

<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article791>



Palestine

“We will return to the land from which we were expelled”

- IV Online magazine - 2005 - IV367 - May 2005 -

Publication date: Monday 23 May 2005

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

Yahya Abu Safi is a Palestinian refugee living in Baqa'a Camp, the world's biggest Palestinian refugee camp near Amman in Jordan, where he was born. He is the spokesperson for the Popular Committees for the Defence of the Right of Return. Interview by Luke Stobart and David San MartÃ-n carried out at the Third Cairo Conference against Globalization, Imperialism and Zionism, March 2005.

How long have people been living at the Baqa'a Camp?

People first went to the Baqa'a camp as a result of the first big Zionist expulsions in 1948. First they built refugee camps in the West Bank and Jordan valley, but after the 1967 war the refugees were forced to move east, finally creating the Baqa'a camp near Amman.

The Zionists say that the historical basis to their project is the suffering of the Jews in Europe. Our people are suffering now and have already been the victims of two big waves of forced emigration: in 1948, with massacres and expulsions, and in 1967, with another war and wave of expulsions. Sharon's criminal wall is aiming to induce a third wave of emigration by making Palestinians' lives impossible where their homes are.

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/baqaa483.jpg>]

Baqa'a - the world's biggest Palestinian camp

What are the main objectives of the Popular Committees?

Defending the right of return for all Palestinian refugees and opposing all forms of integration of refugees outside Palestine. We inform the refugee community in Jordan about the danger of integration projects, the importance of the right of return and the basic rights of the Palestinian people. Lastly our aim is to form an international Arab coalition to defend the right of return.

What do you do to achieve these objectives?

We perform popular activities on the ground. For example, we are doing a campaign of visits to Palestinian refugee families in which we meet them and talk to them about the right of return and current issues related to such. We organize activities to explain the right of return, such as lectures, discussion forums and the printing of leaflets and pamphlets; and we hold seminars for children and youths on this subject and Palestinian culture.

The first international initiative we participated in was with the Arab Cause Solidarity Committee (ACSC), who ran a camp for refugee children in Asturias, Spain. We found this way of working to be very efficient, so we started to apply the same idea locally.

Next month, the PCDRR is holding a general congress on the right of return, which will take place in a refugee camp in Jordan -probably Baqa'a.

What are the relations like between the PCDRR and the Jordanian government?

There is no relation. If at all, it is a relation between authority and opposition. We are in the opposition in Jordan because the Jordanian regime is like any other pro-imperialist Arab dictatorship and supports the imperialist occupation projects. A small example of this is that the first two missiles launched against Iraq during the latest war were fired from a Jordanian aircraft carrier. Another example is that when Palestinians from refugee camps in Jordan

“We will return to the land from which we were expelled”

go to join the national liberation struggle in Palestine, they first have to deal with the Jordanian Army patrolling the borders. I know that many young people that reached the borders had to come back because they didn't want to fight against Jordanian soldiers, who are Arabs too. A regime of that nature must be a pro-imperialist regime.

The media in the Spanish State are talking positively about the “peace” negotiations between Ariel Sharon and the new Palestinian premier Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen). What are your thoughts on these?

I would expect the official Spanish media to treat the negotiations positively, but I would imagine that the Spanish public have the same reservations that we have about an unjust “peace” coming from meetings between Abbas and Sharon. I don't hold out any hopes that a man like Sharon, with his bloody record, can make peace with Abbas or with any other Palestinian. We reject any kind of peace within the framework of the occupation; and the Spanish media and the Spanish people shouldn't forget that the central problem is the Zionist occupation of Arab land.

What is the response by the Palestinian resistance outside the Occupied Territories to this “peace process”?

Firstly I'd like to make clear that Palestinians, wherever they live -whether outside or inside Palestine-, desire peace. We have the human right to live in peace; it is inhuman to be in an eternal stage of killing or being killed. It is our right to drink coffee with milk and sugar and not with blood. By that, I mean we have a right to a normal life.

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/qacamp2.jpg>]

Children play in the dusty camp streets

If our situation wasn't clear before, now we have modern forms of communication, which can be used to show who is really acting violently: who is really killing and expelling people (which is also a form of violence).

It is important to point out that as long as the occupation remains, there will never be peace, because you can't have peace under occupation.

Another important point is that our anti-Zionist liberation project will continue in the future, as it is part of an older anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle, and the Zionist project is part of the colonial project. The Zionist project will be defeated through the defeat of the colonial project.

What forms does the struggle take?

We are confronting any attempt to take away Palestinian rights and the right of return. To do so, we use a variety of methods: The main method is the armed struggle, which is very important for the Palestinian resistance in the “Territories”. This resistance is not an isolated phenomenon; it is part of a wider resistance against injustice and complements the Iraqi resistance against the imperialist project in our region. So we are talking about one single resistance.

Resistance also takes place on a political and legal level: we are confronting all of the attempts to eliminate the Palestinian right of return and attempts to legitimize the occupation of Iraq. We are fighting on all levels.

To complement our fight on an international level, there is the struggle by the international forces of freedom, such as the very effective initiative in Spain.

Does participating in the Palestinian elections mean legitimising the occupation?

Under the present conditions, yes.

Would you accept returning to a Palestinian State neighbouring Israel?

“We will return to the land from which we were expelled”

No. For us there is only a historical Palestine, which was occupied; and we will return to the land from which we were expelled.

Does the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) represent the whole of the Palestinian community, including Palestinians in exile?

No, the Palestinian Diaspora never had the right to participate in the PNA elections.

If the PNA isn't the main political reference point for the Palestinian community as a whole, what then is the main political authority for the Palestinians?

The political reference point is the fixed rights of the Palestinian people and these are non-negotiable. The rights are outlined in the PLO national charter.

What can people in the Spanish state do to help your struggle?

Firstly we know that the Spanish are an educated people with a long history and that you shouldn't believe the simple lies spread by the media. You must seek the truth, and now the new media allow a better contact with the forces fighting for rights in Palestine. Secondly we also need solidarity groups, because we have a common resistance against injustice and tyranny. Lastly as the child of a refugee camp, I would like to invite any Spanish person to come and visit us in the camps and see what things really are like.