

Defeat the Trump Plan to Destroy Palestine

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The framework for the next stage of the Zionist takeover of Palestine and expropriation of her people has been revealed to the world in Donald Trump's 'Deal of the Century' cynically named 'Peace to Prosperity'.

The United States and the other supporters of the plan present it as a land for cash settlement, in which the Palestinian leadership agrees to the annexation of 30 percent of the Occupied Palestinian Territory in the West Bank, in exchange for an international investment package totalling \$50 billion.

Britain's new prime minister, and Trump fan, Boris Johnson, has hailed it as a positive step forwards and foreign secretary Dominic Raab as a 'serious proposal', worthy of 'genuine and fair consideration'. In sharp contrast, outgoing Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn said; 'It will annex Palestinian territory, lock-in illegal Israeli colonisation, transfer Palestinian citizens of Israel and deny Palestinian people their fundamental rights.'

In reality, the plan kills any prospect of a Palestinian State within its still internationally recognised borders. Instead, it amounts to yet another Israeli land grab, plus strengthening US imperialist domination over the adjacent states of the region. It would also create a new political entity with political functions scarcely greater than those of a local council, dishonestly sold to the world as a Palestinian 'state'.

The so-called 'deal', in the negotiations for which not a single representative of the Palestinian people would take part, came on top of the United States' recognition of Jerusalem as the 'undivided capital of Israel', Trump's promise to recognise the settlements inside the 1967 West Bank Border and his ending of his country's contributions to the refugee organisation UNRWA. He even boasted to US Jewish leaders, 'I stopped massive amounts of money that we were paying to the Palestinians', adding that he told them, 'We're not paying till you make a deal'. In fact, US contributions fell from \$360m to \$60m in 2018 and to zero for 2019. Schools, hospitals, unemployed relief, are all being hit.

All these actions made it clear that Trump was declaring null and void fifty years of United Nations' resolutions, accepted by former US presidents. In short, the 'deal of the century', Israeli Premier Benjamin Netanyahu's expression, is an ultimatum; just accept it or we will starve and coerce you into submission. No wonder even Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, the most compliant leader Israel has ever faced, had to say, 'No, no, and no! Jerusalem is not for sale. All of our rights are not for sale or barter'. Meanwhile, demonstrations broke out in Hebron, Ramallah, Bethlehem and Rafah and other towns and cities were subjected to Israeli Defence Force tear gas and bullets. In Gaza, the body of a Palestinian shot by the IDF was provocatively dragged away by a bulldozer.

Land Swaps

The most striking element of the proposal concerns the territorial changes whereby Israel will finally annex territories in which it has a strategic interest. The map of the misnamed Palestinian state would be an

archipelago of blocks of land divided and hemmed in by Israeli territory, the legal recognition of a process that has been going on for over half a century.

In the first instance, all of the Jordan Valley will be ceded to Israel, consolidating its control over the waters of the Jordan, on which much of Palestine's agriculture depends, as well as its control over the whole of the border with Jordan. The principal consideration of Israel's ruling class, however, is the encircling of the West Bank, and the establishment of an eastern corridor. Central to Israeli 'security' interests, this is agreed upon by every ruling class fraction in Israel, now in its third election campaign in 12 months, including so-called 'liberal' Zionists like Benny Gantz's Blue and White alliance. That such a move would involve the further displacement of hundreds of thousands more Palestinians from their homes seems hardly worth consideration.

In addition, Israel would acquire territories to broaden the strip of land between the West Bank and the Mediterranean Sea, where the majority of Israel's population lives. The areas towards the western borders of the West Bank, where the largest of Israel's illegal settlements are located, will also be annexed. In many cases, settlements that have been strategically constructed along the outskirts of major Palestinian cities, like Hebron, will be incorporated, encircling Palestinians in these cities and restricting Palestinian movement and day-to-day life.

Perhaps most significantly, the plan proposes the Israeli annexation of almost all of Jerusalem, the cultural, political and economic centre of historic Palestine, captured by Israeli forces in the 1967 war. Trump's deal dishonestly names 'Eastern Jerusalem' as the capital of a future Palestinian entity, ostensibly fulfilling the longstanding Palestinian demand, but suggests as its location the town of Kafr Aqab, a town of 10,000 people, roughly 12 kilometres from the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem's Old City.

The plan leaves open the possibility of the transfer of pockets of territory in the state of Israel to the Palestinian entity, but only some of these are included in the proposed map and they are subject to stringent conditions. Thus, sparsely populated areas in the Naqab (Negev) desert will go to Palestine, but only for use as an industrial zone open to foreign capital, whose access will be controlled by Israel, which will also administer the road connecting the territory to the Gaza Strip.

The plan also suggests that Palestinian towns and cities presently within in the state of Israel could be incorporated into the Palestinian entity, although these are not shown in the proposed map. Such a move would be less a consolidation of Palestinian-majority areas, than the removal of Palestinian Israeli citizens, thereby removing their right to vote in Israeli elections and their rights to travel while, at the same time, consolidating the ethnic homogeneity of the 'Jewish state'.

It must be noted that even if a future Palestinian entity were to receive all of these territories, this would amount to nowhere near a fair compensation for the Israeli annexations. At best, the proposed Palestinian entity would administer 70 percent of its current territory, or 16 percent of historic Palestine. In return for lands that are barely settled, it would lose land essential to its agriculture, land that connects the northern and southern halves of the West Bank, which would be bifurcated just south of Jenin.

These demands for the annexation of East Jerusalem, the Jordan Valley and the illegal settlements, all originated amongst fringe, extreme, elements of Israeli politics. They have now been taken on by all the mainstream parties who would lead the next Israeli government with the support of the Trump administration.

Palestinian State

As well as reconfiguring Palestinian territory to the point that it would be functionally ungovernable, the

proposal demands the Palestinians accept extreme restrictions on the political independence of their future entity, denying the most basic functions of a sovereign state.

First, Israel will exercise a veto over Palestine's entry into any international organisation. Whilst none are named in the proposal, this could include, most significantly, the United Nations, of which Palestine is still not a full member. This demand also raises questions about Palestine's continued membership of other organisations. For instance, its membership of Interpol or the Arab League could be subject to this veto on the grounds that the future statelet is a 'new' political entity.

The Palestinian entity will be banned from developing any type of military capability beyond that of a lightly armed police force. Even the most defensive military infrastructure, anti-aircraft defences, anti-tank weaponry, even machine guns, are explicitly outlawed. The deal also rules out the creation of a Palestinian intelligence service. Military cooperation with other states is also to be subject to an Israeli veto, should the latter determine that any military agreements pose a threat to its 'security'.

The deal also demands that any cases before the International Criminal Court against the Israeli state be dropped, allowing the crimes committed during the occupation to go unpunished, and allowing future crimes to be carried out with impunity. That such a demand is included in the deal is evidence of the urgency with which Israel wants to prevent the investigation into its war crimes that the ICC announced in December.

Indeed, the deal goes further than demanding Palestinian cooperation against the ICC investigation, setting out the condition that Israelis cannot be tried under the Palestinian legal system either. This is a move that gives carte blanche to the settler population that will remain in the Palestinian statelet, the more political elements of which have a record of violence against Palestinians. They routinely intimidate the Palestinian population via destruction of farms and homes under the protection of the occupying forces, and the deal will allow this, and the immunity of the perpetrators, to continue.

The deal probes even further into the grotesque details of future Palestinian governance, raising demands about the future entity's domestic policies. It demands the end of welfare payments to the families of those killed by the occupying forces, whom it callously dismisses as 'terrorists'. Furthermore, it makes extensive demands that the future statelet's education system be cleansed of any material critical of the State of Israel.

As well as these demands, there are a number of 'security considerations' setting out Israel's legal right to control Palestinian borders, airspace, and fisheries. Israel also reserves the right to launch military action against Palestinian territory if it suspects the leadership of violating parts of the agreement. Even in the absence of such suspicions, the proposal allows 'minimal incursions' onto Palestinian territory, in the name of security.

Foreign Capital

As well as an attack on Palestinian national aspirations, the deal represents a move towards the realisation of imperialism's principal long-term objectives in the region: normalisation of relations between its client Arab states and Israel; and full, unfettered access to the markets in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The deal promises an investment package of \$50 billion, principally focused on infrastructure. It proposes that the investment be carried out by regional states such as Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt, with much of the funds being provided by Gulf States, the US and Europe.

The infrastructure proposals outline the process by which all Palestinian industries, such as transport, power, water, will be secured for private capital, with the profits being repatriated abroad.

Very few of these investment opportunities will yield tangible benefits to Palestinian people. The most ridiculous of the infrastructure projects, a tunnel connecting the West Bank and Gaza which, at 45 kilometres, would be roughly as long as the Channel Tunnel, could be closed at Israel's discretion.

Rather than aimed at raising Palestinians' living standards, many of the investments are targeted at facilitating the extraction of wealth from the territory. A significant proportion of the £50 billion, for instance, is proposed for the upgrade of ports inside Israel, which the plan affirms will be used by foreign investors to export products made inside Palestine to international buyers.

The investment programme also has a clear extractive element, setting out the first steps towards the ownership of the country's stone and marble and its limited oil supply by foreign capital. Most significant, however, will be the control of Gaza's offshore natural gas fields, which Palestinian State authorities acquired from Shell two years ago, largely as a consequence of the difficulty of operating in a territory that was repeatedly bombed by Israel.

Furthermore, much of the investment is aimed at tourism, an industry in which a 'boom' is difficult to imagine as long as the territories remain subject to the capricious military incursions of the Israeli armed forces.

The Purpose of the Deal

The demands that the proposal puts on the Palestinian leadership are so outrageous that it seems likely that its proponents expect, or even want, the Palestinians to reject it. Indeed, no representative of the Palestinian authorities, and few Palestinians at all, were consulted on the deal in the first place.

Trump's son-in-law, and supposed negotiator of the deal, Jared Kushner, made very clear what he understands by 'negotiation':

'They have to stop holding out for myths that will never come, and fairy tales that will never come. The Palestinian Authority would rather go and complain as opposed to come to the table and negotiate, which, quite frankly, shows that they are not ready to have a state.'

By 'negotiate' is meant 'surrender unconditionally' and 'deal' means 'accept a diktat'. The offer of a bribe for doing so, a substantial proportion of which would be paid by the surrounding Arab states, is noteworthy only for its brazen impudence.

The disingenuous character of the Deal, however, does not mean Israel and the US will not attempt to realise it. The proposals are, after all, a series of longstanding ambitions of the Israeli state and its allies, particularly concerning annexations, disarmament and repatriation. Indeed, almost every major proposal in the Deal represents a policy for which the Israeli ruling class has been lobbying for years.

Furthermore, it is likely that many of these proposals will go ahead regardless of the opposition of the Palestinian leadership. In such a case, Israel will be able to use the Deal as diplomatic cover, pointing to its rejection by all fractions of the Palestinian leadership as evidence of their 'non-cooperation'. As Israel carries out its now almost inevitable annexations and the continued ethnic cleansing that will go along with them, it will cynically point to the deal as the Palestinian's wasted 'opportunity' for what it dishonestly presents as a sustainable settlement.

Future of Zionism

What the charade surrounding the Deal exposes is not only that Israel is totally contemptuous of the 'two state solution' but that at long last it has a US President willing to drop the charade and give Israel's plans his seal of approval. It would be an unviable, dependent statelet whose real function would be to imprison

many millions of Palestinians but give their gaolers a renewed legitimacy amongst the ?international community? as a ?reasonable? state, which is negotiating and ?conceding? to the Palestinians.

That Israel refuses even to consider what the Palestinians are entitled to under existing international law; every inch of the West Bank and Gaza, the return of displaced Palestinian refugees and the withdrawal of every Israeli soldier from occupying their territory, is not the result of the particular strategy of its current government, but rather of the ideology of the entire movement: Zionism. A country, which in 1948-9 ethnically cleansed 700,000 people, and has successively displaced and excluded a total of seven million refugees, is not expressing its own democratic self-determination, it is denying another people theirs and, in the process, establishing a ?Jewish?- supremacist state.

Whilst apologists for Israeli state violence still point to the possibility of a Palestinian state alongside Israel, the latter continually undermines this possibility by fragmenting the territory of such a state by the illegal construction of settlements. The legal framework for Israeli annexations has existed ever since 1993, when the Oslo Accords were signed and Israeli was given significant control over the territory that it has now been promised in full in Trump?s Deal.

Whether the Deal of the Century proceeds with or without the forced consent of the Palestinian leadership, it will be resisted by the Palestinian people. In this resistance, they deserve the strongest and unremitting international solidarity. In fighting the Deal, we must simultaneously demand an end to the occupation of Palestinian lands, the right to return of all the refugees, and full civil rights for Palestinians inside the State of Israel.

Now that the Zionist regime and Trump and Johnson have endorsed the apartheid state project, it is especially important that we support the call for a single state ?from the river to the sea?, whose citizens, Israeli as well as Palestinian, shall have equal political rights. As socialists, we believe such a state will best resolve the needs of all its people and resolve conflicting national claims by establishing social ownership of the land, factories, services etc. on the basis of a democratically planned economy.

In short, we must work to support the workers and youth of both ethnicities and languages to take power into their own hands and build a socialist Palestine as part of a United Socialist States of the Middle East.

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