

When discussing the origin of the name Palestine, Spencer writes, “In AD 134, The Romans expelled the Jews from the area in retaliation for revolt against their rule lead by the self-appointed messiah Simon Bar Kokhba as an insult to the Jews and to efface any traces of their land they renamed Jerusalem Aelia and the region Palestine a name they plucked from the Bible as it was the name of the Israelites ancient enemies The Philistines” (PD 8). This is a claim that shows up on Twitter a lot. But what is the evidence for such a claim?

The historian Spencer McDaniels writes,

“In reality, all we know is that Roman inscriptions attest that, sometime around the time of the Bar Kokhba rebellion, the Romans combined Judaea and Galilee into a single province, which was given the official name Syria Palaestina. This reorganization and renaming may have occurred shortly before or during the revolt. There is no surviving ancient source that explicitly says when or why this change happened or who proposed it (although it could only have happened with Hadrian’s approval). Any statement about why the name was changed is simply a hypothesis; on the other hand, the claim that the renaming of the province was specifically intended to punish and demoralize the Jewish people by erasing the name Judaea from the map is not well supported by evidence. There is no surviving ancient source that expressly makes this claim and there is no recorded case of a Roman emperor ever renaming a province as means of punishing a particular people group”.

So in short this claim is repeated often but the explicit evidence for it is lacking.¹

The next big issue that I found with Spencer’s book is that he repeats another claim that left-wing and right-wing Israeli historians have rejected. That is the claim that in the 1948 War, the majority of Palestinian Arab refugees left at the behest of their leaders and were not expelled by the Yishuv. Spencer writes, “The fact is ultimately immaterial to the Palestinian jihad, but is true. In reality, the Arabs for the most part left Israel because they were ordered to do so by the Muslim Arab leaders” (PD 68).

He references, “The Near East Arabic Broadcasting Station confirmed this on April 3, 1949, it must not be forgotten that the Arab Higher Committee encourages the refugees flight from their homes Jaffa, Haifa and Jerusalem” (PD 69). Additionally, he also makes an argument that the mufti encouraged the Arabs to leave on the 15th of May.

¹<https://talesoftimesforgotten.com/2023/10/23/no-the-roman-emperor-hadrian-didnt-invent-palestine/>

I find Spencer's arguments here to be lacking in strength and not fully adequate to explain the phenomenon of the Palestinian refugee issue. I noticed that Spencer did cite Benny Morris a few times in his book. He cites Morris when he discusses the Jewish population growth. Spencer writes, "The Jewish population of Palestine increased from twenty-five thousand in 1881 to six hundred thirty thousand in 1947" (PD 26). He also cites Morris when discussing Israel's national anthem (PD 52) and when discussing Winston Churchill (PD 60).

However, Spencer did not engage with Morris' scholarship on the topic of the Palestinian refugee problem which has shown that both the Arab and Israeli version of events is problematic. The Arab explanation: That it was a systemic or pre-planned plan to expel all of the Arabs isn't supported by the evidence. While the Israeli explanation- that the refugees left at the command of Arab leaders is also lacking in credibility. In fact in many places they were told to stay in place.²

Benny Morris stated the following on page 275, of his highly influential *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*

"Whatever the reasoning and attitudes of the Arab states, I have found no contemporary evidence to show that either they or the Mufti ordered or directly encouraged the mass exodus of April-May".³

As noted by Benny Morris, Israel implemented various measures to prevent refugees from returning, including different evacuation orders and even attempted rapes by the Haganah, all detailed in the same book Morris writes, "On May 25, 15 Arab men were found dead in the Jibalaya neighborhood, near the waterfront: All had been shot and four had ID cards issued by the military governor's office indicating that they probably all had been killed when the Haganah had occupied the town. Three doctors who examined the bodies two days later determined that they had been shot a week or so before. On 14 or 15th of May a 12 year old girl was raped by two Haganah soliders".

And, "vide Faluja and Iraq al Manshiya- in the south authorities expelled whole villages from sites to the interior. In general through this period, the political desire to have as few Arabs as

² See Morris's essay "Explaining Transfer" in Bessel, R., & Haake, C. B. (2009). *Removing Peoples: Forced Removal in the Modern World*. OUP/German Historical Institute London.

³ Morris, B. (1987). *The birth of the Palestinian refugee problem revisited*. 275

possible in the Jewish state and the need for empty villages to house immigrants meshed with the strategic desire to achieve Arab clear frontiers and secure internal lines of communication.⁴

Also as Peter Beinart notes

“But what the establishment Jewish narrative omits is that the vast majority of Palestinians forced from their homes committed no violence at all. In *Army of Shadows*, Hebrew University historian Hillel Cohen notes that, “Most of the Palestinian Arabs who took up arms were organized in units that defended their villages and homes, or sometimes a group of villages.” They ventured beyond them “only in extremely rare cases.” He adds that, frequently, “local Arab representatives had approached their Jewish neighbors with requests to conclude nonaggression pacts.” When such efforts failed, Palestinian villages and towns often surrendered in the face of Zionist might. In most cases, their residents were expelled anyway. Their presence was intolerable not because they had personally threatened Jews but because they threatened the demography of a Jewish state”⁵

The Palestinian historian, Walid Khalidi, addressed the reasons and causes of the flight of the Palestinians in an essay titled, *Why Did the Palestinians Leave Revisited*.

“In 23 April 1948, for example, Haganah Radio (i.e., the radio of the underground Zionist Army) gave a full account of the flight of the Arabs from Haifa. The statement was a response to the Syrian delegate to the United Nations’ accusations of atrocities against the Arabs. The Haganah broadcast mentioned no order in its account of the Arab flight. In early May 1948, King Abdullah of Jordan accused the Zionists of expelling Arabs from their homes. On 4 May, Haganah radio broadcast a reply, but it did not mention an Arab order urging the Arabs to leave. In August–September 1948, Shertok (the Foreign Minister of the Provisional Government of Israel) exchanged letters with Count Bernadotte over the question of the Arab refugees. Shertok disclaimed Israeli responsibility for the refugees, but no Arab evacuation order was mentioned. In August 1948 Weizmann concluded his autobiography, bringing the story up to the establishment of Israel. He comments on the Arab exodus but mentions no order”.

In the book *Side-by-Side: Parallel Histories of Israel-Palestine* the Israeli historians, Sami Adwan, Dan Bar-On and Eyal Naveh, noted the causes of Arab flight. “The departure of the Arab residents thus came about for several different reasons: fear, the rough attitude of the Arab volunteer fighting forces, expulsions carried out by the Jewish army and personal considerations on the part of the families who wanted to get far away from the front until things calmed down”.

⁴ Morris, B. (1987). *The birth of the Palestinian refugee problem revisited*. 339 and 728-729

⁵ Beinart, Peter. (2021, May 11). Teshuvah: A Jewish case for Palestinian refugee return. Retrieved from <https://jewishcurrents.org/teshuvah-a-jewish-case-for-palestinian-refugee-return>

The historian Michael Palumbo explains in his book *The Palestinian Catastrophe*; that the Irgun deliberately targeted civilians, a tactic they used to incite panic and force the Arab population to flee Jaffa. Palumbo notes, "The Zionist campaign of psychological warfare was another major factor in encouraging the Arab exodus in the early months of the war". Also he notes, "Because of the shelling of civilian areas, fear of the Irgun, and rumors of real and imagined atrocities the Arabs fled Jaffa". ⁶

The historian, Adam Raz, includes an interesting quote from Ben Gurion and describes the methods used by the Haganah to drive Arabs from their homes and he doesn't mention orders from Arab leaders as a cause of Arab flight. ⁷

"Why did tens of thousands of people leave their city, their homes, and their wealth in an insufficiently justified panic? It is hard to believe that extremely wealthy people, really rich people who people in the know number among the country's wealthiest would leave all their wealth behind because someone told them to do"

In a similar fashion, the historian Simha Flapan, explained that, "To support their claim that Arab leaders had incited the flight, Israeli and Zionist sources were constantly "quoting" statements by the Arab Higher Committee-now seen to be largely fabricated-to the effect that "in a very short time the armies of our Arab sister countries will overrun Palestine, attacking from the land, the sea, and the air, and they will settle accounts with the Jews." Some such statements were actually issued, but they were intended to stop the panic that was causing the masses to abandon their villages. They were also issued as a warning to the increasing number of Arabs who were willing to accept partition as irreversible and cease struggling against it". ⁸

Spencer also repeats another common assertion, and that is that Palestine was uninhabited and empty before the establishment of the state of Israel (PD 11-20). To make this argument, he uses a quote from Mark Twain, which is commonly used, to prove that Palestine was uninhabited. But was it really a "land without people, for a people without a land" as Lord Shaftesbury said?

⁶ Palumbo, M. (1987). *The Palestinian Catastrophe: The 1948 Expulsion of a People from Their Homeland*. Pg 60-61 and 89

⁷ *Loot: How Israel Stole Palestinian Property*, pgs 27-28

⁸ Flapan, S. (1987). The Palestinian exodus of 1948, 4-5

But what about the Mark Twain quote? Is it really significant? A scholar of Mark Twain, Matt Seybold, had this to say on the issue.

“I am not any kind of expert on the history of the Middle East, but what I can say with expert knowledge is neither is Mark Twain. *The Innocents Abroad* is a notoriously unreliable narrative with three consistent objects of satire: evangelical Christianity, wealthy Americans, and popular travel writing. It is not a work of rigorous history or even an earnest effort to record the observations of a 19th-century traveler. It’s a travel book about how people who write travel books are often full of s####” (emphasis mine) ⁹

Mary Eliza Rogers in her book *Domestic Life in Palestine* described one village in Palestine and it didn't support the idea of an “empty land”. Palestine, before the establishment of Israel, was inhabited by a number of smaller villages, and the land attracted a number of German Protestants who came to live there in the 1860s. James Gevin explains, “Little did tourists like Twain or advocates of settlement like the early Zionists comprehend that the seemingly abandoned and ramshackle villages on the plain indicated an increase in security and prosperity, not an absence of habitation” Additionally, Gevin explains how the demographics don’t support the “empty land” idea. ¹⁰

But what did some of the early settlers and others have to say about the idea of Palestine being an empty land? Ahad Ha'am a Jewish essayist and Moshe Smilansky had different things to say. Smilansky said, “From the inception of the Zionist idea, Zionist propaganda described the country for which we were headed as desolate and largely neglected, waiting eagerly for its redeemers”. ¹¹ The writer Bayard Taylor recounted his experience of visiting Palestine in 1852 and he had this to say about the villages of Yebrood and El Bireh.

When describing the village of Yebrood, “The stones have been laboriously built into terraces and even where heavy rock boulders almost hid the soil, young fig and olive trees were planted in the crevices between them. I have never seen more thorough and patient cultivation. In the crystal of the morning air, the very hills laughed with plenty, and the whole landscape beamed with the signs of gladness on its countenance”.

When describing El Bireh he wrote, “the husbandmen were already at their ploughs, and the village boys were on their way to the uncultured parts of the hills with their flock of sheep and goats”. Furthermore, as the archaeologist Michael Press elucidated, there were other perspectives, apart from Twain's and those cited by Spencer, that presented Palestine as uninhabited.

⁹ Retrieved from

<https://theamericanvandal.substack.com/p/actually-mark-twain-knew-there-were>

¹⁰ Gevin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War* pg 22 and 30

¹¹ Morris, *Righteous victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-1999*, pg 55

“For many, desolation was not the primary image at all. Scottish artist David Roberts found “a richly cultivated country” in the area around Jaffa: “The ground is carpeted with flowers — the plain is studded with small villages and groups of palm-trees, and, independent of its interesting associations, the country is the loveliest I ever beheld.”

A young Cyrus Adler, years before he became a leading figure in the American Jewish community, wrote of similar feelings in a letter to his mother:

“I had one general impression of the great beauty of the country and little wonder that the Israelites fought so hard for it. The succession of hills and valleys and green fields. The ruins. The tremendous rocks. The piles of stone which have been collecting since ancient times all impressed me with the idea that this little country is one of the prettiest on earth”.¹²

The Israeli demographer, David Grossman, notes, “Palestine was not entirely empty during the nineteenth century. Except for the southern negev no location was totally devoid of inhabitants. Demographically, the 1871-1872 rural Arab population was estimated to be around 223,005 and 267,606.”¹³

When discussing former President Obama, Spencer seems to paint him as a president who was very anti-Israel. I found Spencer’s characterization of Obama problematic and not consistent with the facts during his presidency. In addressing former President Obama’s comments, Spencer says, “About the Israeli civilians who had to live with the daily fear of Hamas rockets, Obama had nothing to say” (PD 147).

This was probably the most puzzling part of the entire book for me, because I checked the source Spencer cited, and it was the Jewish Virtual Library. The same source that Spencer cited to make this argument is quoting Obama as saying the following,

“Let me be clear: America is committed to Israel's security. And we will always support Israel's right to defend itself against legitimate threats. For years, Hamas has launched thousands of rockets at innocent Israeli citizens”¹⁴

¹² Hyperallergic. (2017, September 21). How a Mark Twain Travel Book Turned Palestine into a Desert.

¹³ See Chapter 7 in Grossman, D. (2017). *Rural Arab demography and early Jewish settlement in Palestine*.

¹⁴ <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/president-obama-s-first-remarks-on-israel-and-the-palestinians-january-2009>

It seems clear to me that Obama did have something to say about innocent Israeli citizens fearing rockets from Hamas. Spencer opines that, "Obama suggested that Israelis' view of the Palestinians were based not on the grim reality of jihad terror but on prejudice and ignorance" (PD 150).

As far as Obama's comments like "I honestly believe that if-if any Israeli parent down with those kids they'd say, I want these kids to succeed" and later in the speech Obama said, "But I -- I'm going off script here for a second, but before I -- before I came here, I -- I met with a -- a group of young Palestinians from the age of 15 to 22. And talking to them, they weren't that different from my daughters. They weren't that different from your daughters or sons."

He seems to me to be expressing a simple sentiment that Palestians aren't much different from Israelis and he had hope for a future reconciliation and he knew that not all Palestians were terrorists. Or maybe he was just being "politically correct". The idea that he was suggesting that Israelis were ignorant is lacking in credibility especially due to the "pro-Israel" tone of the entire speech. This seems to be more of an opinion on the part of Spencer to me. In that same speech Spencer used to claim that Obama thought the Israelis view of Palestinians was based on ignorance Obama said the following which seems very "pro-Israel".

"For the Jewish people, the journey to the promise of the State of Israel wound through countless generations. It involved centuries of suffering and exile, prejudice and pogroms and even genocide. Through it all, the Jewish people sustained their unique identity and traditions, as well as a longing to return home. And while Jews achieved extraordinary success in many parts of the world, the dream of true freedom finally found its full expression in the Zionist idea -- to be a free people in your homeland. That's why I believe that Israel is rooted not just in history and tradition, but also in a simple and profound idea -- the idea that people deserve to be free in a land of their own".¹⁵

While, yes it is true that Jim Jones, Obama's Former National Security Adviser, made a joke at a speech that some considered anti-Semitic, others didn't take offense to the joke.¹⁶ Also Jones did apologize for telling the joke and he did state, "I wish that I had not made this off the cuff joke at the top of my remarks, and I apologize to anyone who was offended by it. It also distracted from the larger message I carried that day: that the United States commitment to Israel's security is sacrosanct," he said in a statement".¹⁷

¹⁵<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/03/21/remarks-president-barack-obama-people-israel>

¹⁶ <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/gen-jim-jones-and-fast-and-easy-charges-of-anti-semitism/>

¹⁷ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/james-jones-apologizes-for-jewish-merchant-joke/>

As far as the joke itself, I find it hard to see how one could see it as a joke about “greedy Jews” as Spencer described it. However, I am willing to discuss this joke and he can let me know if I missed anything. I will post a video of the joke below.¹⁸

What's interesting is some Jewish commentators, on the YouTube video, expressed a feeling that the joke was indeed funny and not offensive, and another explained it is like an old Yiddish joke about the Jews being powerless.

The joke revolved around a lost, hungry, and food-starved Taliban member in Afghanistan. He then strolled towards a shack, which transpired to be a Jewish merchant's shop. The member of the Taliban asks for water, and the Jewish merchant tells him he only has ties for sale. Next, the member of the Taliban engaged in a diatribe about the merchant's family, and Israel and how horrible he was, and the merchant forgave the Taliban man and forgave him for all of his insults. The Jewish merchant then decides to help out the man and tells him where to get some water. So the Taliban member walks two miles and then comes back to the merchant and tells him “Your brother tells me I need a tie to enter the restaurant”. Some members laughed when Jones told this joke. I’m failing to see how this joke involves the old anti-Semitic stereotype of a greedy Jewish merchant.

Spencer also wrote, “On March 21, 2013, when Obama spoke in Jerusalem, he claimed that Israel was not prosecuting those who committed crimes against Palestinians, and portrayed Israel’s self-defense measures as a gratuitous oppression of the Palestinian people” (PD 149)

An excerpt that Spencer uses has Obama saying the following, “It’s not just when settler violence against Palestinians goes unpunished. It’s not right to prevent Palestinians from farming their lands or restricting a student’s ability to move around the West Bank or displace Palestinian families from their homes” (PD 150).

This was another puzzling part of Spencer’s book for me. Yes, Israel does have legitimate security concerns in the West Bank. However, this part of Obama’s speech, at least what Spencer quotes, is referencing religiously and ideologically minded Jewish settlers who regularly attack and displace Palestinian farmers and civilians, not Palestinian militants. Don’t Palestinian non-combatants have the right to safety as well?

¹⁸<https://www.youtube.com/watch?si=7kUTumsUuf2BFPNB&v=eCOoJmuog0M&feature=youtu.be>

A Palestinian Christian named, Alice Kisiya, has become a vocal leader and documented her family's struggle against settlers and documented how her family has struggled to lead resistance to Israeli settlers seizing of her family's land.

Kisiya also argued, "An interfaith community is what this society needs to be united and to be strong to achieve justice and peace," said Kisiya, a Palestinian Christian with Israeli and French citizenship. "Sharing different backgrounds and beliefs and learning how to love and accept each other is the way to a new age where everyone can live in peace and harmony".¹⁹

Yesh Din, an Israeli Human Rights Organization, found that 93.7% of investigations of violence against Palestinians in the West Bank resulted in no conviction. It also found that only 4.4% of investigations concerning suspected soldier offenses led to the filling of indictments.²⁰

Hillel Bardin, a former Israeli soldier, provided evidence of settler violence against Palestinian farmers. Bardin wrote, "In the autumn olive-picking season of 2002, settler extremists significantly increased their attacks on Palestinian olive groves and farmers".²¹ Additionally, Ihab Hassan, a Palestinian Christian, who regularly speaks out against Hamas, has documented the pogroms committed by terrorist settlers against Palestinian farmers.²²

Spencer in a statement regarding the presence of Arabs in Israel writes, "There is no evidence of Arabs in the area before the seventh century of the common era" (PD 80). Is this true, though? Is there no evidence of Arabs in Israel prior to the 7th century?

In the book of Acts 2, the author describes the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost for the new believers in Jesus. The Book of Acts lists different groups of people and one of these groups of people is the Arabs, "both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs". The NT scholar Darrell Bock in his commentary on Acts suggests the reference to Arabs here is likely a reference to Nabateans.²³

So who exactly were the Nabateans? Let's take a look at what the Jewish Virtual Library, a source Spencer uses often in his book, has to say about them

¹⁹<https://religionnews.com/2024/11/18/west-bank-christian-woman-leads-resistance-to-settlers-seizure-of-family-land/>

²⁰ <https://www.yesh-din.org/en/category/settler-violence/>

²¹ Bardin, H. (2012). *A Zionist among Palestinians*, pg 219

²² <https://x.com/IhabHassane/status/1864882094339690610>

²³ Bock, D. L. (2007). *ACTS (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (BECNT))*, 183

“The little we know about the Nabateans comes from Roman historians and geographers. They were nomadic tribes from northern Arabia who wandered and traded, then established permanent settlements and finally created an independent kingdom with Petra, in the mountains of Edom, as their capital. At the climax of their power, from the first century BCE to the first century CE, the Nabatean kings ruled regions that today belong to Jordan, Syria, and **Israel**. Their contact with the Hellenistic world had great influence on their material culture, uniquely manifest in their architecture” (emphasis mine)²⁴

There is also evidence of the Ghassanids, who were an Arabian tribe, which migrated and integrated into the Palestinian community in the 5th century. The historian Nur Masalha notes, “In the 4th-6th centuries the three provinces of Palestine went through a gradual process of Arabisation and large parts of them were effectively transformed into Arab vassal states under imperial Byzantine influence”²⁵

Yes, Jews have lived in Israel-Palestine for a long time. Before the 7th-century military conquests, Arabs lived there too.

Spencer seems to be using an inconsistent approach in reference to events in Jenin in 2002. Spencer believes the UN unfairly singles out Israel; he writes, “The United Nations aide and abets this impression by spending an astonishing amount of its time issuing condemnations of Israel, while turning a blind eye to actual and serious human rights abuses by other countries” (PD 162).

Earlier in his book, in reference to events in Jenin, writes, “The UN mounted an investigation of its own, finding that fifty-two people had been killed in Jenin and that almost all of those were Palestinian jihadists; it stated that no civilians had been deliberately killed in Jenin” (PD 134).

So is the UN unreliable when it unfairly singles out Israel, but it can be used as a reliable source when it finds that no civilians were deliberately killed? Which is it? While he is correct that there were exaggerations, it's not true that “almost all of those killed were Palestinian jihadists” as Spencer asserts. The UN Report found that, “By the time of the IDF withdrawal and the lifting of the curfew on 18 April, at least 52 Palestinians, **of whom up to half may have been civilians**, and 23 Israeli soldiers were dead. Many more were injured. Approximately 150 buildings had been destroyed and many others were rendered structurally unsound. Four hundred and fifty families were rendered homeless. The cost of the destruction of property is estimated at approximately \$27 million” (emphasis mine).²⁶

²⁴ https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/avdat#google_vignette

²⁵ Masalha, N. (2018). *Palestine: a four thousand year history*, pg 135-136

²⁶ Goodman, H., & Cummings, J. (2003). Appendix II: Excerpts from UN Report on Jenin. *Institute for National Security Studies*

Also, is it true that Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch found no evidence of Israeli war crimes as Spencer claims? Spencer writes, “Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch investigated and found no evidence of Israeli war crimes” (PD 134).

Some claim that both of these organizations are unreliable and unfairly single out Israel. For the sake of this conversation, that question is irrelevant. I merely want to investigate what Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch did find in their report on the events in Jenin in relation to Spencer’s claims. The Amnesty report found that a teacher was beaten and used as a “human shield”

The report also found that

“Faisal Abu Sariya Faisal Abu Sariya, a 42-year-old teacher, told Amnesty International delegates that he was forced to accompany the IDF on military operations for two days and during this period was used as a “human shield”. During the time he was in the custody of IDF soldiers, he reports being subjected to beatings and other ill-treatment. During the time he acted as a “human shield” he sustained a gunshot wound to the knee but was not given adequate medical care and was unable to seek treatment until three days later. On 4 April 2002, the second day of the incursion, Faisal Abu Sariya was at home with his family in the Jenin refugee camp. At approximately 4 am there was knocking at the door. A 15-year-old neighbor had been told by IDF soldiers to enter Faisal Abu Sariya’s home and to instruct the family to go to one room. The soldiers then searched and occupied the house that day and evening. Faisal Abu Sariya said that during this time he was taken into a side room and beaten”.

The report also found that

“Jamal al-Sabbagh On 6 April 2002, 33-year-old Jamal al-Sabbagh was shot by the IDF after he had been taken into their custody. According to a witness, at the time Jamal al-Sabbagh was shot, he was unarmed and had posed no threat to the soldiers who had detained him”.²⁷

Human Rights Watch found that a wheelchair bound man was killed, “Human Rights Watch went to inspect the site of the killing and found the crushed and bullet-ridden wheelchair by the side of the road, its white flag still attached. The stretch of road on which Kamal Zghair was killed was completely open with excellent visibility, so it is unlikely that the IDF soldiers who shot him saw anything other than an elderly, wheelchair-bound man”.²⁸

²⁷ Amnesty International. (2021, October 5). Israel and the Occupied Territories: Shielded from scrutiny: IDF violations in Jenin and Nablus - Amnesty International. Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/143/2002/en/>

²⁸ https://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/israel3/israel0502-05.htm#P234_38516

How is this an example of “no evidence of Israeli war crimes” as Spencer claims?

Human Rights Watch also found evidence of unlawful and deliberate killings, as evidenced by their report on Jenin.

Spencer also claims, “Palestinians - that is both Arabs and Jews who lived in Palestine, the modern usage of “Palestinians” as referring only to Muslim Arabs had not yet begun” (PD 58)

This brings up another issue I had with this book, which is that it seems to be making a false dichotomy. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict isn’t solely a Jewish vs. Muslim conflict, and not all Palestinians are Muslims. Spencer doesn’t say much about the Palestinian Christian community. Palestinian Christians have created various different theologies against Israeli occupation.

Mitri Raheb, a Palestinian Lutheran minister, explained that during the first intifada members of his congregation were imprisoned without trial or any legitimate charges.²⁹

Naim Ateek writes about and describes a Palestinian Christian theology of liberation based on the texts of the Old and New Testament. Ateek believes in peace and argues the Bible and Christian theology can be used to bring peace between Christians of different varieties in the Middle East.³⁰

In a similar fashion, Yohanna Jahctaro spoke about the complex issues on identity in Israel. She spoke about Palestinians who hold Israeli citizenship and the tensions between religious extremes. She speaks about a path forward with mutual love and understanding while drawing from themes on the Gospel of John from a Palestinian perspective.³¹

David Cook, professor at Rice University, explained that in the 1960s and 1970s the PLO launched military operations against Israel and Israeli operations in Europe. However, Muslims played almost no part as the objective of the PLO was to present itself as a secular organization. He also explained that the small Islamic jihad organization’s founder, Fathi al-Shiqaqi, employed semi-secular language.³²

The point I’m trying to make here is that simply viewing the conflict as a Muslim vs. Jew conflict is misleading. Palestinians have also been influenced by secularism and communism in

²⁹ Raheb, M. (2004). *Bethlehem besieged: Stories of Hope in Times of Trouble*, pg 56

³⁰ Ateek, N. S. (1989). *Justice, and only justice: A Palestinian theology of liberation*, pg 151

³¹ Katanacho, Yohanna. (2020). *Reading the Gospel of John through Palestinian eyes*. Langham Publishing, pg 75-76

³² Cook, D. (2015). *Understanding jihad*, pg 113-114

their history, and sometimes these different ideologies have inspired acts of terror in an attempt to end the occupation, which I fully condemn.

Speaking of the aforementioned First Intifada Spencer doesn't say much he writes, "Making matters worse was the fact that Palestinians and their allies continued jihad terror attacks against Israeli civilians, culminating in the First Intifada of 1987-1991 during which the United Nations began its now well established practice of condemning Israel without taking into account Palestinian actions or Israel's security requirements (PD 110).

Spencer fails to mention that the First Intifada primarily consisted of non-violent protests, despite the presence of stone throwing and violent confrontations with the Israeli army and Palestinian civilians.

Hillel Bardin explained, "Much if not most of the Intifada was in fact nonviolent"³³

In addressing the Cave of the Patriarchs massacre, where 30 Muslims were killed and 125 were injured, Spencer describes it as a "retaliatory attack" by the Israeli Baruch Goldstein (PD 127).

In my view, an attack on civilians is not a legitimate act of retaliation. If Goldstein had attacked Palestinian militants, it would be a different story, but he did not. He attacked Muslims while they were praying at a mosque. Also I haven't read any scholar of religious extremism or any historian classified this terror attack as an act of "retaliation". Furthermore, Yitzhak Rabin did not classify it as an act of retaliation; he had this to say about the massacre:

"As a Jew and an Israeli, as a man and human being, I am humiliated by the shame brought upon us by the lowly killer".³⁴

This false characterization of the terrorist attack as an act of retaliation highlights another issue with Spencer's book, and that is the lack of nuance regarding the issue of Jewish fundamentalism in Israel. Baruch Goldstein was influenced by the thought of Meir Kahane, and for some religious settlers, he is still seen as a hero even to this day. He was seen as a martyr by rabbis and religious settlers, and they believed his actions were justified in the name of God.³⁵

So who exactly was Meir Kahane? Kahane was the founder of a party known as the Kach party which was a Jewish party heavily focused on messianic religious ideals and a distrust of secular Jewish politics. He had a reputation for making racist statements against Arabs and some of his

³³ Bardin, H. (2012). *A Zionist Among Palestinians*, pg 84

³⁴ <https://israeled.org/cave-machpelah-massacre/>

³⁵ For more on the influence of Meir Kahane see Chapter 6 in Shahak, I., & Mezvinsky, N. (2015). *Jewish fundamentalism in Israel*.

comments about the Arabs were seen as similar to Hitler's comments on the Jews. A biography of Kahane was published in the 1980's and it was given the title *Heil Kahane*. For Kahane, the Jews could hasten the coming of the Messiah by driving the Arabs off their land reclaiming the West Bank. Kahane's thought also influenced attempts to destroy the Dome of the Rock mosque since the removal of this site could also hasten the coming of the Jewish messiah.³⁶

Yigal Amir was another example of an Israeli extremist. Amir killed the former prime minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin, on November 4, 1995. Spencer frames this event as the following, "Yigal Amir who believed the prime minister had severely compromised Israel's security by agreeing to the Oslo Accords" (PD 126).

I believe it is more accurate to say that Amir was driven by extremist views and some similar views that influenced Baruch Goldstein's massacre. Spencer's framing of both of these events is problematic.³⁷

In a chapter titled "The Palestinian Victimhood Machine" Spencer claims that the massacre at Deir Yassin was in fact a "non massacre". To advance this argument he relies heavily on the work of Elizer Tauber. It's important to note that some have criticized the methods that this book deploys.³⁸

Michael Palumbo and Benny Morris have explained how even despite disagreements about the details, there most likely was a massacre at Deir Yassin.³⁹

Morris writes, "Whole families were riddled with bullets and grenade fragments and buried when houses were blown up on top of them; individuals were taken aside and shot". So in conclusion claiming Deir Yassin was an aspect of "Palestinian Victimhood Propaganda" is a tendentious claim.

Spencer when discussing "The Palestinian Victimhood Machine" writes, "A growing number of people from all over the world believe that Palestinian terrorism against Israel is actually justified, as the Israel government is a racist, repressive regime that is one of the worst abusers of human rights" (PD 162)

³⁶ *Global Rebellion: Religious Challenges to the Secular State, from Christian Militias to Al Qaeda*, pg 57-59

³⁷ *The Israeli-Palestinian conflict: What Everyone Needs to Know*, pg 125

³⁸ <https://an-historian.medium.com/deir-yannis-the-massacre-that-probably-very-likely-was-f824b1891e0b>

³⁹ See Palumbo, M. (1987). *The Palestinian Catastrophe: The 1948 Expulsion of a People from Their Homeland* 56-57 and Morris, B. (1999). *Righteous victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-1999* pg 229

Later in the chapter he writes, “False accounts of Israeli atrocities fuel Palestinian rage against Israel and keep the fires of jihad burning” (PD 170).

Even if some of these charges are overblown, is there any reason for critics of the Israeli government to be making some of the arguments that they do? Is there any evidence of repression, injustice, or human rights issues that should be addressed?

I believe that there is.

In discussing the occupation, which Spencer seems to deny or minimize in his book, the scholar Dov Waxman explains the different legal codes in the West Bank. In simple terms, a Palestinian resident of the West Bank is more likely than an Israeli settler to be convicted and receive a more strict sentence for the same crime.⁴⁰

In the same fashion, the Israeli filmmaker, Yuval Abraham explained the difference in the legal codes with his Palestinian friend Basel. He explains the differences that exist and his documentary was centered on the expulsion of the Palestinian village Masafer Yatta.⁴¹

B'Tselem, the Israeli Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, explains the discrimination that happens to Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. This human rights organization explains how Israeli policy is effective at dispossessing Palestinians from their land and prevents the construction of Palestinian buildings.

Israeli settlements, all located in Area C, receive vast tracts of land, detailed plans, and advanced infrastructure, while the authorities ignore illegal construction in these areas. The settlements have detailed, modern plans that include public areas, green zones, and often spacious residential areas. They enjoy a massive amount of land, including farmland that can serve for future development. Israel's policy in Area C is based on the assumption that the area is primarily meant to serve Israeli needs, and on the ambition to annex large parts of it to the sovereign territory of Israel.⁴²

⁴⁰ Waxman, D. (2019). *The Israeli-Palestinian conflict: What Everyone Needs to Know*, pg 164-166

⁴¹

https://x.com/yuval_abraham/status/1761857460434825366?s=51&t=3c9jWiO8xg0r5LsOWiN4mA

⁴² https://www.btselem.org/planning_and_building

Ben White, in his book, *Palestinians in Israel*, explains the economic disparities that Palestinians face in Israel. Additionally, he also explains the case of Ameer Makhoul who was wrongly convicted of being a Hezbollah spy and was coerced to confess.⁴³ In recent times there was the unfortunate killing of Palestinian Christian journalist Abu Shireen Abu Akleh. The IDF originally claimed no responsibility, but then later explained she was likely killed by the IDF.⁴⁴

This is a video of Michael Ben Ari, another disciple of Meir Kahane and this was taken in 2012. Ari is calling for extreme violence against the civilians of Gaza and this was years before the current war in Gaza.⁴⁵

There is also the issue of building demolition and villagers being evicted in the West Bank.⁴⁶

On the subject of building demolitions, a former IDF soldier, named Becca has become a peace activist and she explains the occupation. Her page name, on Instagram, is thus [beccaexplains.the.occupation](https://www.instagram.com/beccaexplains.the.occupation/).⁴⁷

Additionally, in the chapter “The Palestinian Victimhood Machine”, Spencer when describing the Irgun writes, “The characterization of the Irgun organization and the Stern Gang as Zionist terrorist groups was tendentious neither groups deliberately targeted innocent civilians” (PD 164).

However, earlier in the book Spencer wrote, “Certainly the Irgun and other Jewish groups had adopted some of the tactics of their Arab foes, even at times targeting civilians”(PD 61).

So which one is it? Does the Irgun target or not target innocent civilians?

What about the infamous King David hotel bombing in 1946? The King David hotel bombing was in response to an operation by the British designed to weaken the Haganah. Prior to the attack, the hotel served as a basis for military and administrative operations. Irgun members placed a number of explosives in milk cartons which resulted in the deaths of 91 British, Arab

⁴³ White, B. (2011). *Palestinians in Israel: Segregation, discrimination and democracy*, pg 68 and 77

⁴⁴

<https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/2023-05-10/ty-article-magazine/.premium/a-league-of-her-own-remembering-shireen-abu-akleh-a-year-on-from-her-killing/00000188-056d-d867-afec-e7ff78860000>

⁴⁵ <https://x.com/ireallyhateyou/status/1863371762307903497>

⁴⁶ https://x.com/orenziv_/status/1857048367194411342?s=51&t=3c9jWiO8xg0r5LsOWiN4mA

⁴⁷ https://www.instagram.com/p/DCWrfEOiVVu/?img_index=1

and Jewish officials. The Irgun claimed they had given an adequate warning to civilians to evacuate; whereas the British contested that they were given enough time to evacuate.⁴⁸

Professor Bruce Hoffman made the following statements about the bombing of the hotel in his essay titled, “*The Bombing of The King David Hotel, July 1946*”⁴⁹

“But, at the same time, the Irgun and Begin’s various claims to have provided twenty-two, twenty-five, twenty-seven, and thirty minute windows of time between the first call to the hotel and the bombs’ explosion have never been proven. Nor has the British Army’s official histories’ assertion that the warnings were not received until either a minute or even a second before the blast. Rather, the first warning call appears to have been made to the hotel at 12:27—ten minutes before the blast—with the second conveyed by the Palestine Post’s operator to the King David’s switchboard at 12:32—five minutes before the explosion”.

“It must also be said, that because so many Jews either worked in the King David or regularly visited it, there was a false sense of security that terrorists would never dare to attack a target that might in any way cause Jewish casualties. This proved to be a fatal miscalculation”

“Ironically, the sad truth of the matter is that even if King David had been evacuated, as the Irgun had intended, the casualty toll would likely have been even greater. Those passersby and personnel who had already gathered in front the hotel before the main explosion were mercilessly cut down by flying shards of glass and bits of masonry hurled in their direction by the force of the blast”

Even if the issue of the King David hotel bombing remains unresolved, and if Begin was correct about the evacuation orders, Morris recorded examples of the Irgun targeting civilians in his book *Righteous Victims*. Morris provided the example of the Irgun ambushing a Jaffa train and killing an Armenian passenger and wounding five other Arabs. Additionally he also explained that the Irgun began to, “place bombs in crowded Arab centers”. Yes, some of these tactics were a response to Arab atrocities in October of 1937 as Morris notes, but the issue is whether or not the Irgun attacked civilians, and the evidence suggests that they did.⁵⁰

Spencer claims that the Palestinians are an “invented” people. He isn’t the only one to make this argument. Spencer says, “The Palestinian people were a propaganda invention. In the 1960’s in order to counter the image of the tiny Jewish state standing virtually alone against the massive

⁴⁸ Morris, B. (1999). *Righteous victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-1999*, pg 198

⁴⁹ Hoffman, B. (2020). *The bombing of The King David Hotel, July 1946*

⁵⁰ Morris, B. (1999). *Righteous victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-1999*, 154 and 164

Muslim Arab nations surrounding it, the KGB invented the Palestinians, an even smaller people who were, the propaganda insisted, oppressed by a powerful and ruthless Israel. The French historians Guy Milliere and David Horowitz author of the book (How the Palestinian People Were Invented) were invented in order to transform a population into a weapon of mass destruction against Israel and the Jewish people” (PD 75).

Usually, I don't make a deal about spelling or grammatical errors but in this case; I feel it weakens Spencer's argument. Spencer uses the term “historians” to imply plurality and to say there were two French historians who advanced this thesis. However, after reading about David Horowitz, he is Jewish, and his parents came from Imperial Russia. Also he received his Master's degree in English not history so it's not correct to say it was two French historians advancing this idea.

As far as the former spy, Ion Mihai Pacepa, some don't think he is a reliable source.⁵¹

What exactly does it mean to call the Palestinians an “invented people”? Spencer cites Newt Gingrich in his book, and there are others who have claimed this. Which people group, in the history of the world, can not be called “an invention”?

One could consider the North American, Italian, South Sudanese, and Azerbaijani inventions.

Juan Cole makes an interesting argument, in addressing a similar claim when he says,

“Of course, “Palestinians” is a modern political identity with a genealogy that goes back to the reign of al-Omar. But so, too, is the Israeli political identity modern. It had not existed before the mid-20th century and is unconnected to ancient kingdoms. And “Italians” are a modern invention of people like Garibaldi, too. The 19th and 20th century saw a vast reorganization of the world away from empires and toward nation-states with national identities”⁵²

Mark Kaufman, from the Times of Israel magazine, presented this argument.

“Even the Israelis are an invented people. And like the Israelis, Palestinian national self-identity is tied to a specific geographical location. In fact, the Jewish people are an invented people”

⁵¹ <https://www.archbalt.org/historians-diplomats-cast-doubts-on-kgb-plot/?print=print>

⁵² <https://www.juancole.com/2023/04/palestinian-exercised-historical.html>

“Imagine a spokesperson for Native Americans noting that Americans are an invented people. Emotional responses aside, it’s true. We Americans ARE an invented people. In fact, we take pride in the fact that we are a nation of immigrants!”⁵³

But is there really no evidence of a Palestinian people prior to the 1960s? Contrary to popular belief, two researchers, Zack Foster and Emanuel Beska, have argued that there is evidence for a Palestinian people before the 1960s. They do so in a paper called “*The Origins of the term ‘Palestinian’ (‘Filasṭīnī’) in late Ottoman Palestine, 1898–1914*”.

Foster and Beska state, “The bi-weekly al-Quds (“Jerusalem”), published a dozen articles that included the word “Palestinian.” Al-Quds is the best preserved of all the newspapers published in Palestine during this period, and in the 382 extant issues, we found 12 articles mentioning the term “Palestinians,” written by 7 authors (see appendix 1). The writers used phrases such as the Palestinians (“al-Filasṭīnīyūn”), the Palestinian people (“al-sha‘b al-flasṭīnī”, “al-umma al-flasṭīniya”), Palestinian society (“al-mujtama‘ al-flasṭīnī”), Palestinian emigrant community (“al-jāliya al-flasṭīniya”), the Palestinian individual (“al-fard al-flasṭīnī”), the Palestinian youth (“al-nāshi‘a al-flasṭīniya”) and Syrians and Palestinians (“al-Sūrīyīn wa al-Filasṭīnīyīn”). The articles that contain the term “Palestinian” cover topics such as the Palestinian diaspora, Orthodox Renaissance and Zionism”

They also state, “writers asserted their Palestinianness explicitly. We found six articles containing such statements or signatures, four in Filasṭīn and one in al-Quds and al-Karmal each. A writer, calling himself “Filasṭīnī”, criticized the ineffectiveness of the measures taken by the authorities against Jewish immigration and colonization calling them “mere ink on a paper” (“ḥibr ‘alā waraq”). A contributor writing under the same signature, “Filasṭīnī,” argued that decentralization was inappropriate for provinces that faced strong “foreign influence”, such as Palestine, by which the author clearly means the Mutaṣarrifiya of Jerusalem, since it could lead to its Judaization. A certain Rashīd, a Palestinian living in the US while praising the poet ‘Alī al-Rīmāwī describes himself as an “Arab Palestinian Ottoman man” (“rajul ‘arabī flasṭīnī ‘uthmānī”). Iskandar al-Khūrī while criticizing the clerical members of the mixed council described himself in the following words: “I as a Palestinian, and as a member of the Palestinian Orthodox body” (“Anā ka Filasṭīnī, wa ka ‘uḍw min jism al-urthūdhukṣīya al-flasṭīniya”). Nakhla al-Dadā, a Palestinian emigrant living in El Salvador, sent a letter to the newspaper al-Quds in which he praised Is‘āf Afandī al-Nashāshībī for writing the poem “Filasṭīn, Filasṭīn, yā qawm”

⁵³ <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/the-palestinians-are-an-invented-people-okay-who-isnt/>

[Palestine, Palestine, Oh, Nation/People] addressing him “From a Palestinian to the poet of Palestine” (“min Filasṭīnī ilā shā‘ir Filasṭīn”)⁵⁴

So I don’t believe the common argument about Palestians to be an invention of the 1960’s is correct. On a side note, on the academia website, a number of scholars and even Israeli scholars praised the research.

Spencer claims that the peace process was very biased and one-sided. In relation to the Camp David accords he writes, “And so the Camp David Accords with their one-sided concessions set yet another bad precedent. Camp David became the paradigm of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in which American presidents press the Israelis for concessions while asking little to nothing of the Palestinians” (PD 108). As others have presented the attempted peace deals; the Palestinians “never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity”.

What is the record of the attempted peace process, and is it the way Spencer presents it? This is a common claim, and the claim states that Israel has on multiple occasions given a generous offer to the Palestinians, but they keep refusing it, and Spencer seems to be repeating that argument. What does the evidence say about the attempted peace process between the Israelis and the Palestinians?

Zeev Maoz, a scholar of International Relations, discusses the “Za’im initiative” in April -September of 1949 and he explained that it was the Israelis that turned down a generous offer from the Syrians that could have mitigated some of the issues with Palestians refugees. Maoz writes, “Had Israel been willing to adopt a more forthcoming position early on, the Za’im initiative could have paved the way for a model of refugee resettlement that Israel could use as a precedent for other agreements with Arab states with large numbers of Palestinian refugees”.⁵⁵

Shlomo Ben Ami, whom Spencer cited in his book, is on record as saying “If I were a Palestinian I would have rejected Camp David as well”.⁵⁶

The common story around Camp David is that Israel made an unprecedented offer to the Palestinians, which Arafat rejected. The Palestinian version maintains that the Israeli didn't fully address their concerns in relation to the occupation and settlements.

⁵⁴ Foster, Z. J., & Beška, E. (2024). The Origins of the term “Palestinian” (“Filasṭīnī”) in late Ottoman Palestine, 1898–1914. www.academia.edu

⁵⁵ Maoz, Z. (2009). *Defending the Holy Land: A Critical Analysis of Israel’s Security and Foreign Policy*, pg 394

⁵⁶ https://www.democracynow.org/2006/2/14/fmr_israeli_foreign_minister_if_i

In the article, *Visions in Collision: What Really Happened at Camp David and Taba*, the scholar Jeremy Pressman argues,

“that neither the Israeli nor the Palestinian version of the events at Camp David and subsequent talks is wholly accurate. The Palestinian version, however, is much closer to the evidentiary record of articles, interviews, and documents produced by participants in the negotiations, journalists, and other analysts. Israel did make an unprecedented offer at Camp David, but it neglected several elements essential to any comprehensive settlement, including the contiguity of the Palestinian state in the West Bank, full sovereignty in Arab parts of East Jerusalem, and a compromise resolution on the right to return Palestinian refugees.

Moreover, despite Israeli contentions, Palestinian negotiators and much of the Palestinian nationalist movement favored a genuine two-state solution and did not seek to destroy Israel either by insisting on the right of return or through the second intifada”.

Pressman explains, “Three factors made Israel’s territorial offer less forthcoming than it initially appeared. First, the 91 percent land offer was based on the Israeli definition of the West Bank, but this differs by approximately 5 percentage points from the Palestinian definition. Palestinians use a total area of 5,854 square kilometers. Israel, however, omits the area known as No Man’s Land (50 sq. km near Latrun), 41 post-1967 East Jerusalem (71 sq. km), and the territorial waters of the Dead Sea (195 sq. km), which reduces the total to 5,538 sq. km.⁴² Thus, an Israeli offer of 91 percent (of 5,538 sq. km) of the West Bank translates into only 86 percent from the Palestinian perspective. Second, at Camp David, key details related to the exchange of land were left unresolved. In principle, both Israel and the Palestinians agreed to land swaps whereby the Palestinians would get some territory from pre-1967 Israel in exchange for Israeli annexation of some land in the West Bank. In practice, Israel offered only the equivalent of 1 percent of the West Bank in exchange for its annexation of 9 percent. Nor could the Israelis and Palestinians agree on the territory that should be included in the land swaps. At Camp David, the Palestinians rejected the Halutza Sand region (78 sq. km) alongside the Gaza Strip, in part because they claimed that it was inferior in quality to the West Bank land they would be giving up to Israel. Third, the Israeli territorial offer at Camp David was noncontiguous, breaking the West Bank into two, if not three, separate areas. At a minimum, as Barak has since confirmed, the Israeli offer broke the West Bank into two parts: “The Palestinians were promised a continuous piece of sovereign territory except for a razor-thin Israeli wedge running from Jerusalem through from [the Israeli settlement of] Maale Adumim to the Jordan River.”⁵⁷

In reference to the Taba talks, Pressman notes

⁵⁷ Pressman, J. (2003). *Visions in Collision: What Happened at Camp David and Taba*?

“Israeli and Palestinian negotiators met for the last time at Taba on January 21–27, 2001. According to most accounts, they used elements of the Clinton plan as a basis for the talks and made significant progress toward an agreement. The main summary of the discussions was written after the fact by the European Union envoy, Miguel Moratinos. At the end of the Taba talks, Israel and the PA issued an upbeat communiqué: “The sides declare that they have never been closer to reaching an agreement and it is thus our shared belief that the remaining gaps could be bridged with the resumption of negotiations following the Israeli elections.” In February 2001, Ariel Sharon defeated Ehud Barak in the Israeli elections, and Sharon’s new government chose not to resume the high-level talks”⁵⁸

Sara Roy explained that during the time of the Oslo Process and before the start of the Second Intifada, the government of Israel had been confiscating Palestinian farming land, installing closure policies, and to build even more settlements. Thus, many saw the creation of the Palestinian Authority as a continuation of the occupation, albeit in a different and less direct manner.

Roy writes, “During this time the government of Israel confiscated over 40,000 acres of Palestinian land-much of it viable agricultural land”⁵⁹

Also as Dov Waxman has explained bRoy writes, “During this time the government of Israel confiscated over 40,000 acres of Palestinian land-much of it viable agricultural land”⁶⁰

Also as Dov Waxman has explained both sides had their faults during the Oslo process. To be fair Palestinians did engage in terrorism at this time, and Oslo did not end the occupation or liberate Palestinians from Israeli control. Both sides thus failed to carry out their scheduled commitments. ⁶¹

The historian Avi Shlaim, when discussing the road map to peace, discussed how former prime minister Ariel Sharon never really offered the Palestinians a viable state. What he did give them was a “a series of isolated enclaves, an emasculated and demilitarized Palestinian entity, consisting of Gaza and 40 percent of the West Bank, with Israel in control of its borders, airspace and water resources. This was the recipe for a ghetto, not a free country- let alone a viable state”⁶²

⁵⁸ ibid

⁵⁹ Roy, S. (2007). *Failing peace: Gaza and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict*, location 4289 Kindle

⁶⁰ Roy, S. (2007). *Failing peace: Gaza and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict*, location 4289 Kindle

⁶¹ Maoz, Z. (2009). *Defending the Holy Land: A Critical Analysis of Israel’s Security and Foreign Policy*, pg 471-474

⁶² Shlaim, A. (2000). *The iron wall: Israel and the Arab world*, 762

The peace process has been complicated, and it has had its issues. However, viewing the peace process as a sort of “one-sided” set of concessions isn’t consistent with the scholarship on the topic.

In conclusion, I believe it's possible for two things to be true at the same time. Hamas has definitely been a detriment to the people of Gaza. However, I think it's also true that the Israeli government has taken actions to make Hamas grow stronger.

This former IDF soldier, Benzion Sanders, explains how the Israeli government made Hamas grow stronger.⁶³

Adam Raz, explains that Netanyahu has had a policy of bolstering Hamas.

“Netanyahu’s priority is not maintaining Israel’s security but rather preventing any real chance of resolving the conflict through the division of land, ending the occupation, or a two-state solution. Keeping the cash flowing to Hamas served this objective by ensuring the Palestinian national movement remained splintered between Hamas in Gaza and the Fatah-controlled Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank, thus allowing Israel to maintain its dominance over the whole of the land. Even after the devastating events of October 7, Raz warns that Netanyahu’s playbook remains unchanged”⁶⁴

⁶³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1LSEf_CeJiE

⁶⁴ <https://www.972mag.com/netanyahu-hamas-october-7-adam-raz/>

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