

PFLP and the conflict between Israel and Palestine – Told in 10 minutes

In this mini-book *Fighters+Lovers* describes why the PFLP is a legitimate liberation movement that fights against a violent and international law violating occupation. The PFLP is an important force on the Palestinian political left wing. This mini-book also explains why Israel is not a democratic constitutional state.

The information in these pages comes from a number of UN institutions and independent human rights organizations. All sources is elaborately documented in the report “Israel/palæstina-konflikten og PFLP’s rolle heri” (“The Israel/Palestine conflict and the role of the PFLP”), which can be obtained on www.fightersandlovers.org

Israel and Palestine: The story behind

The conflict between Israel and Palestine dates back to the beginning of the 20th century. Because of the extensive persecution of Jews in Europe, the Zionist Theodor Hertzl formulated a solution in 1896, which consisted of the establishment of a Jewish nation in Palestine. After the First World War Britain gained authority over Palestine. That led to the beginning of a new wave of immigrants, which grew after Hitlers takeover in Germany in 1933.

In 1947 the UN passed a division plan that meant the establishment of two states: Israel and Palestine. Jerusalem would be under international control.

Neither the Palestinians nor the Arab countries would recognize the plan. In a matter of few months a war broke out between the Jewish immigrated population and the Palestinian population who was supported by the Arab neighbors. The war continued until 1949 when a truce was declared. During the war that led to the establishment of the state Israel, 7-800.000 Palestinians were displaced. The Palestinian refugees primarily settled in Gaza at the West Bank, in Jordan and in Lebanon where refugee camps were established. In 2007 more than 2 million Palestinians are living in these camps.

Palestinian territory 1946-2000

In 1967 the Six-day War broke out between the Israel and its Arab neighbors. Israel conquered Gaza, Sinai, the West Bank and the Golan Highs. Sinai was given back to Egypt because of the Yom Kippur War in 1978.

In 1987 the first intifada (uprising) broke out. For the first time the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians was shown on television around the world. It exposed rock-throwing children opposite heavy armed soldiers. This created an understanding that peace had to be made between the two sides in the conflict.

In 1993 Israel and Palestine signed the Oslo Accords (Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements or Declaration of Principles (DOP)). The declaration was from the beginning worked against, both from a number of Palestinian organizations but especially from the Israeli political right wing. In February 1994 the Israeli settler Baruch Goldstein did a massacre towards praying Palestinians in Hebron in which 29 was killed. The Israeli terrorist action was the first in a large number of violent actions from both sides. In November 1995 an Israeli settler killed the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin who with Yassir Arafat had signed the Oslo Accords. A rabid opponent of the peace process, Benjamin Netanyahu, followed Rabin. The opposition and the serious difficulties in the agreement – especially the issue on the Palestinian refugees returning home, the status of Jerusalem and the establishment of a Palestinian sate – led to a hold in the peace process.

In September 2000 the opponent of peace Ariel Sharon made a visit to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem where the al-Aqsa mosque is placed. The visit was the direct cause of the second Intifada. The Peace process was put in the grave with Sharon as prime minister. The West Bank was re-occupied by the Israeli military, and the establishment of settlements was intensified in the occupied territories.

During the second Intifada from 2000 till today 4505 Palestinians has been killed by the opponent. 61% of these was civilians.

In their yearly report from 2006 Amnesty International describes Israel as responsible for the grand majority of the violations of human rights in the conflict.

Judicial apartheid

Israel practices a double legal system in the occupied territories, which is divided according to ethnicities. The Israeli citizens are being convicted according to Israeli civilian criminal law, whereas the Palestinians are being convicted according to special guidelines and military directions. Despite the fact that the Geneva Conventions clearly say that cases against civilians shall take place in civil courts, Israel brings up cases against civilian Palestinians in military courts. Israel says that these are security cases but also traffic offences, disputes regarding land and the right to nature recourse falls into this category.

Economic and military oppression

According to Israeli law all Israeli soldiers has the right to arrest Palestinians. They can be detained in 8-60 days before put in front of a judge. This period is used to force a confession – among other things using torture.

In 2001 the Israeli Human rights Organization B'tselem investigated the difference between the sentencing towards the two populations and found profound differences. In 30 out of 80 cases the Palestinians was sentenced to imprisonment for life for murder on an Israeli. In only 3 out of 89 cases the Israelis was sentenced to imprisonment for life for murder on a Palestinian. In 15 out of the 81 Palestinian cases, Israeli military forces liquidated the accused.

Using military zones, settlements and roads that only can be used by the Israelis, Israel has divided the West Bank into many smaller zones making it in many cases impossible to travel even 5-10 kilometers from one city to another. The West Bank and Gaza is already completely separated. This has destroyed the Palestinian internal trade. Since the 1990es Israel has put an end to the Palestinian export and prohibited the population to seek work in Israel or the other Arab neighbors. The consequences is an over 75% unemployment rate in some areas of Palestine and 65% of the population living under the poverty line.

Israel uses all types of weapons – except nuclear weapons – for their attacks on the Palestinians. In 2001 F-16s was attacking Palestinian targets. Since then F15s and F16s along with Apache Attack Helicopters routinely have attacked cities and refugee camps – with large numbers of civilian casualties. Furthermore Israel uses heavy artillery and combat vehicles against towns and refugee camps.

Israel uses road controlling for preventing the Palestinians freedom of movement in the occupied territories, collective punishment of towns or whole regions by attacks or days of military curfew, destruction of Palestinian houses (Israel has destroyed 12.000 houses since 1967) along with liquidations of Palestinians who is on the military or Secret Services death lists. In the period 2000-

05 Israel liquidated between 353 to 484 Palestinians. Israel themselves calls these liquidations targeted assassinations.

Israeli settlers

Since 1967 Israel has kept an expansive settlement policy in the occupied areas. The Israeli workers party originally had the idea that the settlements could be traded in a land-for-peace agreement in connection to a future peace agreement. The Israeli political right wing and the settlers movement however sees the occupied territories as land God has given them and that never can be given back to the Palestinians. Parts of the movement works actively for ethnic cleansing of all Palestinians in the occupied territories. Since the 1980es the settlers has established death patrols and terrorist groups that has made actions against the Palestinian population.

The settlers are armed with automatic weapons from the Israeli army. Officially for self-defense but they are also used by the Israeli military and settlers in cooperation under military actions, and they are used offensively against Palestinians. The settlers have an organized paramilitary structure that some times operates together with IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) and some times autonomous.

In 1994 the Israeli human rights organization B'tselem made an investigation of 64 settlers kills on Palestinians in the period 1988-93. It showed that only in four cases it was regarding self-defense. In 2000-05 the settlers killed 58 Palestinians in the occupied territories while 1165 was wounded. Furthermore there is an additional 37 kills on Palestinians where it is unclear whether the offender was settler or soldier.

Still the settlers plays an important part in the undermining of the Palestinian economy by burning down or cutting down Palestinian olive plantations or actions where armed settlers prevents the Palestinian olive harvest.

The status of the settlers is therefore much debated. Israel categorizes them as civilians while the Palestinians sees them as legitimate military targets. Either way Israel has a great deal of responsibility for the attacks made against the settlements because when the Geneva Conventions forbids settlements, it is not only to protect the people under occupation. It is also to protect the civilian population of the occupying power.

UN resolutions against Israel

Since the war in 1967 Israel has denied that the West Bank and Gaza are occupied areas. Yet the security council of the UN has made it clear that this is an illegal occupation and has ordered Israel to leave the Palestinian areas.

Israel does not acknowledge the validity of the Geneva Conventions in the occupied areas. Despite of several security resolutions that commands Israel to follow the conventions, they systematically is being violated:

- Israel has since 1967 destroyed 12.000 Palestinian houses under collective punishment actions. In 2001-05 alone 668 houses was destroyed.
- According to the latest report from august 2007 from the UN's special monitor in Israel/Palestine there is currently 10.000 Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons.
- Since 1967 Israel has kept an expansive settlement policy in the occupied areas. 200.000 have settled in East Jerusalem and 250.000 have settled in the occupied West Bank. It is

possible to prosecute Israel at the International Criminal Court (ICC) for their settlement policy alone.

- In May 2007 the UN's special monitor in Israel/Palestine said that Israel, as a retaliation for Palestinian rocket fire on the town Sderot in Israel that cost 2 Israeli lives, went through with an airborne strike against Gaza, which cost 50 Palestinian lives. The monitor criticized Israel for the lack of distinction between civilian and military targets and for a clear violation of the principle of proportionality.
- The resolution 194 from the UN's General Assembly from 1948 gives the 7-800.000 displaced Palestinians right to return to their homes in the current Israel. Israel's enrolment in the UN in 1949 was on the condition that the country acknowledged the resolution 194 and the refugees' right to return. 60 years later Israel still denies the now 2 million refugees their right to return to their homes.
- The International Criminal Court finds the construction of a so-called security wall in the occupied Palestinian areas illegal in 2004.

Palestinian resistance forms

The activities of the PLO (The Palestine Liberation Organization) and the Palestinians were primarily peaceful in the period 1978 to 1994. The goal was to create a foundation for a peaceful solution of the conflict. The uprising (the first intifada) in 1987-91 was, from the Palestinian side mostly fought by throwing of rocks opposite the well-armed military opponent. Israel's invasion and occupation of Lebanon in 1980-82 ended Palestinian partisan attacks against the Israeli military in North Israel, and Israel since kept the southern Lebanon occupied till 2000. In this period the Palestinian armed resistance mostly used light hand weapons and homemade bombs.

In the period after the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, there was established a Palestinian police force – partially trained by the US – which was armed with light weapons. In 2001-02 Israel went through with wide scale bombardments of all Palestinian public institutions – including especially Palestinian police stations. That led to a circling of the police's automatic weapons and light weapons among the militant groups. Despite the improved arming of the Palestinian militant resistance against the occupation, the arming was still way behind the Israeli.

Suicide bombings against Israel started in 1994 after the massacre on 29 Palestinians in a mosque in Hebron by the Israeli settler Baruch Goldstein. Repeating attempts on a truce between the two struggling parties in 2000-05 was stopped by Israeli military actions. The Palestinian organizations (with the exception of Islamic Jihad) decided in 2005 to stop the use of suicide bombings against Israel in the realization that it damaged the Palestinian cause. Despite the fact that 4 times as many Palestinians as Israelis was killed during the Second Intifada, despite the ending of suicide bombings and despite the fact that 25 times as many Palestinians as Israelis was killed by the opponent in 2006, the West still labels the Palestinians as terrorists and makes economic boycott of the democratic elected Palestinian government while no sanctions is made towards Israel. Most of the Palestinians therefore have a view that the EU to is on the Israeli and US side of the conflict.

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

PFLP is a popular liberation movement and a part of the umbrella organization the PLO. In this the PFLP is the second largest organization while Arafat's al-Fatah is the largest. The PFLP was established in 1967 immediately after the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza stripe. Politically non-dogmatic Marxism inspires the PFLP. The goal is a non-religious democratic state with room for Jews, Arabs and other people of all the historic Palestine.

The members of the PFLP are mostly well-educated Palestinians. Since the onward march of fundamentalism in the occupied territories, the organization has attracted many Christian Palestinians who fears for the growth of fundamentalism.

In September 1999 Israel gave permission that the PFLP legally could work in the occupied territories. Because of this the party's new general secretary Abu Ali Mustafa returned to the West Bank in October 1999 to begin the building of the new head quarter of the PFLP in Ramallah. In August 2001 Israel's security cabinet decided to liquidate Mustafa. Two months later the PFLP retaliated by liquidating the Israeli Tourist Minister. Hereafter Israel threatened Yassir Arafat with war if the Palestinian self-government within 7 days did not find the killers. That started a raging witch-hunt where the self-government arrested members of the PFLP at random who later had to be released because no evidence against them was found.

In January 2002 the new general secretary of the PFLP Ahmat Sa'adat was arrested by the self-government. At the same time the arrests of other members of the PFLP continued and in April 2002 4 members of the PFLP was sentenced for the murder of the Tourist Minister and all 5 was transferred to a prison in Jericho, where they were under strict guard by agents from the US and Great-Britain. In June 2002 the Palestinian High Court demanded that Sa'adat would be released because he was not convicted and because there were no evidence against him. But Sa'adat was not released. In March 2006 Israel went through with a military action in the prison and abducted all 5 prisoners to Israel. An Israeli court came to the conclusion in April that there was no evidence to get Sa'adat sentenced for murder in Israel. However the General Secretary has been in prison for more than 6 years without sentencing. The self-governments arrests of members of the PFLP were supplemented from 2002 by Israel's liquidations of 12 high-ranking members of the PFLP.

As the rest of the PLO the PFLP stopped using actions against civilians in 1978. In 2001-06 the organization went through with 15 actions against Israeli military forces and 9 actions against settlers. Single members of the PFLP made to suicide attacks inside of Israel and 1 abduction that lasted one day. The policy of the PFLP clearly states that the armed struggle should be turned exclusively against military targets.

The PFLP is first and foremost a political party and a social movement. At the local elections in 2005 the Party became the third largest party by 4% of the votes. The PFLP got 50 seats in the city council and became the largest party in the governing city Ramallah. Today the PFLP among other things has the Mayors office in Bethlehem. At the election to the Legislative Assembly the PFLP got 3 seats.

Since the 1980es the PFLP has build strong popular organizations in the fields of agriculture, female organizations and human rights. Especially in the area of health the PFLP plays an important role. To date the health network at the West Bank is the area's largest.

'Obviously under military occupation there will be people who resists. These people may be classified as terrorists, but history will treat them differently' (About Palestine)

'Now the same people governs and are treated as heroes' (About the French resistance movement under the second world war and those who fought the South African occupation of Namibia)

(Israel- and Palestine special Rapporteur for the UN John Dugard, BBC 15th of October 2007)

What is Fighters+Lovers?

Fighters+Lovers is a grass root initiative with roots in the solidarity movement. Fighters+Lovers is also a clothes company, a record company and a publishing company. Fighters+Lovers defends political freedom rights in Denmark, which is under attack because of the anti-terror legislation. Fighters+Lovers seeks to set an agenda about the right to solidarity and to inspire bold collective actions – instead of getting frightened by the repression caused by the so-called “war against terror”.

See more at www.fightersandlovers.org