



NDN COLLECTIVE

POSITION PAPER:

# THE RIGHT OF RETURN IS LANDBACK





***“The Palestinian cause is not a cause for Palestinians only, but a cause for every revolutionary, as a cause of the exploited and oppressed masses in our era”- Ghassan Kanafani***

*Ghassan Kanafani is a Palestinian writer, editor, journalist, artist, intellectual, and revolutionary who wrote and told stories about the Palestinian cause for liberation. Born in Acre (Akka), Palestine he was forced into exile with his family and raised as a refugee in Syria during the Nakba, or the 1948 Catastrophe. Kanafani produced over 40 seminal Palestinian texts in his short life which included plays, short stories, novels, journalistic articles, and analytical studies- many earning prominent awards, and some having been adapted into cinema and are considered amongst the most distinguished political films in the [world](#). Kanafani encouraged Palestinian people to weave the individual stories of exile, the loss of home, massacre, and resistance into a fabric of collective memory that could be used to empower future generations to fight for liberation and return. In 1972 at the age of 36, Kanafani, along with his niece Lamees, was assassinated by the Israeli secret service by planting a bomb in his car. Kanafani’s work, spirit, and commitment to the movement is felt to this day and is an inspiration to the creation and publication of this position paper.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

When questioning the problems around our communities, Indigenous youth are often told, “it’s a complicated issue”. We see our grandparents’ houses with no electricity or running water while transmission lines run overhead and water lines supply nearby resource extraction projects. Coincidentally, when asking about what is happening in Palestine (named in Arabic, Falasteen), the dominant response is the same. However, neither the questions nor the answers are truly complicated. The current conditions we face as People stem from the root causes of settler colonialism, genocide, and apartheid. Under settler colonialism, settlers do not care about the People or the land. Their relationships are based on extraction and exploitation. Indigenous Peoples protect and defend our land and our communities. The land convenes us and helps to define who we are and what our purpose is. This is our shared relationship and understanding to Indigenous Peoples globally. That is why, we look to our Palestinian Relatives who, like us, continue to demonstrate the power of resistance against colonialism and occupation. This position paper, provides information on the historical relationship between Palestinians and Native Peoples, an overview of the devastating impacts of zionism, and reasons why NDN Collective and the LANDBACK Team stand in full solidarity and commitment to the Right of Return of our Palestinian siblings and full liberation of their homeland. Just as we fight and organize to reclaim land here on Turtle Island, our Palestinian relatives fight and organize to return to the land and for the land to return to the people. It is through our relationships and shared history of resistance against colonialism that we present the position paper: The Right of Return is LANDBACK.

## CONNECTING STRUGGLE & HISTORY

In 1830, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act as a means of claiming and expanding u.s. territory by violently removing Native Peoples from our homelands to territories not our own. This act was designed to cut relationships Native Peoples had with the land by removing us, destroying our homes, our medicines, our crops, our livestock, and killing any who resisted. Since the passing of the Indian Removal Act, and u.s. expansion out west, the popular “Wild West” trope began, where settlers positioned themselves as saviors, and us as savages. Indigenous Peoples know better because we know our own history, the history of the land, and the history, in this context, of u.s. colonization. On the other side of the world, our Palestinian Relatives are resisting similar violence and conditions, albeit under a different timeline of settler-colonization; facilitated by the same people and their connected forces. Although Zionist colonization and the ethnic cleansing of Palestine began in the years preceding 1948, over 450 years past the colonization of the so-called Americas, the brutality of continuing settler-colonial violence and genocide are ongoing in both cases.

Much like the early colonizers of the Americas who saw how Indigenous Peoples coexisted and thrived on the land, so too did the British colonizers who claimed Palestine as theirs under a “Mandate” in 1916 through the Sykes-Picot Treaty; a secret arrangement between Britain and France. Sykes-Picot contradicted the McMahon-Hussein agreement of 1915, which promised that all lands would be returned to Arab nationals who lived upon them in exchange for launching a revolt against the Ottoman Empire. However, as the Ottoman Empire fell, the British and the French rallied to carve up the Middle East for themselves instead of the land returning to the People.

In 1902 Theodore Herzl, the founder of political Zionism, wrote to the notorious Cecil Rhodes, the Minister of Colonies for Great Britain: “You are being invited to help make history. It doesn’t involve Africa, but a piece of Asia Minor; not Englishmen but Jews ... How, then, do I happen to turn to you since this is an out-of-the-way matter for you? How indeed? Because it is something colonial.” Eventually, the British turned it over to a European ideological movement called Zionism, which sought to establish a Jewish homeland outside of Europe. Palestine became the favored location for this new colonial endeavor.

Zionism itself grew in popularity at the same time as the World Wars and widespread antisemitism across Europe. The Holocaust became a driving force for increasing support for Zionism, with imperial and settler-states even rejecting Jewish immigration from Nazi Germany into their own countries in favor of proposals that facilitated relocation to Palestine. In 1917, Lord Balfour penned a letter on behalf of the British government naming their aims to support a national home for the Jewish people being established in the land of Palestine. Throughout this era, the Zionist movement continued to bolster support from Europe.

The origins of Zionism are firmly rooted in colonial European ideas of “civilization” that we find across our own history in North America. The early Zionist movement out of Europe grew throughout the late 1800s and sent scouts to establish themselves on the land. They mapped most of the region’s aquifers, springs, rivers, and oases and started to build settlements.

Under the British Occupation, the population of European Jewish settlers increased and many of them took on the role of farming in kibbutz, or Zionist compounds. These kibbutz were some of the earliest military outposts for Zionist militias, established on strategic locations such as mountaintops to attack surrounding Palestinian villages, occupy hubs of freshwater and expand Zionist settlement into the valleys. The kibbutz, and the physical segregation of Palestinians between Israeli military zones, isolated enclaves, refugee camps and exile, is all eerily similar to our own history. For example, early army 'forts' were strategically placed near the Native Nations who exhibited the most resistance to the encroachment of European settlers on our lands. Those established "prisoners of war" camps later became the reservations we were forced onto, such as Prisoner of War Camp #334, which is now known as the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. These settlement practices are the model for how Israeli settler outposts are established today, with the silent complicity and funding from European nations and settler colonial nations like the United States, Canada and Australia.

The British and early Zionist scouts who came to Palestine wrote that Palestine was a bountiful land filled with vibrant communities and economies; they saw farmers, also known as Falahin, people of the soil, who later became some of the biggest resistance forces against British occupation. They also saw people and vibrant economies that coexisted in densely populated cities or districts like Jerusalem (Al-Quds), Haifa, Jaffa (Yafa), and Nazareth (Al-Nasra). There was an abundance of fruits, vegetables, grains, spices, and olive trees. Before 1948, Palestine was the largest exporter of oranges in the world and the second largest exporter of citrus globally. Many people across continents came to Palestine seasonally to trade goods and as religious travelers and were hosted accordingly by Palestinians before they again returned to their own nations.

The very core of who we are as Indigenous Peoples ties back to the land, relationships to the plants, animals, rivers, seas, spiritual places, rooting our livelihood, encompassing kinship systems, economies, language, and culture in that land. Oral traditions, first-hand accounts, songs, and even written documents of permanent Palestinian presence on the land as "properties", remain unrecognized by both the colonial Israeli courts and those international forces that legitimize them. We share the stories of how settler colonialism was enforced by militarized forces and so too do we share our stories of resistance. As Indigenous Peoples establish connections to the land through relationships, by contrast, colonizers establish ownership of land through pen, paper and [broken treaty](#) promises.

While settler colonialism is the systemic root of injustice, apartheid—a system or policies of segregation with intent to maintain domination carried out through different sets of laws for people living in the same place—is an expression of it. [There are over 65 Israeli laws](#), including many land laws, that do not apply to Palestinians today inside the 48' territories with other examples such as that Israeli settlers living in the '67 territories are tried under Israeli civilian courts while Palestinians are tried under Israeli military courts. The so-called state of [Israel is recognized today as guilty of the crime of apartheid](#) by many international human rights monitors and other Nations in the International Community. The roots of this crime are original Zionist colonization; when the Nakba, or Catastrophe, took place from 1947 to 1949, European Jewish settlers were allowed to establish "ownership" of any house or land the Zionist militias invaded. Palestinians, however, had to be physically present on their lands or in their homes on the day that the Israeli militias registered the inhabitants of the area. In the chaos and aftermath of Nakba, if Palestinians were unable to be counted in person, they lost title to their land.

Such laws are still at the root of Zionist colonial domination and what keeps many Palestinian families indefinitely displaced, and often unsheltered, on their own land. It is important to note that under the Israeli legal regime, Palestinians even live under different legal systems from each other, depending on the territories or zones where they are registered (e.g. the '48 Territories where Israel first established itself, Jerusalem, and the '67 territories such as the West Bank and Gaza that were occupied by Israel in 1967).

*"Before their eyes we turn into our homestead the land and villages in which they and their forefathers have lived...we are a generation of settlers, and without the steel helmet and gun barrel, we shall not be able to plant a tree or build a house" - Moshe Dayan, Haganah militia member (1930-1948), Israeli state minister of agriculture (1959-1965), defense (1967-1974), and foreign affairs (1977-1979).*

## **DEFEND**

In 1936, Palestinians launched a general strike against the increased settlement of Zionists in their territories, the British government who was facilitating their arrival, and the Palestinians that were appointed by the British government to serve as representatives that failed to assert their own national sovereignty. The unification of Palestinians from each region to undermine British rule and cripple its economy was successful. This seven-month strike is still one of the longest strikes in history, under which Palestinians shut down nearly every active economy in their region. This was only possible by risking starvation, physical violence, death, and imprisonment by British forces. This same spirit of resistance against colonialism and Zionism is ever-present and evolving.

The British gave way entirely to Zionist forces and thus began the Nakba and the exile of over 800,000 Palestinians from their land by Zionist militias who were backed by British armaments, generals imported from other British colonialist struggles, and the twin narratives of Manifest Destiny—the right granted by God that these lands were theirs— and an empty land untouched by humans —“a land without a people for a people without a land”. These false narratives have continued to fuel the Zionist movement today, which claims to be a liberation movement for Jewish people, when it is, in reality, a racist colonial movement. With most Palestinians displaced from larger cities, hundreds of villages depopulated within weeks, massacres, disproportionate access to firepower, and those that stayed being cut off from their traditional livelihoods and fragmented from other Palestinian communities nearby, Zionists were able to settle in larger waves and thus the state of Israel was established upon the ruins of Palestine.

The Nakba both refers to the initial Zionist ethnic cleansing that laid the groundwork for the colonial Israeli state and refers to the ongoing process of removal, dispossession, and colonial violence. Nakba is not just a moment in time, just as the violence that we face here under settler colonialism on Turtle Island is not limited to one atrocity but spans across many events over time until today.

The ethnic cleansing of Palestine since 1948 has led to the simultaneously attempted erasure of Palestinian culture on the one hand, while trying to appropriate Palestinian culture on the other in order to create a new “israeli identity”. A quote from Awab Abdel Fattah of [Mada’ Al-Carmel](#) shares, “if you want to exterminate any people, you first need to exterminate their culture.” There are many examples of this but can be directly demonstrated by the appropriation of the red poppy flower, or the hanoun, the symbol of Palestinian Land Day (مضردأا موي) and Spring, representing hope, perseverance, and sacrifice. In 2013 the so-called state of israel adopted the red poppy flower as its official national flower.

It is important to underscore that israel is constantly in the process of taking on new identities in order to establish permanence and legitimacy as an occupying colonial state. The Zionist state is currently in the process of “red-washing” propaganda, claiming that israelis are Indigenous to Palestine, despite the origins of Zionism as a 19th century settler colonial movement for white Ashkenazi Jews from Europe. Relatedly, white u.s. settlers often try to Indigenize their presence through false and racist appeals to Indigenous heritage. Steven Salaita writes that Palestine is currently undergoing a form of garrison settlement that is closer to the earliest phases of u.s. settler colonialism. This is why the Zionist state has pulled from the u.s. settler imaginary of “Cowboys and Indians” so easily, and why early 20th-century Zionist thinkers like Vladimir Jabotinsky could use the settler colonialism of Turtle Island, not to mention Indigenous resistance, as relevant parallels to justify the use of brute force to expel and subjugate Palestinians.

By removing people from their land, you remove them from their natural development, their medicines, their relationships, and their culture. The state of israel tries to separate the Palestinian people from their land and from each other through systemic violence and infrastructure of Occupation—by separating Palestinian communities through checkpoints and 26-foot walls, heavily surveying Palestinian areas, economic suffocation, targeting Palestinian infrastructure, the mass imprisonment and torture of Palestinian people, the injustice of Apartheid law and military courts, the targeting of Palestinian children, and greenlighting the Oslo Accords that divided the land into multiple zones. And yet, under the boot of intense and routine Zionist repression, there remains the fervent promise and the unified demand by Palestinians in Palestine and all over the world to resist and defend, until the land is liberated and the People can return.

[Benny Morris of the Israeli New Historian Movement](#), “refers to the struggle between israel settler colonialism and Palestinians as the “conflict” or struggle between civilization and barbarism, and suggests an analogy frequently drawn by Palestinians but from the other side, “Even the great American democracy could not have been created without the annihilation of the Indians.” Benny Morris also refers to Ariel Sharon’s Apartheid Wall, stating, “Something like a cage has to be built for them [the Palestinian]. I know that sounds terrible. It is really cruel. But there is no choice. There is a wild animal there that has to be locked up in one way or another.”

## GAZA

The Gaza Strip, Palestine is roughly the size of Detroit, Michigan, and is home to over 2 million Palestinian People. Since 2007, Palestinians in Gaza have lived under a devastating blockade, routine bombing campaigns, and a brutal Israeli military siege from land, sea, and air. 50% of the population are below the age of 15 years old and [have lived an entire lifetime under siege](#). Before the Zionist occupation, Gaza was another district in Historic Palestine. Today it is the largest open-air prison in the world, forcibly isolated from other parts of Palestine and the rest of the world. The living conditions in the Gaza Strip are notorious: [a United Nations report from 2012 stated that by 2020 Gaza would be uninhabitable](#) due to lack of access to clean water, reliable electricity, inadequate health services, and chronic malnutrition. [Today between 97-99% of the water in the Gaza Strip is unfit for consumption](#) and the health system is impending collapse. In 2006, an aide to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon stated that Israel would “put Palestinians on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger”, [accompanied by a calorie counting for all residents of Gaza, which was implemented](#).

But like the fires we build after a relative’s passing, so do the fires of resistance burn, even in the deepest trenches of injustice. Between March 30th, 2018, Land Day, and December 2019, the Great March of Return erupted from Gaza, with Palestinians inside of the Gaza Strip marching towards the Israeli separation barriers that barricade Palestinians inside the besieged zone. This weekly demonstration became the largest popular mobilization of Palestinians since the Second Intifada—the Palestinian popular uprising against the state of Israel from 2000-2005. The Great March of Return is a protest demanding the end of the blockade and the Right of Return for Palestinians to all of Palestine; [it is a “scream for life so that we may leave the walls of our prison” said Ahmed Abu Artema](#). It is also an ask that the rest of the world demand the same. This spirit of resistance and constant organizing for their liberation is something that we must also grasp onto and support wholeheartedly. Because the liberation of Palestine is the liberation of ourselves.

## LANDBACK AND THE RIGHT OF RETURN

The Right of Return and LANDBACK are both promises that harbor the same meaning- that we will outlast colonial governments and laws imposed on us and our Relatives, and live in right relations back where we are from. How land is stolen in Palestine is no different than how land is stolen here. There is a story told by a Palestinian elder, Yacoub Odeh, about his village, Lifta. It is one of the many villages that were invaded and ethnically cleansed during the Nakba, and Yacoub is alive to see his now-abandoned village, alive and breathing, with all of its people still barred from returning. 74 years later, Yacoub tells stories of his aunts and uncles pressing olives for olive oil, his mother making bread and cakes in the ovens, and celebrations held in the village plaza; he tells stories of why the fight to save Lifta is connected to the larger struggle for Palestinian liberation and return, and of sacrifice to struggle against oppression. This place once home to hundreds of Palestinian families less than 80 years ago, is now considered a National Park. [But people like Yacoub are still fighting to return home and organizing for a future where the new generations of Palestinians from Lifta can live dignified lives on their homelands](#).

The Palestinian Bedouin village of al-Araqib, in the Naqab desert, is another story. It is a village home to 22 Palestinian families whose infrastructure is made of wood and plastic- because of limited resources available to them [and the discriminatory israeli jurisdiction that they live under, which classifies them as trespassers on “state land”](#). Since 2010, [the village has faced 192 demolitions by israeli forces](#) as one of 51 “unrecognized” Palestinian villages in the area [that are being targeted for demolition to make room for new towns for Jewish residents in their place](#). The israeli water authority [charges Bedouin Palestinians the highest water rates in the ‘48 territories](#) as if they are wasting water by using it to live, at the same time that they [grab more land through forestation](#) for new state parks and take the water around these villages for polluting israeli industry. Neither the 11 demolitions served during the coronavirus pandemic nor the demolitions served during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, were enough for these Palestinians to move. However many times al-Araqib has been demolished, it has been rebuilt.

Similar stories and determinations are heard by Lakota elders when talking about The He Sapa (Black Hills), or Pueblo, Diné, and Hopi elders talking about Bears Ears, or Kanaka Maoli people talking about Mauna Kea. Public lands, National Parks, private lands, Federal lands, and State lands, are all stolen land. Look at “Yosemite National Park”: before 1890, it was home to the Ahwahnechee People, not a National Park. The California Gold Rush, tourism, and settler violence contributed to the restriction of resources for the Ahwahnechee People, and eventually the destruction of their homes and livelihoods in the Yosemite Valley. The argument the united states had for the removal of the Ahwahnechee was to [“purify”](#) and preserve the land by turning it into a National Park, as if Indigenous Peoples were the problem. National Parks are still used to keep Indigenous Peoples from returning home. However, the fight to reclaim territories and federal recognition continues today.

When Indigenous Peoples exclaim LANDBACK, it is because we understand what it means to live in good relationship with the land, air, water, and our non-human relatives. The climate crisis and water scarcity are examples of why giving LANDBACK to Indigenous Peoples is the solution to climate mitigation. When Indigenous Peoples make up less than 5% of the world’s population but protect 80% of the world’s biodiversity, then the solution is easy. Settler nations like the so-called united states and so-called israel claim to do everything to protect the environment, yet they continue to genocide and bar the Peoples who have been protecting the environment for millennia; a process known as greenwashing.

Olive trees are targeted by the israeli state for their economic importance, their placement as a food and resource staple for Palestinian people, and their deep relationship to Palestinian heritage, culture, and tradition. We do not know how many olive trees have been uprooted since the Nakba of 1948. However, we do know that since 1967 over 1 million olive trees have been uprooted by the israeli military –a process that parallels the intentional killing of millions of Plains buffalo for the exact same purpose of severing the cultural, economic and spiritual relationship with the Indigeous Peoples of the Plains.



Actions such as these are at the heart of these settler projects. Today, the so-called state of Israel under the guise of environmentalism plants foreign trees in place of the Indigenous olive trees. Early examples include the depopulation and forestation of the largest village in Galilee, Saffuriyeh, in 1948, now called Tzipori National Park. Additionally, the so-called state of Israel intentionally covers terraced farming land where Palestinians have grown food for centuries. [Not only do these foreign trees interrupt the natural cycle by killing the landscape, but they also serve as fuel for wildfires, contributing to global warming.](#) The famous and destructive Carmel Forest Fire was notably from the oily European pine trees that Israel planted in droves. The other purpose for planting these invasive species is to mask the genocide and stop Palestinians from resettling villages that have been ethnically cleansed. Of the 68 parks and forests Israel and the Jewish National Fund have planted, 46 of them are directly on top of Palestinian villages. The mask of forestation is nothing more than a mechanism for land grabs, while simultaneously covering up the massacres, ethnic cleansing practices, and preventing Palestinians from returning to their villages.

Having land returned to the Indigenous Peoples and having us return to the land, is what will save the world. The knowledge we possess is for the continual existence of a healthy planet, even after we pass on. And for us to return, we must continue to resist and defend for future generations. The Right of Return is LANDBACK.

## **DECOLONIZE**

### **zionism, Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy, and Imperialism**

We should not treat the struggles we face against Zionism, white supremacy, and imperialism as separate from one another, because they act as one to oppress and eliminate us. Only through solidarity and fighting for justice, can we create change for our people and Mother Earth. Understanding that the Zionist settler project requires the elimination, removal, banishment, and identity theft of Palestinians on their homelands is the same formula that U.S. settlers use in our communities. Zionism has a few founding narratives: the idea that those who develop the land own the land; claims that Israel is a superior nation granted by God and ordained by a higher power to Jewish people alone; and that Palestine was barren just seven decades ago. These same ideologies are akin to how white supremacists view themselves here in the so-called United States. Their altered reality to justify their hierarchy and hegemony in the world is exactly why our existence poses a threat. Even now, they frame us, Native people and Palestinian people, as people who are extinct, unsalvageable, or who have been abandoned by the progression of time. The claim Zionists make towards Palestinians as violent and destructive people today is the same narrative that was used against Indigenous Peoples during the formation of the United States. In the same ways Manifest Destiny has authorized the genocide and removal of Indigenous Peoples in the so-called United States based on divinity and superiority, so too does the Zionist settler project. During the Indian Removal Act of 1830, Andrew Jackson stated to Congress:

*"And is it supposed that the wandering savage has a stronger attachment to his home than the settled, civilized Christian? Is it more afflicting to him to leave the graves of his fathers than it is to our brothers and children? Rightly considered, the policy of the General Government toward the red man is not only liberal, but generous. He is unwilling to submit to the laws of the States and mingle with their population. To save him from this alternative, or perhaps utter annihilation, the General Government kindly offers him a new home, and proposes to pay the whole expense of his removal and settlement."*

Almost 100 years later in 1923, Vladimir Jabotinsky, the founder of the Zionist Revisionist movement that was key in the establishment of the state of Israel, stated about Native and Palestinian people:

*“Culturally they are five hundred years behind us, they have neither our endurance nor our determination... We may tell them whatever we like about the innocence of our aims, watering them down and sweetening them with honeyed words to make them palatable, but they know what we want, as well as we know what they do not want. They feel at least the same instinctive jealous love of Palestine, as the old Aztecs felt for ancient Mexico, and the Sioux for their rolling prairies.”*

These statements by both settler colonial leaders of their respective settler colonial nations highlight their racist and genocidal ideologies. They believe their settler projects as superior to Indigenous Peoples, their societies, and that settlers are the rightful benefactors of our lands and territories. Although the American settlers and the Israeli settlers diminish our power as Indigenous Peoples in words, in reality they live with the constant fear of our power. They know we are the last stumbling block that prevents them from full control, access, and power over our lands in order to secure the Nation State. So long as we exist, resist, and demand LANDBACK, from this generation and all those generations after us, the settler lives in constant paranoia that their deed of extermination is not yet complete. LANDBACK is not a lost battle, it is one we are able to win; this fact is why it is important that we must continue to resist, and resist together. The first prime minister of Israel, Ben-Gurion, wrote to his son “we must expel the Arabs and take their place”. Palestinians counter this every day by teaching their children who they are and uplifting not just their cultural rights but their political rights to the Palestinian Nation, from inside Palestine to those living three generations in exile.

In its desperation for legitimacy, so-called Israel claims that Judaism is equivalent to Zionism or the idea that all Jewish people must hold Zionist ideology and must conflate themselves with an Israeli identity. This is wrong. Jewish people are not a monolith; Zionism, as mentioned above, was a colonial response to European antisemitism and does not get to claim that it represents all Jewish people. The [International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network](#) (IJAN) notes that Zionism was a fringe movement in its beginning stages, and many European Jewish individuals and collectives opposed it. There are many Jewish people who are proud of their anti-Zionist politics today and who stand in solidarity with Palestinians. In fact, as [Jewish Voices for Peace](#) states, it is anti-Semitic to claim that all Jewish people are aligned with the aims or goals of the Zionist movement or the state of Israel. The so-called state of Israel attempts to claim that it is the sole speaker for Jewish people all around the world, as one of its main claims to legitimacy. We wholeheartedly reject this assertion and stand with our Jewish siblings in struggle who refute Zionism and speak out against the forced alignment of Israeli state policies with the diverse Jewish communities and peoples of the world.

The years the initial Nakba took place are the same years the United States and the United Nations recognized Israel as a nation-state in 1948. Since Israel's inception and establishment of its military by generals and soldiers of marauding Zionist militias, it has been heavily invested in and developed by the United States. This partnership has greatly advanced how both racist settler colonial states have assaulted and murdered Native, Palestinian, Black, Brown and/or undocumented, poor, and working-class communities.

The United States is the number one supplier of military aid to Israel, [providing](#) over \$146 billion in one year, the largest sum of aid from the U.S. to any country in the world. In a 2022 omnibus spending package, the United States included and approved \$4.8 billion in military aid to Israel—to put this into perspective, the 2022 fiscal year U.S. Department of Interior budget for Indian Affairs Programs was \$4.2 billion. The giant walls used to separate Palestinian families are what gave inspiration to the United States and white supremacists to support the U.S.-Mexico border walls—walls that run through Kumeyaay, Yaqui, and O’odham lands, separating their families and forcing children into cages. [An Israeli weapons company is contracted with the U.S. to establish panopticon towers along the border](#), built from the prototype that has been tested on Palestinians along the Apartheid Wall since its construction.

[The militarization of Indian Country by the United States military](#), the enslavement of and routine violence against Black people, and the following decades of state violence and mass incarceration of Indigenous, Black, Brown, migrant, poor and working-class people by the United States, all became tactics that were taken, studied, and innovated upon Palestinians. Israeli weapons, military tactics, and technologies of control are exported all over the world. [The United States police department-Israeli military exchange programs](#), which creates a pipeline for those same tactics to be used on us and our siblings in struggle here in the United States, is a blatant example. Many of the tactics used in Standing Rock and Ferguson were contemporarily incubated and tested on Palestinians and victims of U.S. aggression across the Middle East and shipped back to the U.S.

Understanding the colonial process and the relationships our colonizers have with each other, is as important as how we build relationships with one another and learn how to undo what settler colonialism has caused.

## **DEVELOP**

Palestinians have a saying, Shab Wahad, or one people, “many branches, one root,” meaning that despite the different families we represent, the villages we come from, or the different experiences we have, we are of the same people and of the same earth. Additionally, this also means when we come together we are stronger. This understanding of communalism is also the spirit of internationalist solidarity that Palestinians have demonstrated to the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island. During the 1974 Treaty Council meetings at Standing Rock, Palestinians supported AIM in providing security. In 2016, Palestinian youth showed up at Standing Rock in solidarity with the No DAPL Movement. Palestinians showed up for Wet’suwet’en Relatives to block the Coastal Gaslink pipeline from illegally crossing their territories. And then on July 4th of 2021, in Rapid City, SD, a Palestinian Relative was one of 4 people to hang an upside-down U.S. flag with ‘LANDBACK’ written across. This was a statement to the town known as “The City of Presidents,” that this land is not their land, and it will be returned to the Original Peoples.

When confronted with genocide, ethnic cleansing, and apartheid at the hands of what seems to be an endlessly resourced settler colonial government, we and our Palestinian siblings developed a deeper relationship with each other. We developed and innovated new tactics, strategies, and education to resist. The ideas of individualism and liberalism will not liberate our people, and our solidarity with each other and other colonized people is what directly challenges these settler ideals. It is also this deep understanding of communalism that ties our people together, beyond struggle. As Palestinians have been exiled and prevented from returning home because of the Nakba, Israeli laws, and lack of political will from the International community, the lands they have fled to are often our own communities and lands on Turtle Island. But the gift they give us—international solidarity—means that our struggle is their struggle and their win is our win.

## CONCLUSION/COMMITMENTS

There is attempted occupation of the mind and of the information that can be taught to the next generation about our histories and our own People. The prevention of educating our own, by our own, is a history we, Native People, know far too well, dating back to boarding schools. The rewriting of, appropriation, and banning of teaching our own ways is an age-old colonial tactic. These attacks are not mutually exclusive. Today, Palestinians have no autonomy over their educational materials or curriculum. Zionism specifically undermines Palestinian modes of knowledge production all over the world. During the Nakba and throughout every confrontation with Palestinians historically, Zionist militias have targeted Palestinian libraries and archives.

“The old will die and the young will forget” is a statement that Ben Gurion is said to have written to his son about the future neutralization of the “Palestinian problem”. Akin to the “kill the Indian in him, Save the man,” statement by Capt. Richard Pratt. Now, more than ever, telling our own and each others’ stories is crucial for survival. We not only have to be in solidarity with each other, we have to see each other in our struggles and defend, develop and decolonize with every fiber of our being.

When Palestine is free, we are all free. Although our Peoples come from different nations and geographies, the struggles against settler colonialism are the same. Not because we or our struggles are the same but because settler colonialists share playbooks. So it must be and will be our commitment to support calls to action when they arise, expanding on the history of solidarity our people have had with Palestinians, and holding our communities and leaders accountable when they make pro-Zionist, pro-Israel, and pro-settler colonial statements. It must also be our commitment to share and enact tactics to defend our communities, like the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions ([BDS](#)) movement, freeing our political prisoners— in Palestine and on Turtle Island, endorsing the statements of our siblings in struggle, investing in our youth, going through every single legal apparatus to return land/homes, international solidarity work, and building spaces on our own land for learning. The Palestinian cause is not just a Palestinian issue. It is not a complicated issue. It is a cause that we must all unite under. We recognize the Palestinians as Indigenous Peoples with an Indigenous connection and right to their ancestral land. We recognize Israel as an illegal settler colonial state that has inflicted and continues to inflict immeasurable violence on the Palestinian People and should be held accountable in all measures. When Palestine is free, so are we. When we fight for LANDBACK, let it also be for the return of Palestinians onto theirs. From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be Free.