



IMPERIALISM IN action: ‘The Rhodes Colossus’ 1892 caricature of Cecil John Rhodes, regarding his Cape Town-Cairo railway plans and the scramble for Africa by European powers. Rhodes aimed to ‘paint the map red,’ with red representing the British Empire. (Wikimedia Commons)

Breaking down ‘occupationalism’

The new form of white colonialism

• GOL KALEV

Occupationalism is enabled by the Jerusalem-based ‘conflict industry’

OCCUPATIONALISM’S CONSEQUENCES for Jews: Vandalized mailboxes with swastikas covering portraits of late Holocaust survivor and renowned French politician Simone Veil, in Paris, 2019. (Benoit Tessier/Reuters)

CONSEQUENCES FOR Palestinians: SodaStream factory in the Negev, near the Bedouin city of Rahat. (Hillel Maeir/Flash90)

Israelis and Palestinians are facing a common adversary coming from the West – the occupationalists. Those are Westerners who hijack the Palestinian cause, disenfranchise Palestinians and block the path to peace – all in the name of resisting the “occupation of Palestine.”

Over the last 20 years, European governments and other Western sources have invested billions of dollars to nurture the Palestinian plight and turn it into what by now has become an autonomous movement with little to do with the Palestinians’ own interests and realities on the ground.

A global occupationalism pop culture emerged with its own symbols, folklore and terminology, often drafted for other, unrelated causes. Whether it is demonstrations in Europe with banners “End the Genocide in Palestine” alongside Hezbollah flags, or small talk in champagne receptions on New York’s Upper East Side about how horrific Israeli ethnic cleansing of Palestinians is, one thing is clear: occupationalists are not pro-Palestinians; they are pro-occupationalism.

For example, for Palestinians, the term “ethnic cleansing” is about the 1948 displacement from villages like Sheikh Muwannis and Al-Haram, now respectively Ramat Aviv, home to Tel Aviv University, and Herzliya, home to the villas of Western diplomats; while for occupationalists, “ethnic cleansing” is about the 2021 eviction of eight Palestinian families in a property dispute.

By exacerbating the malaise of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to epic proportions, occupationalists can separate it from other disputes (such as what some Catalonians view as the Spanish occupation of Catalonia, and some

Corsicans view as the French occupation of Corsica), turn it into a cause célèbre, and pressure Palestinians to blame any and all woes on the occupation – from marriage difficulties to car problems.

Occupationalism is enabled by the Jerusalem-based “conflict industry,” which employs hundreds of Westerners through various NGOs and UN agencies. It is known for its lavish parties, insularity, high turnover and its own social hierarchy, reminiscent of features of European colonialism of the 20th century.

If occupationalism is becoming a neo-religion for the masses, the conflict industry serves as its clergy, providing content, guidance and talking points – for example, the recent Amnesty International report accusing Israel of war crimes and apartheid, or UNESCO resolutions implicitly denying Judaism and Christianity have historical ties to Jerusalem. Most members of the conflict industry are well intentioned (full disclosure: many of them are my friends), but they are indoctrinated by the dogmatic, rigid culture of occupationalism.

The Jerusalem foreign media corps, which is socially intertwined with the conflict industry, spreads its messages, catering to the demand generated by occupationalists worldwide. One Western journalist explained that editors’ choice of conflict-inducing headlines – such as “Israeli forces kill Palestinian after Tel Aviv shooting leaves two dead” (the initial *Guardian* headline describing the recent Tel Aviv terrorist attack) – is because “this is what Europeans want to see.”

Consequences of occupationalism

It is common to view occupationalism in the context of Israel-bashing. As Judaism evolved, so has the currency of

chronic opposition to it – now funneled through the Jewish state. Yet it is not as common to view occupationalism in the context of rising Islamophobia.

No doubt, occupationalists cause damage to Jews. As Defense Minister Benny Gantz stated: “When Amnesty publishes their outrageous apartheid report, houses of prayer in California are targeted.” But the primary harm occupationalists cause is to the Palestinians they pretend to support.

Occupationalists, led by the European Union, aggressively block Palestinians’ ability to be employed in Israeli factories, mentored in Israeli hi-tech companies, live in Israeli neighborhoods and even purchase products in Israeli stores – all in the name of occupationalism.

As Palestinians watch Middle Eastern Arabs form business and social partnerships with Israel, many of them want to do the same – to benefit from the Start-Up Nation next door. But on top of political and security constraints, Palestinians face paralyzing hurdles erected by the occupationalists.

As in past centuries, Palestinian Arabs are helpless in light of the sheer power, influence and capital deployed by the European invaders – this time the invasion and occupation of the Palestinian mind, consciousness and soul.

The case of SodaStream, a Jewish-owned company operating in a West Bank settlement and employing about 500 Palestinians, is showcased as an example of successful “pro-Palestinian” efforts. SodaStream was pressured to relocate its settlement factory to Israel’s Negev. As a result, hundreds of Palestinians lost their jobs and became unemployed.

As European officials celebrated their success in the bars of Jerusalem, their Palestinian victims just a few miles away were struggling to figure out how to support their families, in an economy with 25% unemployment.

SodaStream is just one example, but it symbolized a shift in European occupationalism from “friendly

advice” to Palestinians (anti-Israel propaganda) to outright negation of Palestinians’ right to choose. EU attempts to sabotage Jewish-owned businesses in the West Bank, including those that employ Palestinians, have only escalated since – the EU now requires those businesses to display special labeling on their products. This, and other efforts to deny Palestinians the right to choose, amounts to possible human rights violations by the EU and other members of the conflict industry.

Issue of human rights

Occupationalists do not accept the human rights principle that it is the Palestinians’ right to choose if and where work, at times referencing the stance of the Palestinian Authority, which most Palestinians view as a corrupt foreign occupier itself (still referred to by some Palestinians as “the Tunisians”).

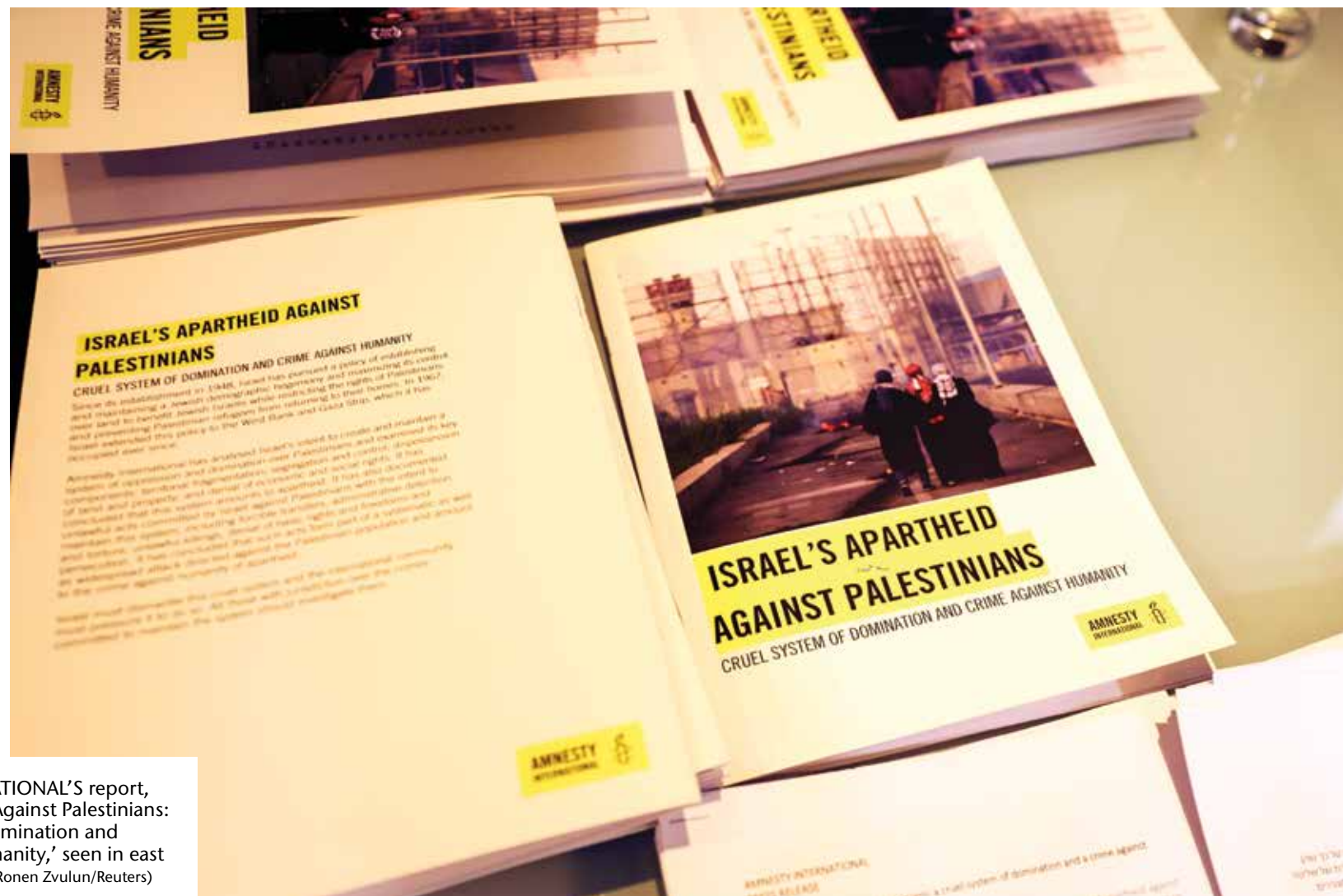
In addition, Europeans put in place crippling dependencies, as much of the PA’s budget comes from conflict-related grants. Therefore, Palestinians are not only dependent on the generosity of Western governments, but also on the perpetuation of the conflict – peace could mean immediate bankruptcy and an end to the Palestinian story.

European disenfranchisement of Palestinians is

also reflected in attempting to negate the Palestinians’ right to choose where to live. Some Palestinians provoke occupationalists by residing in Jewish settlements. In the north Jerusalem neighborhoods of Pisgat Ze’ev and French Hill, considered by the international community as settlements since they are beyond the pre-1967 lines, about 10% of the population is Palestinian. (Some are Israeli-Arabs studying or working in Jerusalem, but many are Palestinians who moved from Arab to Jewish neighborhoods of Jerusalem.)

Occupationalists are eager to stop such “sacrilegious” behavior. For example, European diplomats are leading the charge to block the construction of Givat Hamatos, a joint Israeli-Palestinian neighborhood located beyond the pre-1967 lines and hence qualifying for the golden European designation of “occupation.” As in previous episodes of European colonialism, the occupationalists force their own values over the Palestinians’ human right to choose (Palestinians in nearby Beit Safafa wish to purchase homes in this modern new neighborhood.)

EU officials explain that the new neighborhood “would cut off east Jerusalem from Bethlehem and severely undermine future negotiations toward a two-state solution in line with the internationally



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S report, 'Israel's Apartheid Against Palestinians: Cruel System of Domination and Crime Against Humanity,' seen in east Jerusalem, Feb. 1. (Ronen Zvulun/Reuters)

agreed parameters." Not only does the EU ignore long-standing realities on the ground, such as the established Jerusalem neighborhoods of Gilo and Har Homa that border Bethlehem, but it also prioritizes what it calls "international parameters" over the rights of local Palestinians to choose.

The EU concern about "cutting off east Jerusalem from Bethlehem" is also hypocritical and contradicts its own policy of not recognizing any part of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. This policy is also based on "international parameters" – namely, a 1949 UN resolution that calls for taking away Bethlehem from the Palestinians and Jerusalem from Israel, and creating a "corpus separatum," which is just a cover term for a European colony.

The occupationalists' disenfranchisement of Palestinians' residential human rights also happens in reverse. A Palestinian selling his home to a Jew is considered taboo in Palestinian circles. Yet, for occupationists, this amounts to "self-imposed ethnic cleansing."

Hamas, an archival of the PA and of moderate Palestinians alike, used Jewish ownership of property in predominately Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem as one of the excuses to fire over 4,300 rockets at Israeli cities in May 2021.

While the EU, like most of the West, utterly condemned Hamas terrorist actions and stood by Israel's right to defend itself, it also has been providing legitimacy to Hamas's rhetoric, arguing: "The increase in evictions and demolitions across the occupied Palestinian territory, notably the evolving situation in Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan, in east Jerusalem, and the possible demolition of structures in the Palestinian village of Walaja, are also alarming."

For Europeans, property laws apparently do not

apply to Palestinians – neither when it comes to unauthorized makeshift construction nor when it comes to the basic right of Palestinians to monetize and sell their personal property.

"Sami" selling their property to Norwegian "settlers" in Lapland is allowed (is the EU planning to invest billions of euros to address the "ethnic cleansing" of Sami in Scandinavia?). The same holds for Catalonians selling property to Spaniards in Barcelona, and German natives to Muslims in Cologne. But per the occupationalist stance of the EU, Palestinians' property rights – like their purchasing rights – are apparently subject to a racial test. Humanity advances, populations and neighborhoods evolve, but when it comes to Palestinians, Europe seems to be stuck in eerie frameworks of previous centuries.

The second Hamas casus belli of its May 2021 attack was the presence of Israeli forces on the Temple Mount when riots broke out. Here, too, occupationists took the anti-Palestinian position of Hamas. While the vast majority of Palestinian worshippers are peaceful, a minority have been desecrating the holy mosque, using it as both an ammunition factory to prepare Molotov cocktails and as a shield to launch their attacks. This is happening again in April 2022, and once again occupationalists are right on board.

In his conversation last week with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres about the situation, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett explained that Israel is a stabilizing force without which tens of thousands of Muslims would not be able to pray at al-Aqsa Mosque.

The premier expressed his disappointment at the UN's response to recent Palestinian violence against Israel, including Hamas shooting more rockets. "The international community must not serve the terrorist

organizations' agenda," Bennett warned.

Yet sadly, for too long, occupationalists have indeed served the terrorist organization's agenda. The same 2016 UNESCO resolution implicitly suggesting that Christians and Jews do not have historical ties to Jerusalem went on to incite Palestinians and Muslims worldwide against Israel, inventing a UN-sanctioned lie about "the continuous storming of al-Aqsa Mosque/al-Haram al-Sharif by the Israeli right-wing extremists and uniformed forces." Europeans countries supported or abstained in the vote on this ludicrous resolution.

To their credit, there was a brief moment of atonement and even embarrassment in Europe after it was passed. French prime minister Manuel Valls apologized for not voting against this modern-day blood libel. But then, when a similar resolution came up, France allowed it to pass again, adding fuel to the fire.

Occupationalists' shameless abuse of Palestinians even trickles down to attempts to sabotage Palestinians' consumption ability. Anti-Israel boycott actions, such as the decision by Ben & Jerry's (a subsidiary of Unilever) to stop selling its ice cream in the West Bank settlements, adversely affects Palestinians much more than it affects Israelis.

Palestinians shop in Israeli settlements' mega-supermarkets, such as Rami Levy in Gush Etzion, where they have access to products that are not available in local Palestinian stores. The attempt to deny this from Palestinians is not just the action of a few Islamophobic occupationalists who put their own interests ahead of the Palestinians'; it is an organized campaign, led by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, which includes the blacklisting of companies that sell their products in the settlements.



Again and again, occupationalists, led by the conflict industry, disenfranchise Palestinians of their basic right to choose.

AS MENTIONED, most members of the conflict industry are well-intentioned, honest people who truly believe they are coming to Israel/Palestine to do good. So why the discrepancy between the good intentions and the seemingly immoral behavior?

Various explanations are offered. One of the most common is that Westerners working in NGOs, UN agencies, the EU and foreign embassies, as well as the socially correlated foreign press corps, come to Jerusalem for a finite period of time with preconceived opinions.

"It takes a few years just to figure out what is going on here," one Westerner living in the Palestinian territories told me, "and by the time you get it, you are about to leave." (Though, arguably, if they used the time spent partying with one another to interact with indigenous Israelis and Palestinians, this process could be accelerated.)

Another common answer offered, particularly by some European diplomats, is that the Palestinians are under occupation, and therefore do not have the judgment to know what is good for them – they are enslaved. This is the point where Europe's potential human rights violations inch toward hints of white supremacy: the notion that a European has superior insight. Indeed, the neo-religion of occupationalism houses hints of Islamophobia, colonialism and white supremacy.

This should not be too surprising, since Europe never went through a process of mental decolonization. It was forced to give up its colonies abruptly, and never came to terms with the end of its global domination.

And so, once again, Europe is hoarding the resources of others – this time of the Palestinians, taking possession of their narrative, challenges and hopes, and then repackaging them in a Western framework that suits the occupationalists.

European exploitation of local Arab populations is not new. T.E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia), who instigated the 1916 Arab Revolt, reflected in his later years that what he did was outright immoral. Indeed, Lawrence witnessed the French 1920 colonialist invasion of Syria, which ended the brief utopian Jewish-Arab peace that existed when the pro-Zionist Arab Kingdom of Syria was living side by side with a Jewish state in the making in Palestine. (The French invasion led to the carving of Palestine, as well as to the first shots of what then became the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and to Westerners forcing Arabs in Palestine to adopt a new,

imposed identity as "Palestinians.")

US president Donald Trump claimed that Israeli-Palestinian peace is "the toughest deal ever to make." Occupationalists tend to side with Trump's view, as they treat this conflict on a different scale than all others. Yet realities on the ground have long been different. Unlike the animosity and mutual negation that exist in Europe between "native" Europeans and Muslims, there is a natural affinity between Israelis and Palestinians.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky said that his country wants to be like Israel; so do many Palestinians. Is there hope that occupationalists will ever allow them to join their Arab brethren in forging peace with the Jewish state? Probably not anytime soon.

Meanwhile, the champagne is poured and the occupationalists' parties go on.

The writer is the author of the newly released book, Judaism 3.0 – Judaism's transformation to Zionism (Judaism-Zionism.com). For more of his geopolitical articles: EuropeAndJerusalem.com



WAVING HAMAS flags after Ramadan prayers on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, April 22. Occupationalists seems to side with Hamas and not with peaceful Muslim worshippers. (Jamal Awad/Flash90)

'FREE PALESTINE' message on a hill outside Windsor Park stadium in response to a 2018 Northern Ireland vs Israel football match, in Belfast, N. Ireland. (Clodagh Kilcoyne/Reuters)

AMERICAN COLONY Hotel in east Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, popular among members of the 'conflict industry.' (Abir Sultan/Flash90)

