

Debunking ‘The Israeli Palestinian Conflict: 10 Myths Preventing Peace’

Author: Jeremy R. Hammond, Mar 22, 2019

<https://www.jeremyrhammond.com/2019/03/22/debunking-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict-10-myths-preventing-peace/>

The Jerusalem Institute of Justice's video "*The Israeli Palestinian Conflict: 10 Myths Preventing Peace*" is a work of propaganda that only perpetuates lies. This article is intended to offer a differing and opposing view of life in Palestine.

This is a link to the original video: <https://youtu.be/GdtGOY8T5XE>

The above video, titled "*The Israeli Palestinian Conflict: 10 Myths Preventing Peace*", was [produced](#) by Calev Myers, the founder of the Jerusalem Institute of Justice. This organization passes itself off as a "human rights group", but in his video, Myers demonstrates that he has no interest in upholding human rights. He purports to debunk ten "myths" about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but far from properly informing people about the issue, the video is a disgraceful work of propaganda in which Myers shamelessly and repeatedly lies in order to justify Israel's perpetual violations of Palestinians' human rights.

Myers begins by criticizing how most people simply blame one side or the other, suggesting that what's needed to determine a path to peace is to more objectively clear up misconceptions about the conflict. He then proceeds to hypocritically place the entirety of the blame for the conflict on the Palestinians and to propagate all the same misconceptions that have served to perpetuate the conflict for so long. So let's do what he falsely claims to do and properly clear up the real misconceptions about the ten issues his video raises.

“Myth” #1: “Israel illegally stole land from the Palestinians”

Myers claims that it isn't true that Israel stole land from the Palestinians, arguing that in 1947, "the UN voted to give land to both the Jews and the Palestinians", and that the Jews accepted their partition "and legally formed the state of Israel" while the Arabs rejected their partition and instead attacked Israel.

But Myers is lying. It is true that the UN General Assembly in 1947 passed Resolution 181 recommending that Palestine be partitioned into separate Jewish and Arab states. However, Myer's claim that the land was the UN's to give is false. Furthermore, the infamous "partition plan" was just a recommendation that was never implemented. The UN [had no authority](#) to partition Palestine against the will of the majority of its inhabitants. The grossly inequitable plan was premised upon the *rejection* of the majority Arabs' right to self-determination, essentially calling for Arab lands to be taken away and given to the Jews.

For starters, the plan called for the Jewish state to be comprised of more than half the land in Palestine even though Jews owned less than 7 percent of the land. Arabs owned more land than Jews

in every single district in Palestine. Arabs owned more land than Jews even within the proposed Jewish state than Jews did. Arabs also constituted a numerical majority within the proposed area of the Jewish state when the Bedouin population was counted.

The plan was *reasonably* rejected by the Arabs, and violence broke out. Contrary to Myers' lie, Resolution 181 neither partitioned Palestine nor conferred any legal authority to the Zionist leadership for their unilateral declaration of Israel's existence on May 14, 1948. It was after this action that the neighboring Arab states intervened by sending their military forces into Palestine. By that time, more than a quarter million Arabs had already been ethnically cleansed by Zionist military forces. By the time the war was over, more than 700,000 Arabs were [ethnically cleansed from their homes in Palestine](#) in order for the "Jewish state" to be established. Hundreds of Arab villages were literally wiped off the map, and Israel has always refused to permit Arab refugees to exercise their internationally recognized right to return to their homeland.

In sum, contrary to Myers' lying propaganda, the state of Israel was *not* established through any kind of legitimate political process, but through war and ethnic cleansing. The acquisition of territory by war is [prohibited under international law](#). So it isn't a myth that Israel illegally stole land from Arabs. It is a fact.

"Myth" #2: "The surrounding Arab nations actually want to create a Palestinian state"

Myers accurately notes that, following the 1948 war, the West Bank came under the administrative control of Jordan and the Gaza Strip under the control of Egypt. He argues that these two states never established a Palestinian state, but "kept the land for their own use".

But it wasn't the fault of Egypt and Jordan that the Palestinians weren't able to exercise their right to self-determination in their homeland. *It was the fault of the Zionists who ethnically cleansed them from their homes, systematically leveled their villages, stole their land, and refused to allow them to return.*

Egypt never claimed Gaza for itself. It is true that Jordan tried to annex the West Bank in 1950, but this annexation was never internationally recognized, and Jordan officially [gave up its claim](#) in 1988 to support the Palestinians' determination to establish a state of their own. As Jordan's King Hussein said at that time, "The independent Palestinian state will be established on the occupied Palestinian land after its liberation, God willing."

So much for Myers' lying propaganda.

"Myth" #3: "The Arab nations want to solve the refugee crisis"

Here, Myers argues that the Arab nations could solve the Palestinian refugee crisis immediately by granting them citizenship and equal rights. "Ironically," he adds, "the only country to grant them full citizenship rights is Israel, which absorbed 156,000 Arabs after the 1948 war."

Once again, Myers is lying. The mistreatment of Palestinian refugees by Arab states is a legitimate criticism. But the fact that Myers is attempting to deflect attention away from here is that *it is Israel that bears primary responsibility for the refugee crisis.*

Furthermore, far from accepting Palestinian refugees into Israel, as already noted, Israel has always *refused* to permit them to return *to their rightful homeland.*

The 156,000 Arabs he refers to weren't refugees who were "absorbed" by Israel after the war. *They were the remnant who remained following the Zionists' ethnic cleansing operations.* That is, they were the ones who *weren't* made refugees.

So much for Myers' despicable lie.

“Myth” #4: “UN efforts are helping to solve the refugee crisis”

Here Myers presents his own opinion as a fact. And his opinion is a most peculiar one. Indeed, it is downright Orwellian, as he argues that the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) hasn't helped solve the refugee crisis because it recognizes as refugees the Palestinians who today remain homeless because their families were ethnically cleansed in order for the "Jewish state" to be established. By implication, his solution to the refugee problem is to simply stop recognizing these displaced persons as refugees. Problem solved, in his twisted logic.

Of course, simply redefining these people as "not refugees" wouldn't solve a thing. The facts would remain that (1) they have a right to return to their homeland and (2) Israel refuses to allow them to do so.

“Myth” #5: “The solution is more money”

In this part of the video, Myers argues that the international community has given the Palestinians lots of money over the years, but "Where's the stable economy? Where's the improved infrastructure?"

Of course, the critical factor that Myers willfully blinds himself to *is the ongoing Israeli occupation, including its economic blockade of Gaza.*

It is because the Palestinians are living under Israel's oppressive occupation regime that they are unable to develop a sustainable economy. *Hence the Palestinians' dependence on international humanitarian aid!*

“Myth” #6 “Forming a state is the primary goal of top Palestinian leaders.”

This is the most legitimate argument in the video. Myers asserts that Palestinian leaders like the late Yasser Arafat and his successor as head of the Palestinian Authority (PA), Mahmoud Abbas, are corrupt and uninterested in changing the existing status quo.

And there is a lot of truth to this assertion. But the underlying reality that Myers blinds himself to *is that the PA was established under the Oslo Accords effectively to serve as Israel’s collaborator in enforcing its occupation regime.*

As I document in my book [*Obstacle to Peace: The US Role in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*](#), former Israeli foreign minister Shlomo Ben-Ami has observed that one meaning of the Oslo Accords was that it would make the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which is the parent body of the PA, “Israel’s collaborator in the task of stifling the intifada and cutting short what was clearly an authentically democratic struggle for Palestinian independence.”

Natan Sharansky, a former Member of the Knesset and Chair of the Shalem Center’s Institute for Strategic Studies, similarly explained in 2008 that “the idea of Oslo was to find a strong dictator to . . . keep the Palestinians under control.”

These observations are not merely hindsight. Dr. Israel Shahak, a retired professor from Hebrew University and Chairman of the Israeli League of Human and Civil Rights, at the time wrote an article titled “Oslo Agreement Makes PLO Israel’s Enforcer”. He explained that from the beginning of the occupation, Israel had found “Palestinian collaborators to rule the territories on its behalf”, a role that had been played by the “so-called ‘notables,’ those figures influential in Palestinian society even before the conquest”. However,

Between 1981 and 1983, Ariel Sharon demolished the power of the notables and tried to replace them with his “Village Leagues,” often composed of the dregs of the society. After the start of the intifada, however, this method failed. Israel had to undertake the task of ruling the Palestinians on every level by use of its own manpower. This form of direct rule was much less efficient and more corrupt and burdensome. The Israeli establishment has wanted for quite some time to restore the old method of indirect rule, especially in the Gaza Strip, on Israeli terms. This is the real meaning of the Oslo Agreement as Israel perceives it.

In its new role as “Israel’s Enforcer”, the PLO would be “rewarded by a lot of money, by a much greater degree of honor than the notables enjoyed, and by some vague verbal concessions that will lead to further stalemates in negotiations. . . . But if [Yasser] Arafat and his henchmen really hope that, in return for doing efficiently the job [Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak] Rabin had assigned them, they will be treated as the rulers of a sovereign state, they are deluding themselves and their people.”

So it's true that top Palestinian leaders are more interested in maintaining their positions by preserving the status quo, but what Myers doesn't tell his viewers is that *preservation of the status quo of occupation is precisely what Israel wants.*

“Myth” #7: “Israel has a true peace partner”

Here Myers rolls out the Zionist trope that the Palestinians at Camp David in 2000 rejected Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's supposed offer to have a state of their own. Barak, Myers claims, offered Arafat 94% “of the land he demanded”, excepting Jerusalem. Furthermore, he argues, US President Bill Clinton squarely blamed Arafat for the failure of the talks.

But for starters, why should the Palestinians have been willing to accept Israeli annexation of 6% of their territory, including East Jerusalem? Why should they have been willing to accept anything less than 100% of the territory that under international law is recognized as their own? Israel's legislative measures to annex Jerusalem have been repeatedly condemned by the UN Security Council as illegal, null and void; and under international law, all of Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are “occupied Palestinian territories”.

Myers' narrative, as we'll see further in a moment, is that Israel was offering to give up land for peace, but the truth is just the opposite: *Ehud Barak demanded that the Palestinians give up even more of their land in exchange for limited autonomy within the territory they would keep.*

According to Dr. Ron Pundak, a member of Israel's negotiating team during the Oslo process who was also involved in the Camp David talks, what Barak was demanding was annexation of 9% of the West Bank in a land swap for 1% of Israeli territory. Additionally, the land Barak demanded cut deep into the West Bank to annex major settlement blocs, dividing the West Bank in two. Barak also demanded that Arafat accept an Israeli “security zone” within Palestinian territory along the Jordan River.

Annexation of East Jerusalem was also a non-starter for Arafat. As Arafat frustratedly told Clinton,

The Palestinian leader who will give up Jerusalem has not yet been born. I will not betray my people or the trust they have placed in me. Don't look to me to legitimize the occupation! Of course, it can continue longer, but it can't last forever. No one can continue indefinitely to impose domination by military force—look at South Africa. . . . I was elected president on a clear platform, and our political line has been laid down by our leadership bodies. Our people will not accept less than their rights as stated by international resolutions and international legality.

(For more, again, see [Obstacle to Peace.](#))

Clinton's blaming of Arafat is not evidence that Arafat was to blame for the failure of the talks; it is simply evidence of the United States' own duplicity and complicity in sustaining Israel's continued occupation regime and coercing the Palestinians into surrendering their rights and even more of their land.

“Myth” #8: “Israel just needs to give up land for peace”

Myers argues that for Israel to “give up land” would not bring peace on the grounds that Israel ostensibly did so in 2005 by forcing Jewish settlers out of Gaza and withdrawing military forces. Palestinian leaders promised peace, he claims, but instead Palestinians voted into power Hamas, which has fired thousands of rockets into Israel.

The first problem with this argument is the assumption that any of the land is Israel’s to “give” in the first place. Of course, none of the land in question is Israel’s. Once again, all of Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are “occupied Palestinian territory” under international law.

It is true that, under Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, the Israeli government withdrew settlers and occupying military forces from Gaza. But what Myers conceals from his viewers is that this was done to gain political cover for an accompanying consolidation of Israeli control over the West Bank, including expansion of illegal settlements and illegal construction of a separation wall transparently intended to effectively annex major swaths of Palestinian territory.

Furthermore, despite the withdraw of Israeli soldiers from Gaza, under international law, Israel remained the Occupying Power there by virtue of its continued control over Gaza’s borders, airspace, and territorial waters. Another relevant truth that Myers conceals in order to sustain his fictional narrative is that, following Hamas’s election victory in 2006, Israel escalated its blockade of Gaza into a full scale siege, the purpose of which was described by Sharon’s senior adviser Dov Weissglass as being “like an appointment with a dietician. The Palestinians will get a lot thinner, but won’t die.”

“Israeli officials have confirmed to Embassy officials on multiple occasions”, a 2008 State Department cable to US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice informed, “that they intend to keep the Gazan economy functioning at the lowest level possible consistent with avoiding a humanitarian crisis.”

The cable reiterated, “As part of their overall embargo plan against Gaza, Israeli officials have confirmed to econoffs [US embassy economic officers] on multiple occasions that they intend to keep the Gazan economy on the brink of collapse without quite pushing it over the edge”.

Myers also omits the fact that Israel repeatedly violated its ceasefire agreements with Hamas. For example, following its election victory, Hamas abided by an existing ceasefire that was violated by Israel on June 9, 2006, with an artillery barrage into Gaza that killed seven Palestinians having a picnic on a beach. Hamas retaliated by launching rockets that mostly landed inside Gaza, and its strict adherence to the ceasefire until Israel’s violation was acknowledged by mainstream media organizations including CNN, the Associated Press, and the BBC.

Similarly, it was also Israel that violated the ceasefire in place in 2008 prior to its full-scale military assault of Gaza dubbed “Operation Cast Lead”. (For extensive documentation of this, again, see [Obstacle to Peace.](#))

The bottom line is that it just isn’t true that Israel has tried ending its occupation so that there can be peace. On the contrary, Israel has only more deeply entrenched its oppressive occupation and illegal

settlement regime, and so it should surprise nobody that the consequence is that peace has not been realized.

“Myth” #9: “Most Palestinians want a lasting peace with Israel”

Here, Myers claims in the video that “some” Palestinians do want peace, but that they are a minority.

Myers cites no sources to support his claim, and the truth is that the PLO has officially accepted the two-state solution to the conflict since 1988, while the Israeli government has rejected the two-state solution since its inception in the wake of the June 1967 war.

Among the Palestinian public, polls have consistently shown that most want peace with Israel. For example, a 2017 survey [showed](#) that 44 percent support a two-state solution (not necessarily to be confused with [the two-state solution](#) grounded in international law) and an additional 36 percent support Jews and Arabs living together peacefully under a single-state solution, amounting to 80 percent of Palestinians who desire to live peacefully either alongside Israel or within a single democratic state.

In short, the claim that most Palestinians oppose peace is just another shameless lie.

“Myth” #10: “Giving the Palestinians a state NOW is the only solution to their suffering”

To support this supposed “myth”, Myers claims that this has been the only approach tried for that last 60 years, and that Israel is the only country to grant full equal rights to the Palestinians.

But, of course, both of his claims are blatant lies. Far from trying the approach of respecting Palestinians’ right to self-determination, Israel has always rejected their rights, from the ethnic cleansing by which the “Jewish state” came into existence until the present with Israel’s ongoing occupation and continued refusal to permit refugees to return to their homeland. And, of course, the Israeli government does not treat Arab Israelis as equal citizens under the law. On the contrary, discrimination against Arab Israelis is institutionalized.

For example, as I discuss in [Obstacle to Peace](#), in 2011, the Israeli legislature, the Knesset, passed a law authorizing “admissions committees” to reject applicants for residency in Jewish-majority communities who did not meet “social suitability” criteria, which codified into law the already existing practice of denying residency to Arab citizens, which was the declared intent of the law according to Knesset members who supported it.

Another law passed at the same time banned any publicly funded institution from commemorating the *Nakba*, which is the Arabic word meaning “Catastrophe” and refers to the ethnic cleansing by which Israel was established. The law made it illegal, for example, for schools, municipalities, or theaters to put on plays or screen films about the Nakba—a blatant effort to wipe the ethnic cleansing from history and from memory by infringing on the right to free speech.

Just last year, the Knesset passed what’s known as “the Jewish Nation State Law”, which [explicitly rejects](#) the right of non-Jewish inhabitants of Israel to self-determination.

If Israel wanted peace, a good first step would be to *start* respecting Palestinians’ rights, including their right to self-determination. Myers’ claim that Israel has been trying this for the past 60 years is just another disgraceful and blatant lie.

Conclusion

Calev Myers and his organization, the Jerusalem Institute of Justice, clearly have no interest in upholding human rights, at least insofar as the rights of the Palestinians are concerned. Rather, as demonstrated in his deceitful propaganda video, he rejects their rights and defends the Israeli government’s perpetual violations of international law and Palestinians’ human rights.

For a *real* debunking of myths about the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, read my meticulously documented book [Obstacle to Peace: The US Role in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict](#), which exposes all of the above propaganda claims and many more.

=====

This article was originally published at [Foreign Policy Journal](#) and has been republished here with permission from the author.



[Jeremy R. Hammond](#)

Jeremy R. Hammond is an independent journalist, publisher and editor of Foreign Policy Journal, and author of several books including Obstacle to Peace: The US Role in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. To stay updated with his work and download a free e-book on the subject, [click here to sign up for his newsletter](#).

###