

The Trump 'Deal' for Palestine

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AFTER a lot of speculation and delay, President Trump announced his 'deal of the century'. Before getting into the details, it is important to give a historical background in order to understand how we got here.

In 1916, Britain and France signed the Sykes-Picot agreement in which they decided to partition what was known as Greater Syria into four countries including the current Syrian state, Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan, and to bring the new countries under their military occupation.

This contradicted the promise of independence that Britain gave to the Sharif of Mecca, Hussein bin Ali, in exchange for fighting against the Ottomans in WWI. Britain also broke another promise to give the Sharif control over what's now Saudi as it gave it to its Wahhabi allies who have ruled Saudi since then.

In 1917 Britain invaded and occupied Palestine. In the same year, it issued the Balfour Declaration in which it promised the Zionist leaders would create a Jewish homeland in Palestine which was opposed by the only Jewish member of the British cabinet, Edwin Montagu, who considered the project as anti-Semitic to get rid of the Jews and also that it would lead to the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians.

Britain started to bring European Zionists to colonise Palestine which culminated in the creation of Israel as a colonial outpost on 78% of Palestine and the ethnic cleansing of most of the Palestinians who became refugees. It also led to the destruction of hundreds of Palestinian villages and towns. Palestinians refer to these events as *Nakba*.

In 1967, Israel occupied the remaining 22% of Palestine including Gaza and the West Bank (including Jerusalem), which resulted in another wave of Palestinian refugees. UN resolution 242 and others subse-

quently called for the creation of a Palestinian state in the land occupied in 1967 and the return of all Palestinian refugees to their homes. But Israel has refused to comply with any UN resolution and, against International Law, has started confiscating Palestinian land to build illegal colonies for Israeli settlers. All Israeli policies have been given full American support.

To summarise the Trump 'deal of the century', on the refugees, it is against the International Law and UN resolution 194 as Trump denies 6-7 million Palestinian refugees (the largest and the longest waiting refugee group in the world) the

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right to return to their homes. He also wants to abolish the UNRWA, the UN agency established specifically to deal with the Palestinian refugees, providing them mainly with primary healthcare and education. Instead, while he is building walls around his own country, Trump wants the states that host Palestinian refugees or other Muslim countries to naturalise them.

Despite UN resolutions 242 and 338 which called for the Israeli withdrawal from the Palestinian land it occupied in 1967 including Jerusalem and the creation of an independent Palestinian state, the Trump deal recognises Israel's illegal annexation of Jerusalem as well as giving Israel the right to annex 30% of the West Bank where large chunks of the illegal settlements exist. The Palestinians who live in these areas, unlike the Israeli settlers, are not entitled to Israeli citizenship and the Trump plan condones covert ethnic cleansing.

Contrary to the UN resolutions, the deal proposes a mutilated, disarmed Palestinian state made up of cantons connected by tunnels and bridges. Israel security is paramount and it will have control over the so-called Palestinian state borders. The plan does not endorse democracy, which the US has already blocked by having a veto over who can be in the Palestinian government. US\$50 billion for the project is to be provided by some oil-rich Arab countries.

The deal also recognises Israel as a Jewish state, thus legitimising racism against Israel's non-Jewish population who are mainly Palestinian Muslims and Christians. In order to ensure the racist nature of Israel, the Trump deal proposes bringing the triangle area inside Israel (populated by 350000 – 400000 Palestinians) under the control of the Palestinian Authority in a large ethnic cleansing move to ensure that Israel has a Jewish majority population.

But did the American colonialists Trump and Kushner come up with this idea? The Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat told Aljazeera that Israel proposed the same plan word for word in 2011-2012 but it was rejected by the Palestinians. It's the same old policy written by Israelis in Hebrew, translated into English and read by American politicians as US policy and endorsed by fundamentalist Zionist Christians who believe that the return of Jesus is conditional on all Jews returning to the holy land with no regard for human rights or law.

For us, the people of Palestine, despite being used as guinea pigs for US and Israel weapons; despite Israel's frequent massacres and ongoing ethnic cleansing; despite the land theft; despite killing and torturing our children; despite the poverty and the daily suffering; despite the cultural appropriation; and despite the international community silence; our homeland is not for sale. □