaust provided a legitimate reason for the creation of a Jewish state, the idea was conceived much early before the events of the second world war.

A Jewish journalist and political activist from Austria, Theodor Herzl, officially established Zionism as a movement and political organisation. Herzl believed that the Jewish population couldn't survive if it didn't have a nation of its own.

Zionism is a movement to recreate a Jewish state in Israel. The name comes from the word "Zion," which is a Hebrew word that refers to Jerusalem.

Throughout history, Jews have considered certain areas in Israel sacred. The Jewish religious text, the Torah depicts stories of ancient prophets who were instructed by their God to return to this homeland.

While the fundamental philosophies of the Zionist movement have existed for hundreds of years, modern Zionism formally took root in the late 19th century. Around that time, Jews throughout the world faced growing anti-Semitism, according to the archives.

Persecuted Jews who were struggling to salvage their identity began promoting the idea of

returning to their homeland and restoring a Jewish culture there.

In 1897, Herzl organised the First Zionist Congress, which met in Basel, Switzerland. He also formed and became the first president of the World Zionist Organisation.

Although Herzl died in 1904, he's often considered the father of modern Zionism.



According to the archives, in 1917, British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour wrote a letter to Baron Rothschild, a wealthy and prominent leader in the British Jewish community.

In the brief correspondence, Balfour expressed the British government's support for the establishment of a Jewish home in Palestine. This letter was published in the press one week later and eventually became known as the Balfour Declaration.

The text was included in the Mandate for Palestine, a document issued by the League of Nations in 1923 that gave Great Britain the responsibility of establishing a Jewish national homeland in the British colony of Palestine.

The creation of a Jewish state only came into being after the second world war. In terms of that partition, sanctioned by the United Nations, land allocated to the Palestinians was 44% of the original Palestine and the rest was to be allocated by the Jewish people.

However, the Jewish settlers who came from different parts of the world kept on demanding more land. By 1967, land allocated to the Pales-

tinian people had been reduced to 22 percent of the original Palestine.

The expropriation of Palestinian land for the creation of a Jewish state is the source of a bloody conflict between the Jewish settlers and the Palestinians.

As the conflict intensified with no end in sight, leaders from both sides tried to enter into negotiations that would end the conflict. An opportunity for lasting peace which resulted in the signing of the Oslo peace accord was shattered when a Jewish extremist, Yigal Amir, fired two shots with a Beretta pistol, killing then Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on November 4, 1995.

Efforts for peace suffered a major setback and the conflict continued, resulting in more deaths and Palestinians losing more of their land and rights.

In an attempt to end the conflict, the leading Palestinian liberation movement at the time, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) endorsed the borders of a reduced Palestine in 1988. Despite the historic compromise by Yasser Arafat who accepted the shrinking of the borders to only 22 percent, peace continued to evade the occupied territories as the Israelis continued to keep the occupied territories under their control. Arafat's stature as a liberation struggle hero was compromised, leading to Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Gaddafi describing Arafat as a Zionist mayor in Gaza.

As Arafat and the PLO went out of their way to pursue peace, they removed their eyes on the ultimate prize: the total liberation of the Palestinian people and the regaining of their land. The Israeli junta succeeded to reduce the PLO into an authority that governs the Palestinians on behalf of Israel. Hamas, which started as a small and extremist party, gained ground as the PLO increasingly became irrelevant as it was seen as a puppet authority that was advancing the interests of the Israeli regime. Hamas even won elections in Gaza.

The response by western powers – especially the United States and Britain – to the horrors visited on the Palestinian people by Israeli security



forces is disappointing but not surprising. In addition to bombing residential buildings in Gaza without discriminating from hospitals, schools or refugee camps, the Netanyahu regime has cut electricity, water, gas and food supply to the besieged enclave.



As usual the United Nations, which is essentially a foreign desk of the United States, has offered no support to the victims of violence. As expected, the UN condemned the violence from both sides, totally ignoring the real trigger of the violence – the occupation of Palestine by Israelis.

In the mainstream western media, Hamas is projected as a terrorist group unleashing acts of unmitigated terror on the Israeli people. The “little” detail that Hamas has been forced to resort to violence because of the violent policy of land theft and ethnic cleansing by the Israeli invaders is totally ignored.

Western powers have a history of siding with colonialists. After all, they are the main perpetrators of colonialism. During the anti-colonial struggle in occupied Azania, the west sided with the settler-colonial regime against the liberation movement. In the eyes of America and Britain, Mosibudi Mangena, the Commander in Chief of the Azanian National Liberation Army (AZANLA), was and remains a terrorist. So were other freedom fighters such as Sabelo Phama, Commander of the Azanian People’s Liberation Army (APLA) and Chris Hani,

who was Chief of Staff of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK).

As tragic as the developments of the past few days in occupied Palestine have been, they have unmasked and laid bare the suffering of the Palestinian people who have been living as refugees in the land of their birth since the creation of the Jewish state in 1948. Nobody can claim ignorance of the brutality of the Israeli regime to suppress the quest for self-determination and self-rule of the Palestinians.

Those who have been critical of Russia for invading Ukraine must now stand up against the occupation of Palestine by Israel. Real peace will not be found through violent suppression but only through the delivery of justice. Giving Palestinians their land and space to rule themselves is the only route to a lasting solution in the Middle East.