



# IN FEAR OF INTERVENTION

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S  
ROLE IN THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE  
CONFLICT



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To intervene, or not to intervene? That is the international question.

Since the institutional establishment of the international community back in the post-World War period, international peace and prosperity have been at the forefront of our global development agenda. However, the upholding of supposedly universal rights came at a price. An example of this type of policy arrived in 1947 in the form of the Truman Doctrine, an infamous American foreign policy that helped finance national economies in the non-Western world that were looking to follow the industrialized footsteps of the United States' liberal capitalist development. In his address to Congress, President Harry S. Truman mentions the words "free" and "freedom" nearly a dozen times (Truman, 1991). Yet the true nature of said 'freedom' had more to do with the 'free market' than the freedom of choice in governance. The same year the Truman Doctrine was signed, U.S. President Harry S. Truman also became the "first world leader to officially recognize Israel as a legitimate Jewish state" (Harry S. Truman Presidential Library & Museum, 2021). The U.K. and Canada soon followed suit, declaring their de facto recognition of Israel one short year later. And so, despite the growing momentum of various decolonization movements throughout the world, the end of Great Britain's administration of Palestine marked the beginning of Israel's imperialist expansion over the disputed territory.

In 1967, during the aftermath of the Arab-Israeli War, Israel took hold of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and the Israeli Orthodox

settlement movement was initiated under the guise of divine calling.

A few thousand homes later, in 1995, the late Israeli president Yitzhak Rabin decided to halt the establishment of new settlements while allowing what he called the "natural growth of the settlement population" (O'Malley, 2015, p.204). This statement gave the implicit green light for the construction of houses within existing settlements so as to expand the population to a point where expansion would become inevitable. A year later, this movement was indirectly enhanced by an Israeli government policy that required Palestinians living in East Jerusalem, who were "unable to prove their past and present residency to leave their homes forever" (O'Malley, 2015, p.199-202). Thus began the propagation of Orthodox Jewish settlements whose annexation of Palestinian populations, particularly in East Jerusalem, are said to "have no legal validity under the Fourth Geneva Convention" since the process of annexation is a clear violation of international law (O'Malley, 2015, p.202).

## **"CONCRETE ACTIONS STILL SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS"**

The mention of international law is important when analyzing regional conflicts. For centuries, the implication of international actors in local development, most notably from the West, has shaped the discourse on the ethics of development, war, and justice. However, although international law was in large part penned out with Western ink, the noble clauses have not resulted in any structural changes on their part.

As much as we ordinary citizens would

like to think that our stinging remarks and loud protestations might deter violence from insurgents, state-sanctioned or otherwise, concrete actions still speak louder than words. Rather than utilizing its position of power to advance peacebuilding efforts, the United States has sought to block resolutions at the United Nations Security Council aimed at both condemning Israel's disproportionate military violence and calling for a ceasefire (Al Jazeera, 2021). If an American president calls for a cease-fire in Jerusalem a mere week and half after reportedly "approving the sale of \$735 million in precision-guided weapons to Israel" (Alemany, 2021), if a Canadian Prime Minister calls for a cease-fire in Jerusalem a few months after boasting that a "two-way merchandise trade between Canada and Israel was valued at more than \$1.6 billion in 2020" which also included the sales of weaponry, one has to wonder to what degree denouncement in theory compares to denouncement in practice (Canada, 2021).

In Canada, public discourse often refers to colonialism in the past tense. Yet, our settler-colonial implications are ongoing. They are dispelled in our monotonously-dispersed land acknowledgements, yet they are condoned by our government's inability to denounce settler-colonial states elsewhere in the world.

Despite our renewed collective commitment to social justice on a global scale, capital continues to keep our world from capsizing. The market system in which we currently operate requires us to think of expansion through economic development as the road that leads to the promised land. Unfortunately, in order to reach the supposed promised land, some have sought the mass eviction of others.

Of course, there are two sides to every story. Through this renewed Israeli-Palestine conflict, casualties have been felt on both sides. Innocent lives have been lost as a result of terrorist attacks from Hamas and of military aggression from the Israeli Defense Force. However, the portrayal of violence has also been biased on both accounts. In an institutional framework, terminology is legitimized by the entity that enacts it. According to the Canadian Criminal Code, the term 'terrorism,' for example, refers to "an act committed in whole or in part for a political, religious or ideological purpose, objective or cause with the intention of intimidating the public" (Government of Canada, 2015). And yet, this definition is not usually applied to institutional, systemic, or structural forms of violence by similar means. In other words, whether overt or covert, although the word 'terrorism' should in principle pertain to all entities that use terror and violence to achieve an objective, rarely is it used to describe a state's aggression towards civilians.

**"ONLY THOSE WHOSE PRIVILEGED POSITIONALITY MAKES THEIR LIVED EXPERIENCE THE NORM ARE GRANTED THE LUXURY OF APATHY"**

As international development students, we have often heard our educators profess the so-called depoliticization of our domain. We are taught to believe in the so-called neutrality and indisputable objectiveness of our foreign input on global development. Yet, over time, we have come to understand the deeper meaning behind this normative belief in

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neutrality: only those whose privileged positionality makes their lived experience the norm are granted the luxury of apathy. In contrast, those whose lived experience is a direct threat to the former's status quo have no choice but to denounce the norm. Unfortunately, only then is the pursuit of development deemed political.

What many fail to understand is that every gesture that we pose, every narrative that we advance, every purchase that we make has the power to determine another individual or group's development. Apathy is not political abstinence. It is the reaffirmation of the status quo.

Therefore, the correct answer to the international question is not whether we intervene, but how we intervene.



I am fascinated by processes of political transformation, cultural history and the intersection between individual self-understanding and collective development, whether it be on local or international scale. I am an undergraduate International Development student with experience in field research work on grassroots activism in Brazil, and in qualitative data collection in Senegal where I interviewed local NGOs directors to evaluate international volunteer contributions to local development. I am currently working on a report on women's political participation, activism and advocacy to promote gender equality in 11 countries. I am also a freelance contributor for The Fulcrum, a writer and podcast host for Trad Magazine, and a Politics and Activism staff writer for Parachute Media.

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