

Africa and Palestine: Linked Struggles, Shared Future

Considering their own history of slavery, colonialism, genocide, racial discrimination, apartheid, endless wars, neocolonialism, and brutal economic and political subjugation it would make historical sense for the majority of Africans to see themselves in Palestinians. The fact of the matter is, the Palestinian struggle is a struggle for justice, freedom, and self-determination. It is Africa's past – and ongoing – struggle to complete the decolonization process.

It would also make historical sense for Africans to see "Israel" – and the "Western values" that created it in 1948 and currently support it – as the invader and settler colonizer, acting in the same way that the Western collective did across the continent for centuries. Its supposed "self-defense" and its vindictive and murderous campaigns against Palestinians – which began decades before October 2023 – is reminiscent of the brutal years of colonialism and apartheid. In effect, its war is against humanity, fully masterminded and funded by the same powers who have brutalized Africans for centuries. The fact is that it is impossible to watch the brutality being live-streamed, along with Western complicity and double standards, and not know right from wrong and victims from aggressors.

Not surprisingly, however, the reaction to the genocide of Palestinians at the African governmental level seems to be linked to the level of political independence each country has. There are countries that have stood on the side of morality and spoken in favor of the resistance and of Palestinians' right to justice and self-determination. Then there are those that have remained conspicuously silent. Lastly, there are the few African leaders that have shamelessly supported Israel's "right to self-defense."



The failure to consistently advocate for Palestinian rights can be attributed to a complex interplay of geopolitical pressures, economic dependencies, and varying external pressures. This lack of collective support at the continental level diminishes the potential for leveraging Africa's moral authority and historical empathy on the global stage, highlighting a regrettable gap between shared historical experiences and contemporary foreign policy actions.

This division is to a much lesser extent reflected in the African public's debate on the issue of the ongoing genocide in Palestine. Some claim that the Palestinian struggle has nothing to do with Africa, and that Africans have enough of their own challenges to be worrying about Palestine. Some point to unabashed racism in Arab societies towards Black and African people and claim that Arabs do not deserve solidarity from Africans. Perhaps the most disturbing group, however, is of people who have internalized Christian Zionism's directives and point to misinterpreted Biblical Scriptures to justify the "chosen" people's right to commit this ethnic cleansing of "unbelievers."

Luckily for humanity, the vast majority of Africans know right from wrong and flag the very salient historical context surrounding imperialism and the "international rules-based order", and argue that there is a clear interlinkage in the way these have functioned within both regions, Africa and the Middle East.

As far as Afro Asia Institute for Strategic Studies is concerned, the ongoing struggle against imperialism and neocolonialism on the continent is strongly linked with (and will be affected by the outcome of) the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. One cannot purport to be fighting for Africa's economic, political, and social emancipation without taking into consideration the struggles against imperialism in other areas of the world – especially a region that is a stone throw away from the continent. These struggles are interlinked and neglecting one area can have a detrimental effect on the rest.



**WE KNOW TOO WELL THAT OUR
FREEDOM IS INCOMPLETE WITHOUT
THE FREEDOM OF PALESTINIANS**



The Nakba of 1948 and Palestinians' Right to Resist

The term "Nakba" meaning "catastrophe" in Arabic, refers to the mass displacement and dispossession of Palestinian people that occurred in 1948, leading to the creation of the Zionist entity. The roots of the Nakba lie in the complex interplay of colonialism, nationalism, and geopolitical Western ambitions in the early 20th century. Following the fall of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, Britain assumed control over Palestine under the mandate system established by the League of Nations. The Balfour Declaration of 1917, in which Britain expressed support for the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine, laid the groundwork for the mass displacement and dispossession of the indigenous Palestinian people.

On May 14, 1948, the Zionist regime put into action the Dalet Plan, a secret military plan executed by the Haganah (the primary Jewish paramilitary organization) for the systematic expulsion of Palestinian civilians. They succeeded in forcibly expelling more than 750,000 Palestinians from their homes, destroying and depopulating more than 500 Palestinian villages to prevent the return of refugees, fundamentally altering the landscape and demographic composition of the region. Massacres and atrocities such as the Deir Yassin massacre, where over 100 Palestinian villagers were killed by Irgun and Lehi forces, spread fear and panic, leading to mass exodus.

The Nakba's legacy persists in the plight of Palestinian refugees, who now number over 5 million and remain stateless. The Nakba also had profound social, cultural, and psychological effects on Palestinian identity and nationalism. It solidified a collective memory of loss and dispossession, shaping the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and statehood.

Historical Parallels and Shared Struggles

The genocide in Gaza is an all-too-common sight in the collective African psyche. The history of all African nations is marked by an underlying common relentless fight against colonial domination. Similarly, the Palestinian people have been engaged in a prolonged struggle against Israeli expulsion, dispossession, occupation and an ever-expanding settler-colonial displacement. The parallels between these two histories are undeniable. Just as African nations fought for their independence and freedom, Palestinians are still fighting for their right to self-determination and freedom from occupation for more than 76 years.

The suffocating occupation of Palestinians under a continually oppressive Israeli rule is a full-blown apartheid system. This inhumane structure also bears striking similarities to the South African experience under the white settler colonialism. Apartheid is characterized by the systemic oppression, segregation, and violence aimed at maintaining total control over indigenous populations. In South Africa, apartheid laws were the basis to enforce racial segregation, restricted movement and denial of basic human rights to the black majority, mirroring the same exact Israeli policies that asphyxiate Palestinian freedom of movement, access to basic everyday necessities, including water & electricity, and political autonomy. Much like the creation of Bantustans in South Africa, Palestinians have now been reduced to a few disjointed towns and villages with life made unbearable for them in between by the many military checkpoints, imposition of martial law as well as arbitrary arrests which is euphemistically called 'administrative detention'

Zionism and Judaism: A World Apart

While related, Zionism and Judaism represent distinct concepts. Judaism is a monotheistic religion that encompasses the cultural, spiritual, and legal traditions of the Jewish people, tracing its origins back over three millennia. It encompasses a broad array of beliefs, practices, and identities, centered around the Torah and other sacred texts. Zionism, on the other hand, is a political ideology and nationalist colonial movement that emerged in the late 19th century in Europe with the primary goal of establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine, motivated by the desire for a safe haven in response to widespread European anti-Semitic persecution.



Interestingly, during the apartheid era in South Africa, Israel maintained close ties with the then apartheid regime, providing endless military and economic support. This relationship was a stark reminder of the interconnectedness of struggles against oppression. Nelson Mandela once famously said, "We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians." This sentiment resonates deeply within the African consciousness, reinforcing our collective moral imperative to support Palestine.

Zionism has hijacked Judaism and has weaponized antisemitism – which is an ugly scourge that must be rejected by everyone – to silence any critical thinking and debate about the creation of "Israel" and the imperialism that supports it.

Palestinians have the right to resist the Brutality of Israeli Settler Colonialism

Palestinians have a right to resist – a moral sine qua non.



The ever-expanding establishment of settlements in occupied Palestinian territories serves to fragment and isolate Palestinian communities, undermining their ability to resist. October 7, 2023, however, proved that a people that has nothing to lose but the chains around their necks and feet, will do whatever it takes to break free.

Israel also maintains an illegal siege on Gaza—a strict control over land borders, airspace, and waters, effectively placing the territory under blockade. Gaza is approximately 41 kilometers long and between 6 to 12 kilometers wide, giving it a total area of a measly 365 km². At the start of the genocide, Gaza housed over 2 million people, most of whom are descendants of expelled Palestinian refugees during the first Nakba, making it one of the most densely populated areas in the world. Israel's blockade of Gaza from 2007 restricts the entry of all essential goods and as well as people to and from the strip.

The debilitating blockade is unlawful under international law and detrimental to the population. The blockade causes humanitarian crises including; food and fuel shortages, lack of clean drinking water, destitution, unemployment and limited access to electricity.

Major Israeli war crimes include the 2008–2009 Gaza War, where Israel launched Operation Cast Lead into Gaza, resulting in significant large-scale casualties and destruction of the besieged strip. In 2012 and 2014 Israel targeted Gaza with extensive airstrikes and ground invasions leading to thousands of Palestinian deaths and widespread devastation on the strip's crumbling few infrastructures. More recently, the Israeli genocidal bombardment of Gaza for 9 straight months, leading to the colossal loss of life— close to 200,000 killed (The Lancet, July 2024), majority of them women and children. The displacement of over 2.3 million people from their homes, and the crushing humanitarian crises, further exacerbating the ever-dire conditions in Gaza.

Considering the grim reality detailed above, the argument in support of Palestinian's right to resist and right to self-determination becomes evident.



Solidarity with Palestine benefits Africans

The heavy-handed tactics of the genocidal Israeli regime, whose genocidal rhetoric was documented in the execution of the obliteration of Gaza has significantly awakened the Global South and all formerly colonized peoples to the Palestinian plight, highlighting the similar patterns with their own histories of oppression and resistance. The excessive military interventions, blockades, and humanitarian crises in Gaza have resonated deeply with nations that have endured colonialism, apartheid, and neocolonial exploitation. This shared experience of subjugation has galvanized a growing sense of solidarity, prompting many countries in the Global South to vocally support Palestinian self-determination and justice.

The visible and racist double standards in international responses to the Gaza conflict, compared to other global issues raging on, have further exposed the biases and inequities in the global order dominated by the collective west headed by the United States, United Kingdom and the European Union by proxy. Their repeated provision of diplomatic cover to Israel at global forums, as well as the funding and arming of this current genocide, have also reinforced the need for a united stance against the glaring double standards and the selective application of international law in upholding of human rights and playing by the “rules-based order”.

By forming solidarity across the Global South, and by standing on the side of Palestinians, Africa not only reaffirms its own values and principles but also contributes to the global struggle for justice and peace. The principles of justice, human rights, and equality that underpin the African Union's Charter align with the Palestinian quest for justice recognizing the rights of Palestinians to have a state of their own.



Supporting Palestine is not just an act of solidarity; it is a continuation of Africa's enduring legacy of fighting against oppression and standing up for the rights of all peoples. Moreover, Africa's support for Palestine can strengthen its position in international forums. By taking a principled stand on the Palestinian issue, African nations can enhance their moral authority and influence in global diplomacy. This solidarity can also foster stronger ties with other regions and countries that support the Palestinian cause, creating a broader coalition for justice and peace. ***Africa's support for Palestine is not merely a political stance but a moral and ethical responsibility – and it is now past time to go beyond speeches towards concrete action in standing for justice.***



AAISS' SIGNATURE CONFERENCE



It is within this global context – of Africa's ongoing struggle against neocolonialism, Western double standards and hypocrisy, and the genocide of Palestinians – that Afro Asia Institute for Strategic Studies will be dedicating its annual Signature Conference to discuss how the Palestinian struggle affects Africa, the role that Israel and Zionism has had on the continent, including looting resources and sponsoring conflicts directly and indirectly, and the growing influence of and link to Evangelical Christianity, dubbed by some as Christian Zionism, which perpetuates the deliberate framing of the Arab and Muslim as "bad" and Israel and Jews as "chosen".

The objective of the conference will be to contribute to the understanding that our prime enemy is the same and our struggles are linked and interconnected. It will also aim to challenge the blinkered outlook that exists in some pockets of our societies, which in effect obstructs the overall objective of building a better world. The aim of the conference will be to contribute to the understanding that solidarity across the Global South, and with all Black and Brown struggles, and the harmonization of political and economic objectives, contributes to a new world order where "Western values" and a skewed system of "international law" are no longer used to justify our continued subjugation.

Proposed Topics for Presentations

- Historical and/or legal context of the Palestinian struggle
- Comparable self-determination struggles and movements for independence
- Is Zionism/Israel a threat to Africa?
- The role of Christian Zionism in normalizing the genocide and Western interventions
- Iran and Yemen's leadership and the missing role of the Arab world
- Racism and Western "values" at the core of anti-Middle East and anti-Africa policies
- Why Africa must stand on the side of Palestine?
- How linking anti-imperialism struggles and building solidarity across the Global South benefits Africans

If you are an organization interested in partnering with us on this project in any way, or an individual interested in presenting a paper, please send us an email office@afroasiainstitute.org

