

# **One State vs. Two States**

## **In Historic Palestine**

Since 1948, it has been the consensus of the international community that a durable and just settlement for the Palestine/Israel conflict entails the creation of two states: Palestine and Israel and the return of all Palestinian refugees expelled by Israel and their compensation. This consensus was based on UNGA Resolutions 181 of November 29, 1947 which partitioned historic Palestine into two states, and UNGA Resolution 194 of December 11, 1948 which called for the establishment of a conciliation committee to deal with outstanding issues between the parties, placing Jerusalem under international jurisdiction after demilitarizing the city and its surrounding towns and villages, and protecting Jerusalem's holy places. But from the very beginning, Israel extended its control over Palestinian territory from 53% to 78% of the total land of historic Palestine and refused to withdraw from the territory assigned to the Palestinian state or to allow the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties. In an unprecedented move by the United Nations, prior to adopting UNGA Resolution 273 of May 11, 1949, Israel was required to pledge in writing its intention to comply with the two resolutions as a precondition to be admitted as a member state of the United Nations. In 1967, instead, Israel occupied the rest of historic Palestine. Resolution 242 of November 22, 1967, which emphasized "[T]he inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every state in the area can live in security." To date, Israel is in total occupation of historic Palestine, Palestinian refugees are awaiting their return, and the United Nations and the international community are awaiting Israel's compliance.

Israel's laws, policies, and practices clearly reveal the true intention of Israel: Total occupation of historic Palestine, control and dominance by Israel over all aspects of Palestinian lives, resources, and future, and systematic ethnic cleansing of Palestinians off their land, seizure of their properties and resources, the continuous humiliation and denial of their basic rights and their return and unification. Israel has reduced the possibility of implementing the two-state option to zero and on its ruin created one state of Jews, by Jews, for Jews. This has always been

the objective of Zionism from the start. All maneuvers by Israel to engage in “peace” negotiations hide an ugly reality: A plan to create facts on the ground that would render a viable Palestinian presence in historic Palestine meaningless.

The international community is aware of Israel’s brutal control over Palestine and the Palestinians. Yet somehow, the world seems to be in a state of voluntary amnesia, still believing that a two-state option is possible.

This section is designed to address potential settlement options for the Palestine/Israel impasse. The two most popular options are the two-state and the one-state solutions. Many misconceptions are associated with these options, but in order to understand those misunderstandings, a comparison between the two solutions is warranted.

### **Two States:**

The two-state solution is often touted by its proponents as the most practical and viable option because it is easier to achieve, but it assumes Israeli willingness to withdraw to the 1967 borders and disregards facts on the ground already created illegally by Israel in its ceaseless encroachment upon Palestinian land and identity. The features of the two-state option are:

1. The legalization of the Zionist claim to exclusivity with possession and absolute authority over 78% of Palestine for and by Jews only. In order to establish and maintain a Jewish-majority state, specific laws are enacted that prefer Jews and discriminate against Palestinians such as the Law of Return granting every Jew anywhere in the world the right to immigrate to Israel, and the Nationality Law which automatically grants citizenship to all Jews who immigrate to Israel. Such a state means that non-Jews must either be eliminated or their presence or influence marginalized. Israel has already accomplished part of this objective by systematic discrimination against Palestinians through such practices as forced transfer, segregation, ghettoization, and the denial of citizenship, and basic human rights and freedoms, creating a situation that is alarmingly consistent with Apartheid. Meanwhile, the actions of Israeli leaders intended to secure the ethnic, religious and demographic “purity” of Israel increasingly hark back to the fascist regimes of Europe’s past and smack of what one recent commentator has referred to as “*Arab-rein*”.

2. The two-state solution would create a Palestinian statelet on 22% of the former Palestine, consisting of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. However, Israel’s Apartheid Wall has already appropriated about 10% more of the West Bank, dividing villages, orchards, and farms, and leaving the presumptive statelet with less than 20% of old Palestine. The sovereignty of this state over its land, space, sea, and resources would always remain in doubt, particularly because that 20% would not even be contiguous since the West Bank would be physically separated from Gaza by Israel.

3. The two-state solution would create a Palestine that would be disjointed and unviable, allowing continued Israeli, Egyptian, and Jordanian control over and access to Palestinian land, airspace, sea, and natural resources, leaving its economy and the movement of its people dependent upon the policies of these countries, either separately or collectively. The ongoing siege of Gaza and Egypt's collaboration with and acquiescence to Israeli brutal practices both point to this. Coupled with Jordan's collusion with Israel to suppress Palestinian aspirations for viable independence leaves one to conclude that such a future Palestinian statelet would most likely remain at the mercy of its neighbors as it would be unable to control or develop its natural resources be allowed to defend or protect itself, nor serve as a home for the Palestinian diaspora.

4. A two-state solution would neither implement nor address the right of Palestinian refugees and their descendants to return to their properties either in Israel, the Palestinian statelet, or both. Israel's refusal to comply with international and humanitarian law violates the protections they provide civilians, especially through the construction of Jewish-only settlements that expropriate Palestinian land and resources and which progressively confine Palestinians to enclaves similar to South African bantustans.

With respect to Jerusalem, Israel's measures to build and consolidate demographic domination both of greater Jerusalem and Jerusalem proper have progressively eradicated the historically Arab character of the city, depriving Palestinians of their historic capital, severing Jerusalem's vital social and economic connections to the rest of Palestinian society, and restricting access by Muslim and Christian Palestinian communities to holy sites where they have worshipped since antiquity. Israel's actions and policies point inescapably to the calculated intent of permanently annexing most of the West Bank and all of East Jerusalem, contravening all accepted international principles regarding occupation. The inevitable conclusion is that Israel is pursuing a policy that amounts to nothing less than settler colonialism, and, as in apartheid South Africa, Israel has severely suppressed ongoing demands for democratic reform and equal treatment and protection between Israeli Jews and Palestinians.

5. The two-state solution would not deal with the rights and plight of those Palestinians in Israel who have been subjected to increasingly blatant Israeli discrimination and violent treatment. Israel deliberately targets its Palestinian citizens for exclusion and ethnic cleansing, forcing them to accept the Jewish character of the state which by itself deprives them of their own national identity and aspirations. They are repeatedly told that they are an alien enemy population in their own ancestral homeland and that it is only a matter of time before they are transferred out. They are denied equal protection of the law; have their properties confiscated for use by Israeli Jews, and the portion not utilized by Israeli Jews, is denied to them; have their natural resources expropriated without compensation and exploited mainly to benefit Israeli Jews; and have their culture, history,

legacy, and connection to the land falsified and maligned. All efforts by Palestinians and their Jewish supporters inside Israel to peacefully transform the state into an inclusive democracy with equal protection for all have been ignored and rejected.

6. The two-state solution would not address Israel's highly militaristic culture with its arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. An exclusively Jewish state would be adamant in maintaining its military superiority over its neighboring Middle Eastern countries—individually or collectively. Such regional hegemony would allow Israel to maintain its stockpile of weapons of mass destruction: biological, chemical, and over 200 nuclear warheads. Though Israel is ranked as the fourth military power in the world and is among the exclusive members of the nuclear club, it keeps justifying its brutal and illegal occupation of Palestine and its continual portrayal of itself as being surrounded by enemies intent on destroying it. All indications lead one to conclude that Israel would not agree with the proposed plan to create a Middle East free of such weapons. Israeli insistence on such weapons would push other countries to acquire them.

7. The two-state solution would perpetuate the notion that Palestinians and Israelis cannot share the land and live together peacefully in historic Palestine. The division of the people and territory of Mandate Palestine by the antiquated notion claiming an exclusive birthright to the land for the entirety of one ethnic group alone is inadmissible and violates the human and political rights of the Palestinian people as well as norms expressed in United Nations covenants on human, social, cultural, and political rights. Partition of Palestine into two states has only served to perpetuate conflict, based as it was on sustaining beliefs and practices that fostered conflict, especially ethnic domination and discrimination, forced separation, ghettoization, and land confiscation that reproduce the practices of colonialism and apartheid and which offend the conscience of humankind. The claim that Jews, Palestinians, and all the people of territorial Palestine cannot live together peacefully in one country is just as false and fundamentally racist as were similar arguments promoted by the apartheid regime in South Africa.

In sum, the two-state solution would insist on maintaining the Zionist character of Israel with a Jewish majority, with laws that clearly discriminate against non-Jewish citizens and policies that favor Jews. The most potent weapon that Israel has at its disposal are unique laws that hold confiscated land in a trust for Jews only, that grant every Jew anywhere in the world the right to immigrate to Israel, and automatic citizenship to those who do. Yet Palestinians who have been expelled by Israel from their homes and properties are not allowed to return or be united with their families in Israel.

### **One State:**

The one-state solution is the less popular option at present, but it appears to be gaining momentum because it is universal in nature and scope and aims at creating a democratic infrastructure for a unified country in Palestine with equal protection and treatment for all its citizens. The vision of the one-state solution is eloquently stated in the Declaration of the Movement for One Democratic State in Palestine and consists of four basic principles:

1. Only a united and genuinely democratic state in Palestine, without distinction of race, religion, ethnicity, or national origin, can provide liberty and security for all.
2. The entire land of Palestine between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River is to be established as one country that belongs to all of its citizens.
3. The new state must be constituted as one independent and democratic state in which all citizens enjoy equal rights and can live in freedom and security.
4. The citizens of this state shall include all those who live there now and all those who were expelled over the past decades and their descendants.

The future state will be established as follows:

- Reunified Palestine would be constituted as a democracy in which all of its adult citizens enjoy equal rights to vote, stand for office, and contribute to the country's governance, it being understood that all pre-existing political structures and laws that discriminate against anyone would be abrogated.
- The state would not establish or accord special privilege to any religion and would provide for the free practice of all religions.
- The public land of the state would belong to the nation as a whole and all of its citizens would have equal access to its use. Private property expropriated from Palestinian refugees, Palestinian citizens of Israel, and Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza would be restored or reparations made with the consent of the original owners or their descendants.
- The state would provide the conditions for free cultural expression by all of its citizens.
- Citizens would have equal access to employment at all levels and in all sectors of the society.
- The state would uphold international law and at all times seek the peaceful resolution of conflict through negotiation and collective security in accordance with the United Nations Charter.
- The state would seek and contribute to the establishment of a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East that would also be free of all weapons of mass destruction. All of Israel's present weapons of mass destruction (including but not limited to its arsenal of over 200 nuclear weapons) inherited by the state would be dismantled

or destroyed under the auspices of the United Nations within one year of the creation of the new state.

**The questions to ask, therefore, are:**

- Would the two-state solution mandate drastic changes to the character and practices of Israel or allow Israel to continue with business as usual?
- Would Israel be willing to reverse its colonial policies to allow for the establishment of a viable Palestinian state?
- Is Israel ready to transform itself into a democracy, eliminate discrimination, and guarantee equal protection of the law to all of its citizens?
- Would a race for weapons of mass destruction achieve security and peace?

Comparison between the two options reveals distinct and drastic differences between them. Though the two-state solution is being marketed as viable and the easiest option to accomplish, this option would nevertheless prove to be the hardest to achieve. It would establish two competing entities, leave major issues unresolved, and maintain the Zionist colonial settler character of Israel intact with all of its discriminatory manifestations. The one- state solution, though seen as utopian and difficult to set up, is still the most practical and promising option because it calls for a unified democratic state for both Palestinians and Israeli Jews, provides for equal protection and treatment for both, and eliminates racism, preferential treatment, colonialism, militarism, and bloodshed. Its universal values would lead to a durable system of justice and lasting peace.

Having discussed the basic tenets of both options, attached are the documents that a score of Palestinians, Israeli Jews, and their supporters worldwide have been working on for the last decade to end the conflict and to establish justice, peace, and unity in historic Palestine based on universal values and equal protection and treatment for all.

From June 29 to July 1, 2012, activists met in Munich, Germany, to discuss the one-state option. They acknowledged previous efforts, initiatives, and declarations for the establishment of one democratic state in historic Palestine and adopted the Munich Declaration as a vision shared by all the current initiatives and declarations on the one- state option for the resolution of the Israel/Palestine conflict.

The Munich Declaration calls for dismantling and ending all institutions, laws, policies, and practices that discriminate among people based on religion, ethnicity, national origin, or gender. The declaration aims to restore justice to the Palestinians who have been the victims of Zionism and Israel. It deals with Israel/Palestine as a single geographic unit and treats current Israeli Jews and Palestinians as one people. The declaration further accords the future citizens of the state equality and equal treatment and protection by law. It promises future citizens freedoms, equality, dignity, and security. It pledges to establish a state that upholds international treaties and conventions, respects human rights, and works diligently to make the region a safe place to live by reducing tension and eliminating all weapons of mass destruction. The Munich Conference calls upon the supporters and activists of one-state option to unite for the establishment of an International Movement for one democratic state in Historic Palestine.

Advocates of the one democratic state believe, and hope that you agree, after reading this book, that the one democratic state solution which is rooted in universal principles has the promise of being the most viable and durable of the two options and invite all those who cherish freedom, justice, equality, and democracy and those who reject apartheid, racism and segregation to join in support of this option, articulating its ideals, and diligently working to achieve it. There is no other viable solution!