

Standing Up for Palestine: BDS More than Ever!

December 12, 2017



IF THERE WAS any “Israel-Palestine peace process,” Donald Trump torched it with his December 6 announcement recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the transfer of the U.S. embassy to that bitterly contested city. But there are two more important underlying realities.

First, *there is no “peace process”* and hasn’t been for a long time. Endless blather about “the two-state solution” has only covered up the *destruction* of any viable two-state possibility — through Israeli settlement expansion, demolition of Palestinian homes and neighborhoods in Jerusalem itself, the expansion of “Greater Jerusalem” and “Metropolitan Jerusalem” to slice the West Bank in half, the annexation Wall and apartheid roads for the settlers, and brutal repression of Palestinian protests including the Israeli Army’s deliberate targeting of children.

Israel’s crimes against human rights and international law, well-documented by Palestinian, Israeli and international human rights and legal organizations and on-the-ground reporting, have been systematically enabled by U.S. administrations of both parties – Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama – with relatively inconsequential differences in rhetoric. The difference now is that the rightwing extreme Israeli settler movement is now *directly engaged in setting White House policy*, through Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner, his bankruptcy lawyer David Friedman whom he appointed ambassador to Israel, billionaire backer Sheldon Adelson – all corrupt figures in their own right – and a cohort of Christian Zionist fanatics spearheaded by vice-president Mike Pence.

Announcing the embassy move rips away what’s been a convenient fig leaf of U.S. “peace” posturing and isolates Washington from the rest of the world including its major allies, but it changes little on the ground except to encourage even greater Israeli military and settler violence.

Second, *there should be no surprise about Trump’s announcement*, coming from the same thief-in-chief who has pulled the United States out of the Paris climate accord, threatens to start trade wars with Canada and Mexico, terrorizes immigrant communities and destroys their families, intends to cancel the multilateral nuclear agreement with Iran, threatens North Korea with “total destruction” (meaning nuclear war), and is looting the treasury of the American people with tax cuts for the super-rich, the destruction of priceless national monuments – and so much more besides.

Here, the difference is that many liberal Democrats who oppose Trump on other issues think it’s just fine to recognize Jerusalem as “Israel’s eternal capital” and treat the lives and the rights of the Palestinian people as minor collateral damage. That’s another whole discussion of its own.

For social justice and Palestine solidarity activists, the big question of course is: What can we do?

Many important emergency appeals have been made, all worth supporting, by CODEPINK, Jewish Voice for Peace, the U.S. Campaign for Palestinian rights, numerous Arab, Palestinian and Muslim organizations and progressive Christian church bodies – to call Congressional representatives and Senators, to write letters to newspapers, to demonstrate in the streets and proclaim in social media, “Not in Our Name!” in response to Trump’s latest atrocity.

But we believe that one ongoing grassroots campaign stands out: The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement has been growing in strength on U.S. campuses, in communities and internationally. The BDS campaign was launched in 2005 by Palestinian civil society organizations around three fundamental demands: an end of the post-1967 Occupation, full equal rights for Palestinians who are treated as second-class citizens inside Israel, and the right of return for Palestinian refugees. (Read the call at <https://bdsmovement.net/call>)

It’s not that BDS has the power to severely impact the Israeli economy (much of which is based on high-tech and military exports). Rather, it brings the issues of the Occupation and of racist policies inside Israel, *and particularly the complicity of U.S. corporations*, to the attention of ordinary people in a way they can do something about it. The U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights has a summary of BDS activism and victories at <https://uscpr.org/campaign/bds/bdswins/>.

That’s why Zionist forces, state legislatures and the U.S. Congress (yes, both parties) are attempting to suppress and criminalize BDS activism. That’s perhaps the best indicator of its growing importance and success. Those of us outside Palestine and Israel can’t produce “the solution.” What we can do is show that the Palestinian people have allies in their struggle for dignity, survival and self-determination. BDS now more than ever!

We particularly recommend the following sources of analysis and calls for action:

Phyllis Bennis on Trump’s announcement,
<https://www.commondreams.org/views/2017/12/06/no-peace-process-exists-destroy-trumps-jerusalem-decision-dangerous-hell>

News from the US Palestinian Community Network, www.uspcn.org

“Tell Trump No” at <https://jewishvoiceforpeace.org>

CODEPINK’s petition at www.codepink.org/JERUSALEM

News from the Israeli peace bloc Gush Shalom: http://zope.gush-shalom.org/index_en.html

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