

When Being Pro-Palestinian Means the End of Israel

It is important to remember that many of those protesting Israel's war in Gaza are not simply advocating for a cease-fire or a two-state solution. They are advocating for the end of Israel. This, of course, is the obvious meaning of the "river to the sea" chant. But what is implied in the chant is now being stated explicitly by anti-Israel protesters and their allies. They, in turn, are simply articulating what has always been the fundamental position of Hamas.

In a fascinating April 13 interview, Yuval Bitton, head of the Intelligence Division of the Israel Prison Service, recounted his interactions with Hamas leaders, including Yahya Sinwar. Bitton first interacted with the prisoners as their dentist before getting into intelligence work, so he got to know these men on very personal terms.

He explained that whereas Fatah prisoners would talk about a two-state solution, that was never the position of Hamas: "The thing with Hamas is that they have always been a faction of the Muslim Brotherhood," he said. "They set themselves Islamist goals: to annihilate the state of Israel, to liberate sacred Muslim lands. The Israelis just didn't get it: For them, Hamas and Fatah were the same thing."

He continued, "As a dentist. Fatah talked about the 1967 borders, about the occupation, about the Palestinian people. To me, the Hamas inmates would say, 'There's neither 1967 nor 1948. There are no borders, and there is nothing to talk about. You are on Waqf land, Muslim sacred ground, and you have no place here.'"

This remains the official Hamas position, as stated in its "Our Narrative" document issued on Jan. 21 "The battle of the

Palestinian people against occupation and colonialism did not start on Oct. 7, but started 105 years ago, including 30 years of British colonialism and 75 years of Zionist occupation."

That is how the document begins. There is no ambiguity here.

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Fast forwarding to 1948, Hamas claims that "the Zionist gangs seized control by force of 77% of the land of Palestine where they expelled 57% of the people of Palestine and destroyed over 500 Palestinian villages and towns, and committed dozens of massacres against the Palestinians which all culminated in the establishment of the Zionist Entity in 1948. Moreover, in continuation of the aggression, the Israeli forces in 1967 occupied the rest of Palestine including the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem in addition to Arab territories around Palestine."

No wonder, then, that anti-protesters have used almost identical language, not just standing with the Palestinians of Gaza but celebrating Oct. 7 and calling for the end of Israel.

In that very spirit last month, Charlotte Kates, the international coordinator for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-affiliated Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network, "led [Canadian] demonstrators in a chant proclaiming 'Long live October 7.'" Yes, the massacre is something to celebrate.

She also referred to the "Beautiful, brave and heroic resistance of the Palestinian people, which did not begin on October 7, which has continued for over 75 years, which has continued over 120 years."

Again, this is not a call for a retreat to pre-1967 borders. It is a call for the elimination of Israel.

Flora Cassen, an associate professor of Jewish, Islamic and Middle Eastern studies and associate professor of history at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, learned this the hard way while trying to interact civilly on a Reddit discussion board about the war in Gaza.

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As explained to her by one commenter:

Israelis aren't civilians. They're colonizing settlers. When a land is being colonized, the colonizers & settlers are used as an inherent weapon of violence against the colonized. If Israelis didn't wanna get killed, they shouldn't be colonizing Palestine, simple as that. This take reads heavily like "I hate slavery but I just don't think it's right those Haitian slaves killed their slavers families & other employees."

As to whether the Israeli civilians deserved to be massacred on Oct. 7, one commenter replied:

I'm not saying they deserve to be massacred, just that Israelis are not simply civilians. Every single Israeli exists on land violently stolen from Palestinians within the lifetime of the average grandma. Simply just existing as an Israeli makes you a weapon of violence against Palestinians bc you are living on land that was stolen from them & their parents/grandparents, etc. If you don't want your baby killed in the process of people liberating their own land from their oppressors, maybe don't be one of their oppressors. My daughter is in 0 danger of being killed by Palestinian revolutionaries & it's bc I actively choose not to colonize Palestine.

In short, if you're an Israeli and you want to live, then leave. Otherwise, you will suffer the fate of unwanted colonizers.

Little wonder, then, that 51% of young people aged 18-24 surveyed last December "replied in the affirmative when asked if Israel should be 'ended and given to Hamas and the Palestinians.'"

All clear?

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