

Israeli Expansionism: In Their Own Words

Revisionist history in both Israel and the United States has often ignored the reality of an Israeli expansionism leading to the dispossession of Palestinians from their lands. While there are suitable numbers of actual facts on the ground that prove this reality, even more compelling is the fact that throughout the years Israel's own leaders, historians, and journalists have aptly described Israeli intentions.

- Theodore Herzl (1860-1904), the founder of Zionism: "We shall try to spirit the penniless Arab population across the border by procuring employment for it in transit countries, while denying it employment in our own country. . . . Both the process of expropriation and removal of the poor must be carried out discretely [*sic*] and circumspectly." (John Quigley: *Palestine and Israel: A Challenge to Justice*, Duke University Press, 1990)
- Ahad Ha'am (1856-1927), Zionist author: "The Jews treat the Arabs with hostility and cruelty, deprive them of their rights, offend them without cause, and some boast of these deeds." (Sami Hadawi, *Bitter Harvest*, Interlink Publishing, 1998)
- Yitzhak Epstein, Zionist author writing in *Hashiloah*, in 1907 called for "a new Zionist policy claiming that no good land was vacant [requiring] that Jewish settlement meant Arab dispossession."
- Benny Morris, Israeli historian, writes in the March/April 1998 edition of *Tikkun*: "While the Yishuv's leadership formally accepted the 1947 Partition Resolution, large sections of Israel's society, including David Ben Gurion, were opposed to the partition and from early on viewed the war [with the Arabs] as an ideal opportunity to expand the new state's boundaries beyond the UN earmarked partition boundaries, and at the expense of the Palestinians."
- David Ben Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, in 1938 said that "after we become a strong force, as a result of the creation of a state, we shall abolish partitions and expand into the whole of Palestine." (Noam Chomsky, *The Fateful Triangle*, South End Press, 1996)
- Joseph Weitz, Director of the Jewish National Land Fund, in December, 1940 said: "There is no room for both peoples in this country.... This will not bring about the State of Israel... and there is no way except transferring the Arabs from here to neighboring countries." (Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine*, Knopf Publishing, 1992)

- Benny Morris, Israeli historian: “Ben Gurion clearly wanted as few Arabs as possible to remain in the Jewish State. He hoped to see them flee. He said as much to his colleagues and aides in meetings in August, September, and October 1948.... He always refrained from issuing clear or written expulsion orders; he preferred that his generals ‘understand’ what he wanted done. He worked to avoid going down in history as the ‘great expeller.’” (*The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem 1947-1949*, Cambridge University Press, 1987)
- Simha Flapan, Israeli author: “That Ben Gurion’s ultimate aim was to evacuate as much of the Arab population as possible from the Jewish State can hardly be doubted, if only from the variety of means he employed to achieve his purpose,...most decisively the destruction of whole villages and the eviction of their inhabitants.” (*The Birth of Israel*, Pantheon, 1987)
- David Ben Gurion, 1936: “The boundaries of Zionist aspirations are the concern of the Jewish people and no external factor will be able to limit them.” (Chomsky, *The Fateful Triangle*)
- Israel Shahak, Israeli Professor, (1994): “The main danger which Israel, as a ‘Jewish State’ poses to its people, to other Jews, and its neighbors, is its ideologically motivated pursuit of territorial expansion and the inevitable series of wars resulting from this aim. No Zionist politician has ever repudiated Ben-Gurion’s idea that Israeli policies must be based on the restoration of Biblical borders as the borders of the Jewish State.” (*Jewish History, Jewish Religion: The Weight of 3000 Years*, Pluto Press, 1994)
- Excerpt from Israeli Prime Minister Moshe Sharatt’s personal diaries, May 1955, quoting Moshe Dayan: “[Israel] must see the sword as the main, if not the only instrument with which to keep its morale high and retain its moral tension. Toward this end it may-- no,it must—invent dangers, and to do this it must adopt the method of provocation-and-revenge.... And above all—let us hope for a new war with the Arab countries, so that we may finally get rid of our troubles and acquire our space.” (Livia Rokach, *Israel’s Sacred Terrorism*, AAUG Press, 1986)
- Martin Buber, philosopher/educator, (1878-1965): “The first fact is that at the time when we entered into an alliance (an alliance, I admit, that was not well-defined) with a European state and we provided that state with a claim to rule over Palestine, we made no attempt to reach an agreement with the Arabs of this land regarding the basis and conditions for the continuation of Jewish settlement. This negative approach caused those Arabs to see us increasingly not as a group which desired to live in cooperation with their people but as something in the nature of uninvited

guests and agents of foreign interests. (At the time I explicitly pointed out this fact (*A Land of Two Peoples*, University of Chicago Press, 2005)

- David Ben Gurion, (1886-1973): “Why should the Arabs make peace? If I was an Arab leader, I would never make terms with Israel. That is natural: we have to take their country. Sure, God promised it to us, but what does that matter to them? Our God is not theirs; we come from Israel, it’s true, but two thousand years ago, and what is that to them? There has been anti-Semitism, the Nazis, Hitler, Auschwitz, but was that their fault? They only see one thing: we came here and stole their country. Why should they accept that?” (Nahum Goldman, *The Jewish Paradox*, Grosset & Dunlap, 1978)
- Gideon Levy, Israeli journalist, in *Ha’aretz*, March 4, 2001. “Never before has there been distress and suffering on this scale among the Palestinians in the territories. They will engender unprecedented despair and ultimately they will spark violence more cruel and painful than anything seen so far....This is the point: the horrific distress of the Palestinians because of the present closure will quickly turn into the distress of the Israelis.”

For better or worse, the present state of Israel and Palestine is what it is. “The ideology that enabled the depopulation of half of Palestine’s native people in 1948 is still alive and continues to drive the inexorable, sometimes indiscernible, cleansing of those Palestinians who live there today.”¹ For the sake of achieving peace and justice in the Holy Land, the time for false spin and denying history has ended. Increasingly the world is demanding justice, which requires an honest rendering of Israeli motivations and designs beginning as early as the 19th century.

Additional Resources

Ben Ehrenreich, “Zionism is the Problem: The Zionist ideal of a Jewish state is keeping Israelis and Palestinians from living in peace,” *The Los Angeles Times*, Monday, March 16, 2009.

Conn Hallinan, “Ethnic Cleansing and Israel: The Ultimate Aim is the Transfer of Arab-Israelis,” March 3, 2009, www.counterpunch.org/hallinan03032009.html

¹ Ilan Pappé (2006) *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, ONEWORLD, 259.