

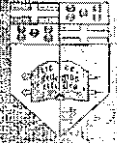
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tions of the historical events a bit naïve. But as the author says, he is "...not offering them a right answer, just a way of thinking..." And although in the Postscript he does offer an answer based on Israeli unilateral withdrawal from the occupied territories, he calls this a "sad peace" because, as he tries to explain, it will not be a happy one, not even for the Palestinians. However, no book such as this can be judged solely on the "correctness" of the solutions it proposes for, neither in a real therapeutic setting nor in the Israel-Palestine question, are correct "solutions" easy to come by.

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**Palestine/ Israel: Peace or  
Apartheid Occupation,  
Terrorism and the Future.**

**Bishara Marwan**

Zeb Books Ltd xvii + 173 pp.  
ISBN 1-84277-272-4 (paperback)

This book seeks to recount the diplomatic history of Palestine from the signing of the Oslo Peace Treaty up to the election of Ariel Sharon as Prime Minis-

ter. The author admits that the Oslo Peace Treaty is defunct under the stones of the second *Intifada*. According to Bishara, this treaty has brought more harm than good to the Palestinian people. The Palestinians began to implement the security clauses of this treaty but Israel stepped back from executing the political clauses that might have laid the foundations for the Palestinians to build their own state.

Bishara's efforts to entrench his account within reference to original documents and records is commendable, but this is often problematic in a Middle East context, and the study depends on published chronicle sources as well as on a memoir of personally experienced events. Therefore, this book is not only an exercise in historical analysis but also a personal document, useful in putting across the viewpoint of a Palestinian surveying the history of his homeland evolving in front of his eyes.

The author owes a discernible debt to one of the most influential thinkers of our times – Edward Said. The affinity is based not only on the fact that both are Palestinians but it is also linked to their life experience; Bishara, like Said, is building his academic career away from his birthplace, and is similarly critical of the PLO and of

how the Palestinian authorities are managing power.

Predictably, the rationale for Israeli lethargy and abuse of power with regard to the Palestinian people is associated with the significant support that America extends to Israel. Perhaps more surprisingly, the European Union is also cited by Bishara as one of the principal allies of Israel. Additionally, and contrary to the conventional perception of many European commentators, the author does not see much difference between American presidents. Both the Republicans and the Democrats (Clinton and Bush) stood for broadly identical political programmes where the Middle East is concerned. Even in Israel itself, the political divide is seen by Bishara as not determiningly important, and he regards both the left (the Socialists) and the right (the Likud) as pursuing the same policy: that of the expansion of Israel's territory at the expense of the Palestinians.

Bishara insists that the Clinton administration was unabashedly partial towards Israel and that at the second Camp David Agreement between Israelis and Palestinians all Clinton's advisors were Zionists. This image of Clinton given in this book contradicts the current perception in Europe where he was con-

sidered, in particular among the leftist parties, as the American President who could bring about peace to the Middle East. The Leftist media commentators in Italy were on the forefront to depict Clinton as the President committed towards the creation of a new world set up. Yet Bishara draws attention to one important point in this chapter: Clinton's ability to manipulate the media into portraying him as a man of peace while behind that image was a more questionable agenda. Thus, he attacks the Palestinian leaders, in particular Arafat, for placing too much faith in Clinton's ability to solve the Palestinian question. However, Bishara has to admit that Clinton's intervention in the region was not universally welcomed in Israel and extremists were annoyed with his role in bringing Arafat and Rabin and later on Barak to the negotiating table. In the light of such facts the criticism towards the Clinton administration is perhaps overstated.

Bishara has no doubt that the Oslo agreement paved the way for Israel's strengthening of apartheid policies against Palestinians, but unlike Milosevic's in Serbia or De Klerk's in South Africa, Israel's actions are typically not met with any real resistance by the international

community. For Bishara, Israel's actions are tantamount to terrorism. He recounts the suffering and torture endured by Palestinian civilians as part of their daily existence. He equates the violence in Israel with the past colonial reaction in the area performed by the British against the Jews or with the Nazi treatment of the same people. The recent events are in the eyes of Bashari (who comes from a secular tradition) a perverse re-enactment of the 1930s with the difference that those previously persecuted are now in turn victimising an ethnic minority (the Palestinians in the occupied territories). However, such a comparison is a risky and possibly constitutes a hyperbolic analogy.

Israeli policy, for Bishara, is leading to a new dangerous phase, that of introducing apartheid between prosperous Israelis and deprived Palestinians. He admits that the Palestinians are partly to blame for this situation. The latter were not sufficiently economically adept at coming to terms with the economic implications of the Oslo Agreement. Israel had the real expertise. This was eventually translated into an unrealistic deficit towards the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). Israel, according to Bishara, used a few Palestinian businessmen, whom he identified

as VIPs, that is highly important persons in Palestine, who got richer and richer by acting as middlemen between Israel and Palestine, furnishing cheap labour for Israeli manufacturers. In the process, the Palestinian economy deteriorated and by 2000 the GNP was by far lower than it was prior to the Oslo Agreement. The second aspect of apartheid is related to Israeli settlement policies. Bishara admits that in the settlement question, 'traditionally the Labour party was more discreet than Likud'. Jews control practically all the resources and infrastructure of the occupied territories. A divide has developed between Jewish settlements – which receive protection from the state of Israel – and the Palestinian towns and villages that are facing ruin.

Before such a situation, the Palestinian people could not remain passive. They reacted by launching the second *intifada*, and a small minority resorted to suicide bombings. Bishara expresses disapproval of the latter course. He admits that these attacks are doing more harm than good to the Palestinian cause outside Israel, and is unreserved in his condemnation. What he proposes instead is political resistance by all the Palestinian people. He suggests that the Pal-

estinians should totally refuse to cooperate with the state of Israel, not only politically but also economically. He praises Palestinian popular actions as the *intifada*, which, contrary to the suicide attacks, is being fought within the occupied territories. Moreover, he encourages the Palestinians to become more proactive in their international diplomacy. He perceives the present Palestinian position in the latter area as being rather listless.

Despite the fact that this book is being written by an individual who is *parte in causa* – his brother was imprisoned by the Israelis for his political beliefs – he undertakes a similarly moderate approach with regard to the Palestinian refugee problem and the question of Jerusalem. He speaks favourably of the refugees' right to return to their homeland and at the same time suggests an honourable solution based on financial compensation. Yet, he knows that at present this amounts to wishful thinking. He also tackles the problem of Jerusalem and suggests that the only viable and peaceful solution for this holy place is a divided city, with Israel and the Palestinians administering their respective sectors. The issue of Jerusalem, which is at least as much of a religious question as

political, is also evenly addressed, without recourse to any extremist rhetoric.

However, the text perhaps suffers from its love-hate relationship with the political figures Bishara is analysing, in particular Rabin, Barak, and Clinton. On the one side he accuses them of projecting a policy of violence, of wanting to use the Oslo Peace treaty solely for the aggrandisement of Israel, while on the other he recognises that the assassination of Rabin represents the first set back and the electoral losses of Clinton and Barak sounded the death knell of this peace treaty. Despite the impression given in the book that the all the Israeli politicians are birds of a feather, he admits that Rabin and Barak did not actively encourage religious settlement. The author proceeds to view the Israeli settlement issue from a religious perspective. The settlers are driven – unlike the founders of the Jewish state – from a religious fervour of recovering what they consider to be the biblical promised land by God, which they believe by right belongs to the Jewish people. He considers the victims of Israel's policy as being solely Palestinians, disregarding all other ethnic communities living in Israel. They too are suffering as the Palestinians from the Israeli's expansionist

policies. Being of non-Jewish ethnicity, they are also discriminated against and as the Palestinians, they have to endure insupportable pressures from the Israeli state. They are being made to feel to be unwanted citizens in the state of Israel. A multi-ethnic state is only possible in Israel providing that the residing citizens are Jews.

The author takes a secular look at the events in Palestine/Israel. He looks at the unfolding of events in a western outlook. His democratic views are western and his principles are unshackled from religious arguments or bigotry. Such an outlook could explain why there are some vexingly unexplored issues. The role of Hamas and the assassination of Rabin are not extensively dealt with, as one would have expected. The Hamas group is qualified as a fringe group but it is without doubt the organisation making the biggest headlines in many Middle East affairs. Bishara avoids sustained reference to the Muslim dimension in the region or to the rise of fundamentalism. The Muslim factor has become an important issue of the new Palestine problem. Terrorists often lurk and operate within these factions; the Muslim religion is offering to its Palestinian adherents the laurel leaves of martyrdom, a heavenly

reward, that no secular mortal could offer. The assassination of Rabin also epitomizes the awakening of religious extremism in Israel. Finally, the role of secret societies, so important in America and among Jewish communities should surely be explored. I am sure that the latter organisations are exercising strong pressure in America so that both the Democrats and the Republicans would continue with their support to the State of Israel and they are also behind the Jewish settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory.

To those readers who had the privilege to visit Israel, the stories re-accounted would bring to their mind similar stories of ordeal that the citizens of this land are condemned to undergo to continue living their daily existence. Each visitor might have anecdotes to recount and I am sure that each experience has a circumspect and sensitive angle. The reading of this book brought to my mind recollections of a study-visit I had undertaken in Israel in 1994. In that year, I was invited to attend an E.U.-funded seminar aimed at bringing different students from the Mediterranean region together. The main topic of the seminar was the Arab-Israeli conflict. I remember perfectly well that tension was running high among the

participants, in particular those originating from Israel and Palestine. During my stay in Israel, the first in a series of suicide bomb attack had taken place in Tel Aviv. In reading this well-written book on an aspect of contemporary Mediterranean history, the tensions I experienced inside this Holy Land, as well as the harrowing realities that daily ravage the Middle East, all came to my mind.

'Palestine/Israel Peace or Apartheid' is a book that has been written with the Western reader's sympathies in mind. While its Palestinian author can make the book appear biased in favour of one side against the other, the fact that the author is a bystander of the events he is recounting means that it is a book which is in itself a historical document that no individual interested in contemporary politics and international relations should miss.

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~~**Palestine, Palestinians and  
International Law  
Francis Anthony Boyle**~~

~~Clarity Press (February 2003) -  
ISBN 0-932863-37-X Pages 205~~

~~This book provides a comprehensive legal analysis for the Palestinian right to an independent state, the right of Palestinians to self-determination, and Palestinian rights under international law.~~

~~The author referred to the legal basis of Palestinian rights as far back as the British Mandate on Palestine under the League of Nations, the UN partition plan, the Palestinian Declaration of Independence, and the Middle East peace negotiations to the present day. He refers to Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 as well as General Assembly resolution 194 and 181. All which are critical to the Palestinian case and essential to any solution.~~

~~The author is a long-time supporter of Palestinian rights and served as Legal Advisor to the Palestinian Liberation Organization on the Palestinian Declaration of Independence of 15 November 1988 as well as during the Middle East Peace Negotiations from 1991 to 1993. During which Dr. Haidar Abdel Shafi, Palestinian Head of Delegation~~