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Palestine

Declaration of Fourth International on Palestine

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The following declaration on Palestine was adopted by the International Committee of the Fourth International in Amsterdam on 24 February 2015.

Situation

1) The year 2014 was characterized in Israel and the Palestinian territories by a deepening of the dynamics that had been at work during the two preceding decades. Israel strengthened its hold on Gaza and the West Bank. Jewish settlement continued and sped up. Repression of the Palestinians was uninterrupted, and accompanied by intermittent, targeted, extremely violent military attacks, with a new level reached in the last bloody attack on Gaza in summer 2014. The political and economic strangulation of Palestinian society continued, as did the rightward radicalization of Israeli society and politics.

2) These dynamics had already been manifest before the Oslo accords of 1993-94. The long-term process of expropriation of Palestinian land and ethnic cleansing had been proceeding all along, on a shifting scale and at varying tempos in different conjunctures. But the situation today can only be understood by taking account of the changes made with the introduction of 'Palestinian autonomy'. This period has seen an end of the direct Israeli military occupation of the main Palestinian population centres. Direct occupation has been replaced by the Palestinian Authority (PA), a Palestinian politico-administrative and repressive apparatus. In the process, the Palestinian refugees outside historic Palestine have been marginalized.

3) The 'peace process', and thus the tasks assigned to the PA, were rife with intrinsic contradictions. They were meant to contain Palestinian demands through the distribution of international aid, backed up by repression. But given the lack of any real political advances, the contradictions exploded in September 2000 with the outbreak of the Second Intifada. This revolt manifested the refusal of broad layers of Palestinian society to keep silent in the face of the so-called 'peace process' and faced with an unprecedented acceleration of the colonization: in reality a thinly veiled restructuring of the Israeli occupation. The uprising further increased the visibility of the divisions at the PA's summit between, on the one hand, those who advocated trying to maintain an implausible balance between struggling against the occupation and collaborating with the occupation authorities, and, on the other hand, those who supported unqualified integration into the colonial system.

4) Israel repressed the Intifada by liquidating or arresting thousands of resistance fighters, the majority of whom came from Fatah. This violent repression strengthened the most capitulationist currents of the Palestinian leadership. Yasser Arafat's death and his replacement by Mahmoud Abbas were the visible expression of the new balance of forces. Since 2005, under the direction of Abbas and his old and new associates, the PA has fully played the role of an auxiliary of the Israeli occupation forces. This has been apparent, notably, in the reorganization of the Palestinian security services under US tutelage. In addition, pushed forward by former high IMF official Salam Fayyad as PA prime minister, the PA sped up and completed the Palestinian economy's integration into and subjection to the world capitalist system and its chief local representative: Israel. While there are still, within the Palestinian Authority's apparatus nationalist sectors coming from Fatah hostile to co-management with the occupying power they are more and more marginalized.

5) The victory of Hamas (the Islamic Resistance Movement) in the 2006 legislative elections was a new, albeit deformed, expression of the refusal of the majority of Palestinian society to submit to Western and Israeli orders or to give any political support to the PA's capitulationist and corrupt leadership. Most Palestinians did not identify the PA

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leadership with Fatah, however: while the PA's rulers were defeated in individual constituencies, Fatah as an organization obtained a percentage of the national party list vote that was only slightly lower than Hamas'.

6) Hamas' victory was followed by its complete seizure of power in the Gaza Strip in reaction to Fatah leader Mohammed Dahlan's attempted putsch, which had the direct or indirect support of the US, Egypt and Israel. But this exposed Hamas to the contradictions of Oslo. There are increasingly visible divisions within Hamas between advocates of resistance to Israel, including armed resistance – and thus of confrontation with the Abbas leadership – and those who support rapprochement with the Abbas leadership (and thus a 'cold peace' with Israel).

7) Hamas faces the same problem that Fatah confronted in the first years of Palestinian autonomy: the tension between co-managing structures integrated into the system of occupation and at the same time continuing the struggle against occupation. So far, Hamas has managed to maintain its unity by combining the clientelist management of its mini-state apparatus in Gaza with the direction of the armed struggle (alongside other Palestinian organizations but with far more visibility and on a greater scale than the others), particularly in response to Israeli aggression. This has enabled Hamas to maintain its legitimacy, both among those who have benefited directly from the movement's institutionalization (by appropriating some of the revenues of the mini-state apparatus) – who support more peaceful relations with Israel – and among those in the most marginalized layers of the population (especially in the refugee camps) who oppose any form of peaceful relations with Israel.

8) This precarious equilibrium also rests on a discourse – the reactionary utopia of an Islamic state in Palestine, whose extent in space and time remains deliberately unspecified – that makes it possible to unite social categories with divergent, even contradictory material interests. Hamas has no monopoly on religious ideology, and this is not the main line of cleavage in Palestinian politics. But religion is central for Hamas, and is manifested in the movement's projects and practices: the marginalization of women, the substitution of religion for politics, the confusion between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism, etc. Looking beyond the clear need for inclusive frameworks that allow unity in struggle among different currents of the Palestinian resistance, this underlines the necessity of a political leadership that can provide an alternative to Hamas.

9) The Palestinian left (the PFLP, DFLP and PPP and Mustafa Barghouti's current) is not capable today of forming the necessary alternative. It is divided between advocates of total (in the case of the PPP) or partial (in the case of the DFLP) integration into the PA and the devotees (in the case of the PFLP) of national unity between Hamas and the Abbas leadership. The left is thus paying the price for its ambiguous attitude towards the 'peace process'. Unlike the PPP, the DFLP and PFLP formally opposed the Oslo accords. But their leaderships' insistence on the legitimacy of the PLO led them to mute some of their criticisms. Their failure to undertake the construction of a 'third force' left Hamas with the mantle of the only credible opposition, first to Arafat, then to Abbas. In view of this lack of perspectives, many of the left's cadres and activists gradually reoriented to NGO work. While their work has often been essential, it contributes, as long as it is not linked to the construction of a political alternative, to the depoliticization and NGO-ization of Palestinian society.

10) Meanwhile, the rightward radicalization of Israeli society and politics is continuing. Recent Israeli governments, dominated by racist, anti-democratic, far right forces, have continued and sped up the policies of settlement, repression and ethnic cleansing, directed against the Palestinians not only in the West Bank and (minus the settlements) in the Gaza Strip but also within pre-1967 Israel. The Israeli centre and centre-left have shared responsibility for these developments, either by participating in coalition governments or through their silent complicity in these policies. The 'peace movement' is paying the price for its orientation towards the Labour Party. Only small anti-colonialist groups are now really taking on the task of struggling against all the dimensions of Israeli colonialism and of full-fledged solidarity with the Palestinians. Unfortunately, they are a small minority in Israeli society today. They face growing repression and harassment from the Israeli state and from far right groups.

11) These developments, taken as a whole, and the shift in the relationship of forces to the Palestinians' disadvantage, can only be fully understood and analyzed by situating them in their regional and international context. The Israeli state is in fact an integral part, politically and economically, of the world imperialist order. It benefits from open backing or indirect support from virtually all the Western countries. The tensions which exist between the Obama administration and the Netanyahu government do not lead to any pressure on Israel; the USA, weakened in the region, cannot enter into open confrontation with their Israeli ally. Even some states that are more critical of Israeli policies, like Brazil, Turkey or even China, are continuing to step up their military and commercial ties with Israel. The recent votes in several European countries recommending recognition of a Palestinian state may express irritation at Israeli violence, arrogance and stubbornness and more and more marked isolation of the state of Israel, but they have not led to any real change in the diplomatic balance of forces. The Arab revolutionary process, which had raised the possibility of a break in the Palestinians' regional isolation, is going through a period of retreat with the rise of counter-revolution in its different forms, both repressive regimes and Islamic fundamentalism. The process has not been defeated and the region is far from being stabilized and new developments are to be expected, particularly in Syria and Egypt which could have an impact on the Palestinian situation. The revolutionary ebb is currently benefiting the Israeli state, due both to extreme forms of rivalry among the Arab countries and to growing collaboration with Israel by several Arab states: Egypt, Jordan, the Gulf states, etc. The Palestinians' isolation, contrasted with the widespread, strong support enjoyed by Israel, underscores all the more the vital necessity of international solidarity, as the key to changing the relationship of forces.

Tasks

12) For almost three years now, we have been witnessing a tactical shift by the Palestinian leadership led by Abbas: it has decided to appeal directly to the international institutions, thus partially freeing itself from the constraints of the Oslo framework. The PA has thus asked to join the UN and various bodies linked to it, acceded to the International Criminal Court (ICC), tried to make the UN adopt a resolution imposing a calendar for Israeli military withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967, etc. The failure of this last attempt shows the limits of the tactical shift. So does the threat of financial sanctions hanging over the PA, mainly by the US and Israel, especially if the PA pursues its appeal to the ICC. This would paralyze the functioning of the Palestinian institutions.

13) The conclusion is nonetheless unavoidable that these initiatives reveal an increased awareness by part of the Palestinian leadership that the 'peace process' and bilateral negotiations under US tutelage have led to a dead end. Even so, Abbas and his associates do not for the time being explicitly envisage a formal break with the Oslo accords. Rather, they aim to improve the relationship of forces with Israel. These initiatives also reflect, though in a distorted way, the aspiration of a steadily growing proportion of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories to escape from the cage of a 'peace process' that is making the prospect of satisfying the Palestinians' national rights more remote every day.

14) It is this realization in particular that guided the Palestinians who in July 2005 launched the civil society appeal for boycott, divestment and sanctions. Without taking a position on a long-term solution, they noted the failure of the strategy of negotiations and the unbalanced relationship of forces, and set the goal of isolating the state of Israel politically, economically and diplomatically until such time as the Palestinians' national rights are achieved. BDS is thus meant to escape from the logic of bilateral negotiations and of an 'acceptable compromise'. Its aim is to develop mechanisms that will force Israel, which until now has stubbornly refused to speak any other language than the language of force, to change course. It is also a question of breaking with the logic of military confrontation with Israel, a dead end for the Palestinians, and to combine external pressure and the new development of a popular movement within the country.

15) BDS gives the international solidarity movement a key tool to denounce and pressurize not only the state of

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Israel, but also other states that are complicit in the occupation, as well as the big capitalist multinationals that profit from it by participating directly or indirectly in the economic exploitation of the Palestinian territories. In the last decade, especially in the wake of the massacres in Gaza in the winter of 2008-2009, BDS has made steady progress on an international scale. It has become a central activity of the solidarity movement and has won some significant victories, mainly in the areas of boycotts and divestment.

16) The Palestinian initiators of the BDS campaign rely on the creativity and tactical sense of the international solidarity movements, so that they take account in each country of the different possible aspects and levels of BDS suitable to specific national and regional realities. In different countries and regions, therefore, different demands can be highlighted, favouring demands which could have a real impact on Israel: suspension of the EU-Israel agreement, an immediate end to Egyptian participation in the blockade of Gaza and the opening of the Rafah crossing, an arms embargo, an end to military and economic cooperation with Israel (for example on the extraction of gas in the Mediterranean), the freeing of prisoners – particularly child prisoners etc. The key thing, apart from tactical adaptations, is to reject any concession on the fundamental demands, and to insist that BDS will only stop with the full and entire achievement of Palestinian national rights as a whole, including the rights of Palestinians in the 1967 territories, of the Palestinians in pre-1967 Israel and the Palestinian refugees in exile outside historic Palestine.

17) Through and over and above the BDS campaign we should especially emphasize the reinforcement of contacts, links and partnerships between different social and labour movements – trade unions, peasant movements, the feminist movement, the LGBTI movement, human rights movements, the progressive Christian movements, etc. – with their Palestinian counterparts. These partnerships directly benefit the Palestinians by breaking their isolation, and by enabling solidarity movements to root themselves more deeply in national and regional social and political dynamics, widening their social base and audience. The chaos created by the counter-revolution in the region in the region has strengthened the logic of exodus of Palestinian refugees towards, in particular, Europe: taking into account this new fact should be a preoccupation of the solidarity movement linked with the movements of defence of migrants' and refugees' rights. The criminalization of the BDS movement and more largely the solidarity movement among other, and particularly in France, it also a new fact that we should take up in building as broad and unitive mobilizations as possible.

18) We should of course combat any form of racism, including Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, within the movement in solidarity with the Palestinians, and reject any form of collaboration with extreme right forces. The recent events in Paris and Copenhagen during which Jewish people were deliberately assassinated, underline the need to struggle against all forms of stigmatization on religious or ethnic bases, and the importance of the presence of anti-occupations Jewish movements and networks within the solidarity movement. This implies developing a solidarity movement that is firmly wedded to principles. In imperialist countries, this does not however rule out an inclusive and proactive approach towards people of Arab and/or Muslim culture, who often provide some of the main bases of support for solidarity. On the contrary, solidarity movements should work towards or deepen their collaboration with forces representing these groups, including Muslim movements and grassroots organizations, insofar as unity is possible without abandoning such fundamental principles as the reject of any confessional approach to the Palestinian question and any instrumentalization of solidarity in the service of religion.

19) Finally, it is important to establish and cultivate ties with the forces of the Palestinian left, in all their diversity, without posing any preconditions. This dialogue should focus, on the one hand, on forms of joint work that are possible within the international solidarity movement and, on the other hand, on perspectives for the recomposition of the anti-imperialist left on a regional and international scale and on the contribution that we can make to this process, in particular in defending our revolutionary Marxist point of view. In this connection, the joint meetings and declarations of the revolutionary left organizations of the Arab region provide precious support, even if we may sometimes consider them imperfect and/or insufficiently representative. It is our task to build them, strengthen them and broaden them, while respecting pluralism and allowing for tactical divergences. In the solidarity movement with

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Palestinians, we should fight against any attempt to counterpose the regional revolutionary process and the Palestinian struggle, in particular in recalling the historical hostility of the regimes in the region to the Palestinians' demands, and underlining the complementarity between the struggle against the Israel and the struggle against the regimes. The combination between the Palestinian struggle and the other struggles for emancipation should also be particularly highlighted in our educational system, including and particularly in the IIRE schools.

20) In all these struggles and discussions, we will uphold the demands included in the resolution of the FI's 2010 World Congress: unconditional, immediate and total retreat by the Israeli army from the territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem; the dismantling of all colonies built since 1967; destruction of the separation wall; liberation of the political prisoners held by Israel; immediate and unconditional lifting of the blockade of Gaza – as initial steps towards a political solution based on equal rights. We support the struggle of the Palestinian people in all its forms for the attainment of their rights: the right to self-determination without any external interference; the right of return for the refugees or compensation for those who demand it; equal rights for the Palestinians of 1948. Furthermore, we reaffirm the necessity of the emancipation of the Arab peoples, of the dismantling of the Zionist state, which represents a racist and colonialist project at the service of imperialism, in favour of a political solution in which all the peoples of Palestine (Palestinian and Israeli Jewish) can live together in full equality of rights.