

Corbyn and Palestine: Hold Your Applause

For some reason Jeremy Corbyn and the British Labour Party he leads are sticking to the two-state solution at a time when more and more pro-Palestinians are abandoning it. Is it possible to bring Labour around to support for a normal democracy in Palestine, free of the racism and apartheid the left genuinely abhors?

First, [what Corbyn said](#) at the Labour Conference in Liverpool last week was this: "We support a two-state solution to the conflict with a secure Israel and a viable and secure Palestinian state. ... And in order to help make the two-state settlement a reality we will recognise a Palestinian state as soon as we take office." This got a 35-second standing ovation from the delegates of the party which soon could govern a member of the Security Council.

Recognising a Palestinian state can of course be done without prejudice to a one-democratic-state solution, but there are several contradictions in coming out for its antithesis, the two-state solution.

Most obviously, the two-state solution is a raw deal for Palestinians. For one hundred years Palestinians consistently and unanimously rejected partition of their homeland, thus placing the burden of proof on anyone who claims to simultaneously support Palestinian aspirations and the two-state solution.

What's more that solution permanently robs Palestinians of over 80% of it of their country, and of the two states literally on offer, the one planned for them by today's version of the Great Powers is a small and insulting remnant, not even sovereign because, after all, the one the Jewish Israelis get has to be "secure". And its security as *a Jewish state* depends on excluding as many Palestinians as possible.

Whether the West Bank/Gaza Strip archipelago is "viable" or not is beside the point. It is its undesirability and its injustice that are the point.

We too often focus on the Palestinian state, though, of the two states, without at the very same time scrutinising the Israeli one 'recognised' and cemented in place by the two-state solution. But in any version the solution has nothing to say about the rights of Israel's non-Jewish so-called citizens, nor about the Palestinians' right to over 90% of the land within Israel, that taken from them for Jewish use only.

Literally, the two-state solution is a Zionist solution because one of the two states it wants to impose is the Zionist state.

The Returnees

So far, so familiar. But when we add into our inspection of the two-state solution the right of return for the over 8 million displaced Palestinians, the case is closed. Even the most

liberal of the envisioned two-state solutions have no place for these people in Israel, where the homes and lands are located to which they have the right to return. That would numerically and politically totally destroy the “security” of Israel as long as it defines and realises itself, [as it does](#), as the state of the Jews. It would have to make way for a standard democracy.

Jeremy Corbyn, however, did not mention the right of Palestinians to return. This must have been deliberate because just before and after the minute (minute 46) he spent on Palestine he explicitly and passionately called for the return of two other groups of refugees: the Rohingyas and the Syrians.

Lambasting Myanmar leader Aung San Su Kyi, he said: “Nearly one million [Rohingyas] have fled to neighbouring Bangladesh... We demand that the Myanmar government end this horrific ethnic cleansing and allow the Rohingya people to return home and rebuild their communities and their lives in safety and security.”

Of the “the terrible war in Syria” he said that it “has led to millions of refugees, some of whom I met in Jordan this summer, wonderful, brave people, desperate to go home, desperate to see peace, wondering how their families are getting on at home, a short distance away... [One must] end the killing, and allow those wonderful refugees the right, which they want, to return home to their own country.”

So immersed are we in the Zionist narrative that we do not even *expect* Jeremy Corbyn to utter similar words about the Palestinian refugees, even knowing that they are far more numerous and long-suffering than either of the other deserving groups. The key restoration of justice in the form of the right of return is irredeemably incompatible with the state of Israel.

Yet shouldn't it be possible to convince the Labour Party and exceptionally decent and knowledgeable politicians like Corbyn of this incompatibility, of this contradiction of supporting return for other refugees but not for Palestinians?

Our Dilemma

We international supporters of all the rights of all the Palestinians wish Corbyn well and face a dilemma. His heart has always been in the right place concerning many of the rights of many of the Palestinians. His brave efforts for Palestinian rights started decades ago. The Labour Party's frenetic applause at its leader's pro-Palestinian words is a thing of hope, not to mention the Conference's passage of a resolution against arms sales to Israel.

But can Labour – or [the new faces](#) soon entering the US Congress – walk the last mile? The problem is in the fine print. However strongly we emotionally rejoice in Corbyn's partial escape from the mainstream on the Palestine issue, and however strongly we

defend him from ludicrous ‘antisemitism’ allegations (despite his party’s purges of critics of Zionism) – the two-state solution is tragically in the centre of the mainstream.

For Corbyn and Labour are reaffirming their place in the chorus of reactionaries who at the UN last week were launching their last-ditch defence of the two-state solution: Donald [Trump](#), Emmanuel Macron, Benjamin Netanyahu, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, [Haaretz](#) newspaper and of course the unelected Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas.

Nothing in principle against strange bedfellows, but this gives reason to pause. During this pause we must look ever so carefully at what the two-state solution actually *means*. In addition to its incompatibility with BDS’s four demands for self-determination, equality within Israel, de-occupation and return, a short year ago even Jerusalem was taken away!

It could be that the theft of Jerusalem will be the final straw, or rather the final shovelful of dirt on the two-state grave, which started dying back in 1938 when the British government [realised](#) that the partition its Peel Commission proposed was a bad and impractical idea.

Whether businessman Trump will realise that support of Israel is ‘bad business’ anyway, and force Israel to accept an Israel without ‘Judea and Samaria’, is beyond my ability to judge. But having a Britain on the Security Council that would resist the two-state burial of Palestinian rights is something to fight for, so we should lobby Labour urgently.

Jeremy Corbyn has the knowledge, heart and wherewithal to move beyond two states, to democracy and an overdue end to the apartheid colonialism his party is duty-bound to oppose. We must try to show him and his party what they are actually supporting when they support a “secure Israel” which literally excludes all Palestinians from their homeland. This is the best chance internationally for Palestinians since 1947, but Labour is not yet good enough.

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Photos below:

1. Jeremy Corbyn and a rally for Gaza in London
2. Rohingya refugees in Myanmar

