

# Palestine: Trump?s Gift to Netanyahu

Robert Teller Thu, 28/11/2019 - 13:57

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The US government has declared that it will no longer consider the Israeli settlements on the West Bank to be a violation of international law. No other government in the world, except the government of Israel itself, has ever recognised the settlements as lawful.

The US administration did not hesitate over its one reason: "We recognise the reality in the area," said Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and, thus, in just a few words, unlawful becomes lawful.

The 4th Geneva Convention declares the transfer of an occupying power's own population to occupied territory to be illegal. A large number of legal opinions, not to speak of UN resolutions, most recently Resolution 2336 in 2016, confirm the obvious fact that this condition is fulfilled in the West Bank. The step cannot therefore be understood as a "new legal opinion", but rather as the brazen recognition and acceptance of the fact that international law, if it contradicts the strategic goals of the State of Israel, has no meaning for the United States. The recognition of the settlements by the US government follows Trump?s recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and the annexation of the Golan Heights, which were also flagrant violations of international law.

The decision is another election campaign gift to the badly beleaguered Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is expected to have to stand for his third consecutive election within twelve months.

Since the conquest of the West Bank in the 1967 Six-Day War, the settlements have been a central component of the occupation system and the ongoing ethnic cleansing of Palestine, that is, the expulsion and marginalisation of Palestinians. The militarily fortified settlements are intended to underpin the Israeli state's claim to sovereignty in the occupied territories.

The Israeli right intends to annex the Jordan Valley and the settlements in the medium term, which would be nothing more than legalising the status quo. It has no intention of leaving any part of the West Bank to a future Palestinian state, or recognising any form of Palestinian self-determination, however limited. This, it believes, would be a permanent danger to the self-designated Jewish state, faced with millions of dispossessed and displaced people who have never come to terms with their fate and still demand their right to return. The "two-state solution" praised by the official Palestinian leadership, as well as by the rest of the ?international community", is therefore dead.

The tame "criticism" formulated by assorted European governments, is not directed against the injustice of the aggressive policies of Israel and the USA against the Palestinians, but against the fact that they expose their own position as a hypocritical utopia. The rejection of the "peace process" is indeed a rejection of the previous "international consensus" that a solution must be found in negotiation with the Palestinian Authority.

The fact that so far no other government has followed the USA in recognising Jerusalem as the capital also

shows that this policy remains risky. But it is logical and by no means an about-face, rather it is the logical continuation of the policy of the past 25 years. Israel does not want to create a second Gaza on the West Bank, it wants space for the expansion of the settler state. In the meantime, "peace process" or not, the total number of settlers in the West Bank has grown to over 600,000. As this continues unabated, eventually there will be no need for Palestinian co-administration of the "occupied territories".

The real danger for the Israeli state lies precisely in the fact that it is politically discrediting and embarrassing for the PLO factions, which have been paralysing the resistance against the occupation for 25 years by adhering to the illusion of a two-state solution. It lies in the fact that the collaboration of the reactionary Arab regimes with Israel and the "peace policy" of German and European imperialism lose their sham legitimation.

The so-called two-state solution is revealed as a diplomatic fiction with every step. Revolutionaries should take this as an opportunity to stand up for the only possible progressive solution in Palestine and in the worldwide solidarity movement: a single, socialist state of Palestine that guarantees equal rights to all inhabitants, all nationalities, regardless of religion and origin, including the right of return for refugees expelled from their ancestral homeland.

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