

In memory of Edward Said

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I have never met Edward Said face to face. Our exchange was through the written words, often only through public written words. Still, he has had a formative role in my life. When I think about Said, I don't just think about the intellectual, the sharp political analyst, the voice of reason and justice, but I think about him in the context of life in exile - his life as part of the Palestinian Diaspora. I think about losing the landscapes of your childhood and your collective roots, which are such a formative part of your identity. In this case, Said's exile is indirectly also my responsibility as a member of the oppressing people - the people who brought this about. I would like to read from the opening paragraphs of my *Israel Palestine*.

The state of Israel was founded in 1948 following a war which the Israelis call the War of Independence, and the Palestinians call the *nakba* - the catastrophe. A haunted, persecuted people sought to find a shelter and a state for itself, and did so at a horrible price to another people. During the war of 1948, more than half of the Palestinian population at the time - 1,380,000 people - were driven off their homeland by the Israeli army. Though Israel officially claimed that a majority of the refugees fled and were not expelled, it still refused to allow them to return, as a UN resolution demanded shortly after the 1948 war. Thus, the Israeli land was obtained through ethnic cleansing of the indigenous Palestinian inhabitants.

This is not a process unfamiliar in history. Israel's actions remain incomparable to the massive ethnic cleansing of Native Americans by the settlers and government of the United States. Had Israel stopped there, in 1948, I could probably live with it. As an Israeli, I grew up believing that this primal sin our state was founded on might be forgiven one day, because the founders' generation was driven by the faith that this was the only way to save the Jewish people from the danger of another holocaust. But it didn't stop there.¹

But it did not stop there. In 1967 Israel conquered and occupied the Palestinian West Bank and the Gaza strip, and a new wave of refugees had to go into exile. Since then Israel has been occupying these territories with more and more aggressive means of oppression. Today, 3.5 million Palestinians live under Israeli occupation.

The question that Said faced as a member of the oppressed society and I - as a member of the oppressors' society was what means are open for resisting such blatant violations of basic human rights and international law. During the years of the occupation two schools of thought have developed on this question. One is the way of arms, of liberation by force. Among the Palestinians at the time were those who were speaking of "throwing the Jews to the sea" - the idea being that the elimination of Israel is the only way to eventually achieve Palestinian liberation. The other model of struggle, which Said had kept reminding us of, is the way paved by Mandela in South Africa. The blacks in South Africa vastly outnumbered the whites, and probably it

¹ **Israel/Palestine, Introduction, pp. 7-8.**

would have been possible for them to believe they could eventually throw away all the white residents that have been their oppressors for years. But that is not what they chose. They chose instead to offer a solution based on equality and human dignity for all the residents of South Africa, including the whites.

In March 2001, Said wrote from South Africa, where he attended a conference on values in education. He quotes from Mandela's speech at the conference, noting two phrases that have deeply touched him: "The first phrase -- the campaign against Apartheid 'was one of the great moral struggles' that 'captured the world's imagination.' The second phrase was in his description of the anti-Apartheid campaign not simply as a movement to end racial discrimination, but as a means 'for all of us to assert our common humanity.' Implied in the words 'all of us' is that all of the races of South Africa, including the pro-Apartheid whites, were envisaged as participating in a struggle whose goal finally was coexistence, tolerance and 'the realization of humane values.'"² Said explains that the struggle of the Blacks in South Africa could attract the imagination and dreams of the entire world, because it offered the whole society—even the Whites who apparently benefited from the Apartheid—the only way that enables the preservation of basic human values.

The Palestinian struggle, says Said, must be based on the understanding that the Jewish people are here to stay. The struggle must strive towards a settlement that will enable coexistence based on human dignity, a settlement that “will capture the world's imagination”:

"We would have to provide a solution to the conflict that, in Mandela's second phrase, would assert our common humanity as Jews and Arabs. Most of us still cannot accept the idea that Israeli Jews are here to stay, that they will not go away, any more than Palestinians will go away. This is understandably very hard for Palestinians to accept, since they are still in the process of losing their land and being persecuted on a daily basis. But, with our irresponsible and unreflective suggestion in what we have said that they will be forced to leave (like the Crusades), we did not focus enough on ending the military occupation as a moral imperative or on providing a form for their security and self-determinism that did not abrogate ours...

"Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs are locked in Sartre's vision of hell, that of "other people"... Therefore, it is up to us to provide the answer that power and paranoia cannot. It isn't enough to speak generally of peace. One must provide the concrete grounds for it, and those can only come from moral vision, and neither from "pragmatism" nor "practicality." If we are all to live -- this is our imperative -- we must capture the imagination not just of our people, but that of our oppressors. And, we have to abide by humane democratic values."³

Since at least 1988, a majority of Palestinian society subscribed to this second model. In November 1988, at the peak of the first Palestinian Intifada, the nineteenth session of the Palestine National Council (PNC)—the top forum of Palestinian

² Edward Said, “The Only Alternative,” *Al-Ahram Weekly On-line*, 1 - 7 March 2001, Issue No.523, reprinted in Edward Said, *From Oslo to Iraq and the Road Map*, New York: Pantheon Books, 2004, Vintage Books, 2005 (pp. 48-51 of the Vintage Books edition).

³ *Ibid.*

organizations—was held in Algiers under the title “Intifada Meeting.” In an overwhelming majority vote of 253 to 46, it passed resolutions accepting the partition of the historical Palestine along the lines of the pre-1967 borders, which for the Palestinians means accepting only 22% of their historical land as their future state. The PNC’s resolutions called for a peaceful settlement of the conflict, and denounced terrorism in all its forms. An enthusiastic Edward Said, who was present at the historic meeting said, “Most of us there had grown up with the reality (lived and remembered) of Palestine as an Arab country, refusing to concede anything more than the exigency of a Jewish state, won at our expense in the loss of our land, our society, and literally uncountable thousands of lives... For the first time, also, the declarations were implicitly recognizing a state that offered us nothing whatever.”⁴

But we gather here today in times of real difficult test to this vision of Mandela and Said and the spirit of the solution that could capture the world's imagination. Right now Israel is bringing about the third Palestinian Nakba. There was one in 1948, another in 1967, and the third one is happening today. With very little coverage and reporting, Palestinians are being pushed out of their land, being locked in smaller and smaller enclaves with restrictions on their movement. Palestinians die every day, not just from shooting and bombardment by the Israeli army. They can die at the roadblocks - if someone has a heart attack, he may not be able to get to the hospital on time - or because they were injured by the Israeli army. In every Israeli attack, along with the dead, there are many more injured. The injured are not counted in the statistics of evil, but what are their chances to survive with the collapse of the medical system in the territories?

To understand the present Israeli project, let us go back in history. Ever since the 1967 occupation, Israeli military and political elites deliberated over the question of how to keep maximum of the occupied land with minimum Palestinian population. Two models for a "solution" have developed in Israeli political thinking.

One, which was dominant in military circles and whose primary spokesman was Ariel Sharon—assumed that, given Israel’s military superiority, Palestinian resistance could eventually be broken. It is necessary, therefore, to break any form of Palestinian organization or power base, as Sharon did in Lebanon in 1982. On its longer term perspective, this approach maintained that it should be possible to find more sophisticated ways to achieve a 1948-style “solution.” It would only be necessary to find another state for the Palestinians. “Jordan is Palestine”—was the phrase that Sharon coined in the 1980’s.

The other model developed since the eighties in the "dovish" circles of the Labor party. Its Alon Plan proposed annexation of 35-40 percent of the territories to Israel, and either Jordanian-rule, or some form of self-rule of the rest of the land on which the Palestinians actually live. In the eyes of its proponents, this plan represented a necessary compromise. They believed it is impossible to repeat the 1948 “solution” of mass expulsion, either for moral considerations, or because world public opinion would never allow it to happen again.

The Oslo accords in 1993, and the agreements that followed, were in effect the realization of the Labor’s Alon plan. This is not how it was perceived at the time. The Palestinians, as well as the Israeli left, have always rejected the Alon plan, which robs them of 40 percents of what is left of their historical land, and keeps even the rest under Israeli control with a restricted autonomy. The Palestinians, the Israelis and the world were led to believe that Israel, under Rabin, has finally changed direction and is

⁴ Edward Said, “Palestine Agenda,” reprinted as Chapter 15 in his *The Politics of Dispossession* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 148. The article provides an extensive summary of the session’s resolutions.

willing to end the occupation and implement UN resolution 242, after an interim period of five years. Nevertheless, as I detail in my *Israel/Palestine*, right from the start, what Israel implemented during the Oslo years (1993-2000) was the Alon plan. Rabin himself declared this willingness to accept this plan already in 1983⁵, and its realization came in 1993. In return for Arafat's commitment to control Palestinian frustration and guarantee the security of Israel, Rabin appeared willing to allow the Palestinian Authority to run the enclaves in which Palestinians still reside. Gradually it became apparent to the proponents of the Alon plan that they could even extend the "Arab-free" areas beyond the 35 percent to which Rabin agreed already in 1983. In practice, during the Oslo years, the Palestinians have been dispossessed of about 50 percent of their lands, which are now state lands, security zones and "land reserves for the settlements." However, it appeared that they will be satisfied with this 50 percent, and would allow the Palestinians some sort of self-rule existence in the other 50 percent. Thus, the model developed during the Oslo years was of classical apartheid.

However, the other model, of massive ethnic cleansing, never died out in the army, or in the circle of "political generals," whose career moved from the military to the government. In their eyes, even this apartheid system was giving too much to the Palestinians, because from a longer-range perspective, even a partial autonomy may enable political frameworks for future Palestinian resistance to the occupation. Right from the outset of the Oslo agreements, two dominant voices against them were that of Ehud Barak, then chief of staff, and Ariel Sharon, then a leader of the opposition Likud party.

In 1999, the army got back to power through the "political generals"—first Barak, and then Sharon. The road opened to correct what they viewed as the grave mistake of Oslo. In *Israel/Palestine*, I argue that the current escalation of hostilities that started at the end of September 2000 was not a spontaneous outburst of violence, but rather a calculated and well-prepared move by the Israeli military designed to undo the Oslo arrangements. In order to achieve this, it was first necessary to convince the Israeli society and the Western world that the Palestinians were not willing to live in peace and were in fact threatening Israel's very existence. Barak succeed in doing this with his "generous offer" fraud in the July 2000 Camp David summit. By 2002, under Sharon, the process of restoring direct military control of the occupied territories was completed. Israel started its massive project of ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians along the wall that it began constructing in 2003.

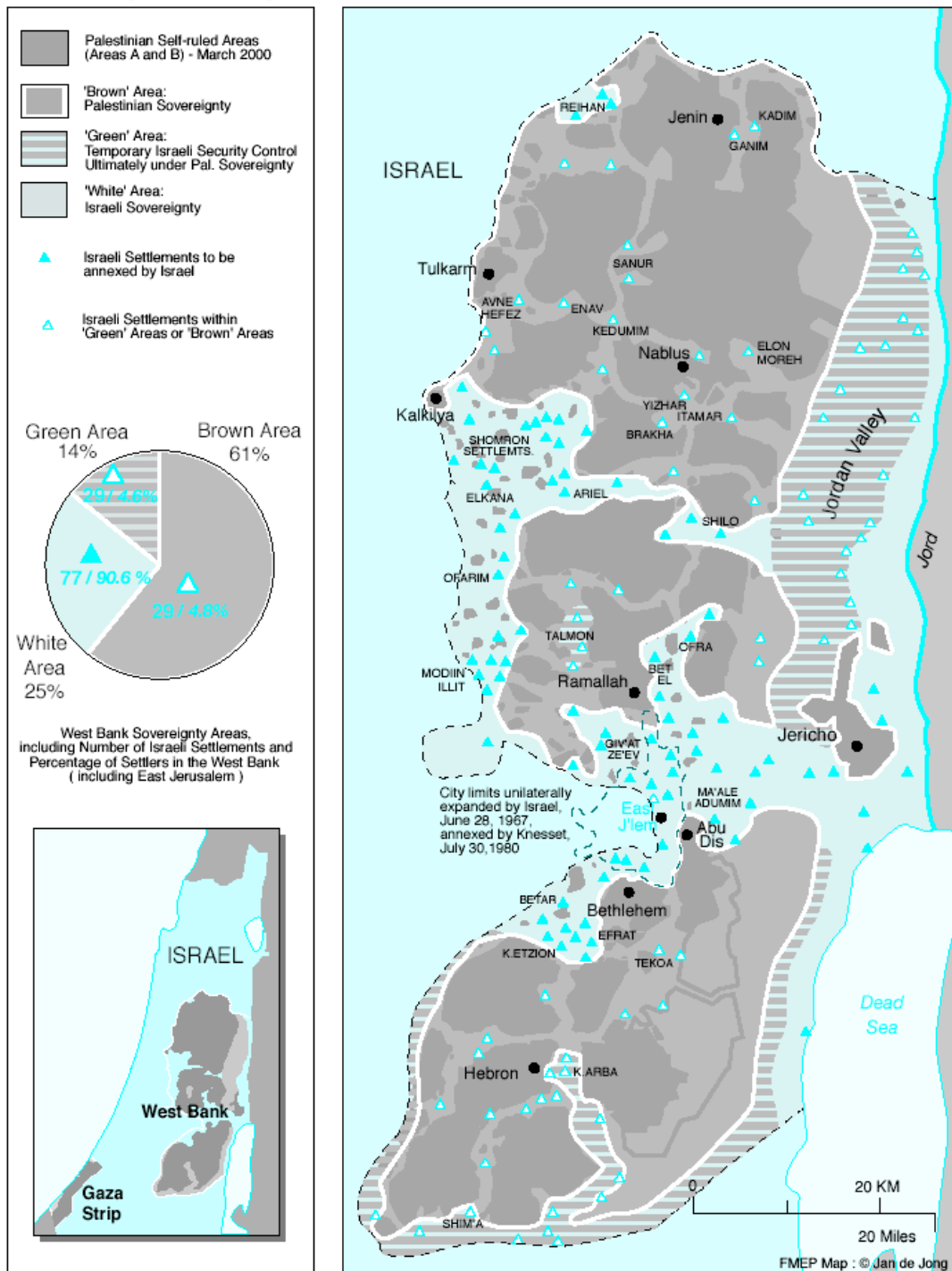
To get a grasp of what drives the wall project, let us look at the map I distributed. This is the only formal map that Israel has ever presented as its proposal for the final agreement. It was presented by then Prime Minister Ehud Barak in the Taba-Eilat negotiations in May 2000 (two months prior to the Camp David summit), and was originally published in Hebrew, in *Yediot Aharonot*, on May 19 of that year. According to this map, the darker areas are to be under "Palestinian sovereignty," and together they comprise 60 percent of the West Bank. The rest of the West Bank will remain Israeli—the white areas will be immediately annexed, and the striped areas will be held "temporarily." The Palestinian's "sovereign" land is divided to four isolated enclaves, with no territorial continuity. To understand what type of life the Palestinians can expect inside their 60 percent, we may examine the situation inside the darker areas of the map. This is the situation that existed in the West Bank already by 2000. (The planned Palestinian enclaves correspond to areas A -full Palestinian control, and B- partial Palestinian control, as determine by the various post Oslo agreements.) In these areas, there are still about 40 isolated Israeli settlements (white triangles), connected by security roads and military zones. So the lighter gray areas inside the dark areas are Israeli-controlled lands, roads, and military posts. These further divide the enclaves internally to smaller units surrounded by Israeli military

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roads and posts. The May plan, made no mention of ever dismantling these settlements, or changing the internal situation of the enclaves. Two months later, in the Camp David summit of July 2000, it was miraculously declared that Israel's plan is to give back to the Palestinians 90% of their land. But no maps or territorial details of this supposed new plan were given. Though time does not permit discussing this here, in the plan Barak proposed at Camp David as well, the situation inside the enclaves was to remain the same⁶.

⁶ See Israel/Palestine, chapter 2.

*West Bank Final Status Map
Presented by Israel - May 2000*



So, this map remains the only formal plan Israel has ever proposed for the final agreements and since the end of 2000, Israel has been working intensely on implementing this map. While before it was just a proposal awaiting international acceptance, the wall project that Sharon started aims at determining it as a fact on the ground. At the present stage the wall is being built essentially on the line separating the dark (Palestinian) areas from the white area that is to be annexed to Israel, on the

west side of the West Bank. Work on the eastern wall that will separate the West Bank from the Jordan River has not started yet, but Israel has been taking systematic steps to isolate these areas from the rest of the West Bank, and to push Palestinians in the Jordan valley out of their land.⁷

The most horrifying aspect of the present wall project is what happens inside the white areas in the map, the ones designated to be eventually formally annexed to Israel. These areas on the map are dotted with gray spots that represent Palestinian villages and towns. The white areas around them are their lands. The wall project is to separate the villages from their lands – the lands will be on the Israeli side of the wall, but the villages will remain in the Palestinian enclaves. Therefore, the present line of the wall is not straight, as in this map, but cutting around villages, creating in many areas a loop that surrounds a town or a village, leaving only one exit connecting them to the West Bank. The wall, thus, severs the towns and villages from the agricultural lands from which they live. The wall also separates the villages from each other permanently, and turns them into isolated enclaves. In some cases, the villages will not have any connecting passage to other Palestinian West Bank land, but will remain fully on the Israeli side of the wall, surrounded by an Israeli system of barriers that separate them from their fields and from the rest of the West Bank, turning them into actual open air prisons.

According to UN figures, summarized also in the ruling of the International Court of Justice, as a result of the construction of the wall, 237,000 Palestinians will be stranded outside the wall and disconnected from the West Bank. Around 160,000 other Palestinians will be included on the West Bank side of the wall, but will reside in almost completely encircled communities, cut off from their farmland, their jobs, universities and schools. Similar figures are also openly reported in the Israeli media.⁸ The route of the current wall, thus, cuts off 400,000 Palestinians from their sources of livelihood and imprisons them in isolated enclaves. What will happen with these people, whose land is now being grabbed by Israel? With no means of subsistence, they will be forced to leave those enclaves over the next few years to seek employment at the peripheries of West Bank cities and towns. In this way, sections of the West Bank that border Israel will be “cleansed” of Palestinians. This is already happening in Qalqilya and Tul Karm, where the wall was completed in 2003. Qalqilya used to be a flourishing town, a local center of commerce and agriculture. The wall separated it from its lands and encircled the town on all sides, leaving a bottleneck controlled by the army as the only exit connecting it to the West Bank. Now Qalqilya is already a dead city. Many of its inhabitants have fled to seek subsistence at the edges of other West Bank towns; those who remain have succumbed to the despair and decline that characterizes prisoners.

The word “transfer” evokes the horrific collective memory of trucks arriving in the middle of the night to transport Palestinian villagers across the border, which happened in a number of places in 1948. But transfer along that model is not possible in today’s world. Today transfer must be accomplished more slowly and surreptitiously. Right now, 400,000 Palestinians are being destined for such slow and invisible transfer away from their land. They are being pushed into the four big enclaves in the West Bank that Israel has allocated for Palestinian existence. At the same time, Israel has been escalating its long-standing policy of hidden forced migration of Palestinians out of Palestine. Recently, it forces out Palestinians with international passports who have been living in the territories for years.

⁷See, e.g. **Amira Hass, “Israel Cuts Off Jordan Valley from Rest of West Bank,” *Ha’aretz*, February 13 2006.**

⁸ **Meron Rappaport, *Yediot Aharonot*, May 23, 2003; Akiva Eldar, *Ha’aretz*, Feb 16, 2004.**

But still, there are 3.5 million Palestinians living in the enclaves, even if many of them are forced out, many more are still there. What does Israel plan for these remaining Palestinians? To hold 3.5 million people under occupation, with no human rights, the question that has always bothered the occupiers is how to control these people in a way that will not disturb the life of the occupiers. The solution that Israel has developed under Sharon is a complex system of open-air prisons. The Palestinians are being pushed, into sealed and fenced enclaves. The Israeli army controls the Palestinians from outside the sealed enclaves, but also enters them at will. As far as I know, this model of occupation - imprisoning a whole nation, not just a group of people, as means to control its people and gain quiet for the occupiers new in history - is an unprecedented model of occupation, and it is being executed with frightening speed and efficiency.

The prison model was first developed in the Gaza strip, and was already established during the Oslo years. Under Rabin, an electronic fence was constructed that closed the Strip on all sides bordering with Israel. Thus, during the Oslo years over one million people had already become prisoners on their own land, with movement in or out permitted only through Israeli-controlled security gates, and in most cases, not permitted at all. Since Oslo, Israel has controlled every aspect of the economy of Gaza, including when and how much goods can go in and go out. Israel has used economic strangulation as a major means of control already before the present escalation. Since the evacuation of the Gaza settlements, the Israeli control from the outside has only tightened. What we witness now is complete strangulation of the Gaza strip, which has turned into a big open-air prison, fully controlled by the prison wardens. The goal of the present Israeli leadership is to establish the same situation also in the West Bank. Just a few years ago, it seemed that this would be impossible. The West Bank is a much bigger area than Gaza, with some sort of functioning economy. But in reality, the wall project, the road-blocks, the economic strangulations, and the political persecution of the Palestinian elected political institutions are designed to achieve the same goal.

A question which has been preoccupying the international community is how to deal with states that systematically violate international law, criminal or rogue states. By all criteria, Israel is such a rogue state. In a just and well-ordered world, the international institutions would impose sanctions on Israel, as was done with other rogue states in the past. But in the present world, not only this is not happening, but the West has decided to impose boycott and sanctions on the Palestinians instead. Since the Palestinian elections in January 2006, All international aid to the Palestinians, including funds for NGOs has been frozen. The West collaborates as Israel withholds the tax money that it owes the Palestinians. The Palestinian economy is completely paralyzed, with no salaries, no social services, no medical care or functioning hospitals.

Just two years ago, the Western world celebrated the dawn of democracy in the Middle East, with Arafat departing, and the Palestinian people preparing for their first democratic elections. According to Jimmy Carter's report in the "Herald Tribune", the elections were "honest, fair, strongly contested, without violence and with the results accepted by winners and losers. Among the 62 elections that have been monitored by... the Carter Center, these are among the best in portraying the will of the people."⁹ In a just and well-ordered world, it would be unthinkable for a government that was elected in this way to be disqualified because Israel does not like the choice of the

⁹ **Jimmy Carter, 'Punishing the innocent is a crime', International Herald Tribune May 7, 2006**

electorate in question. But in a world in which the U.S. rules, might is right, and might can define democracy as it chooses. Thus it was announced that the outcome of the Palestinian elections would not be recognized until three “mantras” were fulfilled. Meanwhile the Palestinian people would be punished and starved through an economic boycott, in the hope that this will lead to the collapse of the elected government.

The first mantra is that Hamas should "renounce violence". What exactly is the substance of this demand? In January 2005, Hamas announced its resolution to replace armed struggle with political struggle and agreed to a unilateral ceasefire (“calm”). In the two years since then, Hamas has not perpetrated a single terrorist attack. According to Israeli security sources, since the election, Hamas did not even participate in the launching of Qassam rockets from Gaza,¹⁰ until Israel's attack on the Gaza strip in the summer of 2006.

The second mantra is that Hamas must honor previous accords. In an interview with Washington Post, Hamas PM Haniyeh explained that according to the Oslo Accords of 1993, after an interim period of five years, a Palestinian state was to have come into existence. But Israel violated every clause of the Accords and continued to colonize and to dispossess Palestinians of their lands. From now on, he says, his government will only honor accords that are good for the Palestinian people.

The third mantra is that the Hamas government should recognize the existence of Israel. But the fact of the matter is that Israel is the side that does not recognize the right of the Palestinians to exist as a state. As we saw, at the Algiers meeting of the Palestine National Council in 1988, the Palestinian people undertook to recognize the partition of the country and to be satisfied with a state within the 1967 borders. Israel has not done a thing since then to prove that it is prepared to accept such a compromise. In a just world, the international demand should be for mutual recognition.

For Israel, the results of the Palestinian election are just the pretext to declare war on the Palestinian people. For Israel, there has never been a Palestinian partner for peace. First, Arafat was declared untrustworthy, then Abbas was declared too weak, and now it is Hanyeh's turn. Since ending the occupation is the one thing Israel is not willing to consider, the option it promotes is breaking the Palestinians by devastating brutal force. They should be starved, bombarded, terrorized for months, until they understand that rebelling is futile, and accepting prison life is their only hope for staying alive. Their elected political system, institutions and police should be destroyed. In Israel's vision, the occupied territories should be ruled by local gangs collaborating with the prison wardens. Since the Palestinian elections, Israel has been exploiting the wave of Islamophobia in the U.S. and Europe, to engage them as active partners in this war on the Palestinians, doing their part in suffocating, starving, and weakening the Palestinian people, as Israel carries out its mission of destruction.

These are very dark days, and we are back to the question of the options of struggle - Edward Said's question that we started with. The pole that is calling for forceful solutions - solutions by elimination of the aggressor - is strengthening today more than it ever had in the past. Iran's president Ahmadinejad is giving a voice to this pole, when he declares that the Arab world should no longer pay the price for the Jewish Holocaust - Israel should be dismantled and the Jews should return to Europe. Many have lost hope in the option of forcing Israel politically to change its policies,

¹⁰ **Amos Harel, ‘IDF and Qassams / Zero tolerance’, Ha’aretz, April 7, 2006; Amos Harel and Arnon Regular, ‘IDF: Hamas about to rein in Qassams’, Ha’aretz April 10, 2006.**

and this line of thinking is gaining support in many people's hearts. But the other model, paved by Mandela and advocated by Said, is still just as much there.

The other lesson of Mandela and the South African struggle, that I have not mentioned before, was that the struggle should be international. The South African white domination collapsed and crumbled because of international pressure. It started with small students groups calling for boycott and divestment. It grew into pressure on companies doing business with South Africa and eventually it forced governments to act and impose sanctions on South Africa. But this is a model of non violent political struggle. If, as a professor, you decide you are not participating in a conference in South Africa, or in Israel, you are not doing any violent act. But you choose to show that you will not collaborate with a society that allows such crimes to happen.

This road of international struggle is still open. In fact, the last few years were not just years of victory to the Israeli expansion policies. Despite the apparent success of pro Israel lobbies in silencing any criticism of Israel, during this period opposition to Israel's policies has substantially grown in people's minds all over the world. For instance, there was a poll in Europe two years ago, regarding which states people view as most dangerous to world peace. And the majority of Europeans thought it was Israel (even more than the U.S., which, of course, is not true). It seems that the success of propaganda is only partial. Israel's violence is silenced and ignored in the media, and in the acts or statements of governments. Still, people's awareness of the situation is only growing.

In my last book, *The road Map to Nowhere*, I argue that for a short while during this period, the U.S., which was getting more and more entangled in the Iraq occupation, had to yield to European public opinion, as conveyed by Blair, and exerted real pressure on Israel. Sharon's evacuation of the Gaza settlements was not an act of free will, but a decision enforced on him at the peak of international pressure that followed Israel's sabotaging of the road map and its construction of the West Bank wall. Though it was kept fully behind the scenes, U.S. pressure was quite massive, including military sanctions. The official pretext for the sanctions was Israel's arm sale to China, but in previous occasions, the crisis was over as soon as Israel agreed to cancel the deal. This time, the sanctions were unprecedented, and lasted until the signing of the crossing agreement in November 2005.

This turn of events shows the limits of propaganda. Basic concepts like justice, international law, solidarity with the oppressed, have disappeared from mainstream political discourse, but they are present in people's minds. It also shows that persistent struggle can have an effect, and can lead governments to act. I quote from my *Road Map to Nowhere*:

"Such struggle begins with the Palestinian people, who have withstood years of brutal oppression, and who, through their spirit of *zumud* – sticking to their land - and daily endurance, organizing and resistance, have managed to keep the Palestinian cause alive, something that not all oppressed nations have managed to do. It continues with international struggle – solidarity movements that send their people to the occupied territories and stand in vigils at home, professors signing boycott petitions, subjecting themselves to daily harassment, a few courageous journalists that insist on covering the truth, against the pressure of acquiescent media and pro-Israel lobbies. Often this struggle for justice seems futile. Nevertheless, it has had an effect on public opinion, which in turn can force governments to act"¹¹

¹¹ **Tanya Reinhart *The Road Map to Nowhere - Israel/Palestine since 2003*, Verso, London, New York, 2006, p. 131.**

This struggle, which is our hope, is not only the salvation of the Palestinian people. This prison system that Israel is building is also a prison for the Israelis. A small state, of 7 million residents, 5.5. of them Jewish, is making itself the enemy of the whole Arab world, and now, the whole Muslim world. Such a state does not have any guarantee of surviving in the long run. Therefore, saving the Palestinians is also saving Israel.

I would like to conclude with a few personal words. The last few months, I made a decision that I cannot continue living in Israel under the present circumstances. I have always had a question of where is the line crossing which would make it immoral and impossible to stay without being a partner to the crime. For me, this line has been crossed this summer.

This is a painful decision for me, because I love the country - I was born there. I love its landscapes - the landscapes of my childhood - the evening breeze, the sea, the sunsets. I love the people (unlike their leaders) and Hebrew is the only language I know real well. I never believed that I would have to leave it. I thought I would end my life in struggle in this country. But now, I am going into exile, like Said. This is an exile of choice - so it is very different from the Palestinian exile. Since this is an act of choice, a part of me also pains for betraying my comrades in struggle. Along with Israel of the occupation, along with all the horrors I described here, there is also another Israel/Palestine forming there the last few years.

There are quite a few Israelis who are struggling daily against these horrors, carrying out what often seems to be a stubborn insistent banging against the prison walls. Specifically, there is one form of struggle that developed, which is really marvelous. Along the lines of the wall, the Palestinian residents are determined not to wait for the third Nakba to happen, but rather stand there, on their land, in front of the Israeli Bulldozers and army, in non violent opposition. Armed only with the courage of people who have stuck to their land one generation after the other, they stand in front of one of the most brutal military machines of the world. And right from the start, Israelis have been joining them in this struggle. In the last three years, we are witnessing, perhaps for the first time in the history of the occupation, a truly joint Israeli/Palestinian grass root struggle. I have been there. I was in Mas'ha right from the first days of the popular resistance; I was in Bil'in. But it has become impossible for me to endure this. The army brutality is beyond my physical ability - they beat you, bombard you with tear-gas, aim stun-grenades at your body, or aim rubber bullets at your eyes. I don't know how the young activists in their twenties can endure this week after week, but I am not young enough to be able to do the same.

When I leave, I also leave this struggle. But I pledge to my comrades in Israel/Palestine that I will continue the struggle abroad. Because the road that Mandela and Said have participated in paving - the road of international, non-violent, political struggle - is still there, and can lead us to victory.