

## **What about Palestinian terrorism and its threat to Israel's security?**

Terrorism is the systematic use of violence or the threat of violence to create a general climate of fear in a population and thereby to bring about a particular political objective.<sup>a</sup> Both Israel and the Palestinians have committed terrorism against each other.

Israel's terrorism has had as its ultimate objective the cleansing of the land of Palestine, known as Eretz Israel (the land of Israel) by Zionists, of its indigenous non-Jewish population to make room for the settlement of the land by Jewish immigrants. Initially the settlement of Eretz Israel was by mostly European immigrants of Jewish identity, survivors of the pogroms of Poland and Russia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and the Nazi genocide during World War II. Subsequently, Jewish immigrants from Arab countries and more recently from Russia, both Jewish and non-Jewish, have come to settle in Palestine.

Initially the Jewish underground paramilitary, Haganah, the Stern Gang, and Irgun prior to the establishment of Israel in 1948, terrorized the Palestinians to flee. After the founding of the Israeli state, terrorism was used by the Israeli military to drive the indigenous non-Jewish Palestinians, Christians, and Muslims, from their homes, villages, towns, cities, and farm land.

Not wishing to acknowledge that they had forcefully expelled some 750,000 Palestinians, 75% of the population in the part of Palestine that became the state of Israel in 1948-1949, the Israelis claimed that the Palestinians left their homes, farms, villages, cities, etc., of their own free will, sometimes in response to their leaders' directions. When the displaced Palestinians attempted to return to the where they had once lived, they were prohibited to enter the new state of Israel. A majority of the displaced Palestinians ended up living in impoverished refugee camps in the West Bank (then controlled by Jordan), Jordan, Gaza (then controlled by Egypt), Lebanon, and Syria. A small minority ended up living in Europe and the United States. Many of the initial refugees and their descendants continue to live in these refugee camps, more than 60 years after their displacement.

Palestinian terrorism has sought to drive out what Palestinians consider to be the European invaders or colonialists who had driven the Palestinians from their ancestral land. Unlike the Israelis who successfully drove a majority of Palestinians from the land that became the state of Israel, the Palestinians have not expelled the invaders but rather continually lose more and more of their land to Israeli settlers who since 1967 have built and expanded settlements in the West Bank. Israel also built settlements in Gaza which they abandoned in 2005, resettling these Israelis on confiscated Palestinian land in the West Bank. Given that Israel's military is the most powerful military in the Middle East and that the Palestinians have no military, it is not surprising that the Palestinians have not expelled the Israelis but rather have lost more and more of their

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<sup>a</sup> See Jeff Halper, *An Israeli in Palestine*, Pluto Press, 2008, 234-253; and Saree Makdisi, *Palestine Inside Out*, Norton, 2008, 265-70, for a discussion of terrorism in the context of Israel-Palestine.

land to Israeli settlers.

So given these historical facts, would it not be more accurate to see Israel as the greater threat to the security of the Palestinians than the reverse? How can a state with so powerful a military feel seriously threatened by a people without a state and without a military? But Israelis continue to express concern for their security no matter how powerless the Palestinians. It is as though the Palestinian wish to reclaim the land taken from them by Israel continually haunts the Israelis. The acts of terrorism by the Palestinians, such as suicide bombings and primitive rockets launched into Israel from Gaza, serve to remind Israelis that they are not free from the Palestinian demand for justice, the right to their land, and the right to live in a state where all its residents have equal rights. Only a negotiated peace that is just will bring an end to terrorism and the fear that it causes.

#### References

1Halper, Jeff, *An Israeli in Palestine: Resisting Dispossession, Redeeming Israel*, London and Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2008, 317 pages.

1Quigley, John B., *Palestine and Israel : a challenge to justice*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990, 337 pages.

1Rose, John, *The myths of Zionism*, London and Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2004, 232 pages.