

## Twenty Years in the Making: The Palestinian Intifada of 1987.

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### Abstract

Why did the *Intifada* of 1987 take place? The independent variable which I analyze in this article will be the multifaceted oppression brought upon by Israel in the 20 years following its illegal occupation of Palestine after the Six Day War of 1967 which bottled-up Palestinian grievances and denied them their desires for self-determination, leading to the dependent variable at hand, the *Intifada* of 1987. After 20 years of occupation and its multidimensional detriments, the Palestinians wanted their sovereignty from the Israeli occupation which harshly affected all aspects of their lives. With a combination of long term frustration and lack of alternative avenues to pursue their ambitions, they finally rose up. It is recognized that no major conflict is mono-causal, and the *Intifada* is far from being an exception to this trend. However, the subjugation of the Palestinian people by Israel following the Six Day War was the foremost cause of the *Intifada* and thus acts as a necessary condition for the conflict in that it would have been exceptionally unlikely that the *Intifada* of 1987 would have taken place without the circumstances imposed by Israel after 1967. The oppression ensued by Israel took four key forms: economic, social, ideological, and political. Hence, Israel's authoritarian conduct towards the native Palestinian population will be examined in depth in four separate categories. Firstly I will discuss the severe economic frustration suffered by the Palestinians due to Israeli policies. Next, the continuous and day-to-day social misery the Palestinians suffered at the hands of the Israeli military government and settlers in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip will be explained. Following this, Israel's denial of Palestinians ideological ambitions will be taken into account. Finally, I evaluate the effects of Israel denying Palestinians political freedom and how this pushed Palestinians towards perusing their political objectives by other means. Subsequently, I take into account important sufficient causes for the making of the conflict and how they acted as catalysts for the *Intifada*. These are the abandonment of Palestine by her former Arab allies and the eventual and new belief by Palestinians in the 1980s that Israel's militarily could be damaged and thus Israel could be forced to stop its oppressive ways and grant them the freedom and autonomy which they were desperately seeking all along.

### Introduction

Some have argued that the *Intifada* took the form of an “outside-agitator model” which, according to Charles Tilley, entails a leader from the top provoking and rallying otherwise indifferent and non-violent masses to rise up from the bottom.<sup>1</sup> Another theory which is invoked regarding the *Intifada* is one that argues it took a “volcanic model”. This theory which was explained by Rod Aya simply argues that groups of people with

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<sup>1</sup> Nassar R. Jamal, and Roger Heacock. *Intafada: Palestine at the Crossroads*. [Intafada: Palestine at the Crossroads](#). NewYork: Praeger, 1990: p16

long-term frustration and a natural inclination to revolutionary action spontaneously and collectively burst out, like a volcano, with hostility and violence.<sup>2</sup> While this may be a tempting stance to take regarding the *Intifada*, it has many shortcomings as a sufficient and appropriate theoretical framework for the conflict at hand. This is because this explosive volcanic model fails to scrutinize the crucial and complex interplay of social, political, economic and many other forces which amounted to the eventual “eruption” in 1987. Rather, another model formulated by Tilley referred to as the “political process model” seems most fitting. This model argues that, according to Jamal R. Nassar and Heacock, the collective violence of the *Intifada* simply constitutes one form of collective action and thus “constitutes politics by other means” in contrast to it being “abnormal behavior”. They go on to argue that the uprising was deliberate, calculated and undertaken for practical reasons and not simply to vent in regards to oppression but rather due to an intricate relationship between long standing levels and types of subjugation incurred and a continuous drive for freedom. They go on to explain that the political process model recognizes that the failure to legitimize and accommodate a people’s long term grievances via legal or political institutions can lead to a change in the oppressed peoples’ tactics. This failure can, over time, accumulate to dangerous levels due to a lack of proper and non-violent route of achievement of just and viable resolutions.<sup>3</sup> The *Intifada* of 1987 is consistent with the dimensions and the logic of the political process model.

However, in order to get a clear understanding of why and how the 20 year long illegal occupation of Palestine amounted to an unbearable level of frustration and dire vigor for change, eventually resulting in the *Intifada*, it is essential to have a clear understanding of the consequences that the Six Day War of 1967 had on the Palestinians immediately after the Gaza Strip and West Bank were take over by Israel.

### **A Brief History of the Aftermath of the Six Day War and its Immediate Consequences for Palestinians**

Following Israel’s victory in the Six Day War, an immediate military occupation took place, taking control over the entirety of less than half of Palestine which remained

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<sup>2</sup> Nassar and Heacock: p17

<sup>3</sup> Nassar and Heacock: p17

since being carved apart in 1948 in favor of creating of Israel at the behest of Palestine.<sup>4</sup> Israeli soldiers, tanks, and artillery fortified by barricades and sandbags were dispersed throughout all of Palestine. However, there was more to the control of Palestine than merely a military occupation. Israel also pursued a vigorous and rapid settlement plan within the newly taken lands. One reason for the establishment of the settlements can be seen as based on military strategy: by having a military occupation of Palestine a barrier is formed with Arab neighbors, safe guarding Israeli land at the price of using Palestine as a shield.

Another consequence of the Six Day War was Israeli civilian theft of land from Palestine. This was done by religious Zionist settlers who believed that all of what was Palestine before Israel's creation in 1948 was in fact god's gift to the Jewish people and that it belonged to them. The 1967 war was immediately interpreted as a prophecy by these religious visionaries and they quickly, with or without the help of the Israeli government depending on the case, began to move to Palestine and occupy lands which, in their eyes, were bestowed to them by god. The first movement to be formed in pursuit of these religious settlements at the cost of Palestinians' land and livelihood was The Greater Israel Movement which declared that the lands were to be taken in god's name, at all costs, and to never be returned again. David Newman, an expert on religious Zionist movements, explains the mentality of these settlers following the 1967 war:

Their territorial irredentism was based on a religious ideology which viewed the whole of the Land of Israel, as described in the biblical texts, as having been promised to the Jewish people by God and, once conquered (or, in their terms, 'liberated') in the 'miraculous' events of the Six day war in June 1967, not to be relinquished voluntarily to any form of non-Jewish (Arab) rule even through the democratic decisions of an elected government.<sup>5</sup>

What was once the Palestinians' homes had quickly become a military zone controlled by a hostile occupier and hijacked by religious zealots who claimed that, in fact, it was never the Palestinians' land in the first place. These were the initial consequences of Israel's victory in 1967 and they manifested into very detrimental living conditions for the

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<sup>4</sup> Bennis, Phyllis. From Stones to Statehood: The Palestinian Uprising. New York: Zed Books Ltd., 1990: p12

<sup>5</sup> Newman, David. "From Hitnchalut to Hitnatkut: The Impact of Gush Emunim and the Settlement Movement on Israeli Politics and Society." Israel Studies 10.3 (2005): p194

Palestinians -- which were present in every aspect of their lives regardless of sex or class. One aspect can be observed in how the occupation hindered the economic freedom of all Palestinians regardless of class.

### **Discriminative and Arbitrary Economic Regulations**

The economic conditions which were created by Israel in the occupied territories over the 20 years substantially contributed to the frustrations of the Palestinians in many ways, and thus, contributed to the eventual build-up that manifested itself in the form of the *Intifada* which resulted in the Palestinians rising up so as to “shake off” (which is the English translation of the Arabic word “*Intifada*”<sup>6</sup>) their oppressors’ burdening of them.

The economic policy geared towards the occupied people took two forms. The first economic policy introduced by Israel attempted to pacify the Palestinians. Tensions were high, a military occupation was in place, and the settlers made life very difficult for the Palestinians. With this in mind, the occupying government attempted to distract the Palestinian people by giving them economic incentives in return for their cooperation as subordinates. Markets were opened to Jordan. During this phase the **occupying ← do you mean occupied?** territories were the second biggest export market for Israel after the US<sup>7</sup>. However, as Ruth Beitler explains, this tactic was only effective in the short run. While the occupied economy did grow, the Palestinians did not cease to be aware of their unjust situation. This happened for two reasons. First, the Palestinian economy, although enlarged due to the Israeli ploy, was still insufficient to support the population as a whole. Second, Beitler explains that the Palestinians noticed that they were in a state of dependency in relation to Israel and were not content with such a dynamic.<sup>8</sup> This is consistent with Palestinian desires for sovereignty. Moreover, dependence on Israel was against nationalist desires and thus added to Palestinian frustrations.

The other aspect of Israel’s economic policy towards Palestinians which contributed to the build up of the *Intifada* existed in its grossly exploitative treatment of

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<sup>6</sup> Wing, Adrien Katherin. "The Intifada: The emergence of embryonic legal mechanisms for Palestinian self-determination." *Arab Studies Quarterly* 15.4 (1993): p67.

<sup>7</sup> Beitler, Ruth Margolies. "The Intifada: Palestinian Adaptation to Israeli Counterinsurgency Tactics." *Terrorism & Political Violence* 7.2 (1995): p55.

<sup>8</sup> Beitler: p56.

Palestinian migrant laborers who worked in Israel after 1967. Figures have shown that during harvest seasons as many as 250 000 Palestinian laborers were working in Israel. Others show that 39 percent<sup>9</sup> of the total Gaza Strip workforce and 35 of the West Bank's<sup>10</sup> were working in Israel as well as 35 percent by 1987. The treatment and experience of these people which was at the mercy of Israel greatly affected the views and positions working class Palestinians later took towards Israel during the *Intifada*. On average, migrant workers from Palestine who worked within Israel only received between 50 and 70 percent of what their Israeli counterparts received for doing the same job.<sup>11</sup> This was a serious predicament for Palestinians who were under the rule of Israel, yet were mistreated compared to their Israeli counterparts. Certainly such circumstances over a long period brew much anger and fuelled a desire for a just change. Another economic policy which victimized Palestinians was the lack of recognition by Israel of Palestinians being anything more than temporary workers. Palestinians were routinely arbitrarily fired from their jobs regardless of seniority. This was all made possible due to official Israeli policy which denied Palestinians any rights as workers within Israel.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, racial policies aimed against Palestinian migrant workers further fermented animosity. Under Israeli law, migrant workers who slept in Israel overnight were not allowed to walk freely in Jewish areas. Moreover, if migrant workers were caught outside after midnight they were subject to fines and imprisonment.<sup>13</sup> Further, the economic realm of Palestinians' lives was routinely hindered by Israeli policy, leading to a feeling of despair in other areas of their lives as is the case with the intertwined nature of all people's economic situations in relation to other parts of their everyday lives.

But perhaps the biggest contribution Israeli economic policy had in regards to the experience of migrant workers and the build-up towards the *Intifada* was that Palestinians had the chance to see what life was like outside of their imprisoned lives. Migrant workers saw that they could be living independent lives and making more money for the same work like their Israeli counterparts. Their exposure to Israeli policy motivated them

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<sup>9</sup> Shelley, Toby, and Ben Cashdan. Palestine: Profile of an Occupation. London: Zed Books Ltd., 1989: p33.

<sup>10</sup> Beitler: p56.

<sup>11</sup> Shelley and Cash Dan: p42.

<sup>12</sup> Shelley and Cashdan: p47.

<sup>13</sup> Shelley and Cashdan: p46.

to strive for more because the non-Palestinians working next to them, doing the same work, were much better off. Everyday the Palestinians saw what they could and should have, due to the fact that they mixed with their economically emancipated Israeli counterparts on a daily basis.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the fact that they were economically discriminated against for no justifiable reason further frustrated the already subordinated Palestinians. According to Toby Shelley, the Palestinians saw their lack of economic freedom after the Israeli occupation as a serious detriment to their lives, and being face to face with their punisher from day to day did anything but calm their fervor towards the need for change.

Israel's confiscation of Palestinian land after the Six Day War further inhibited the Palestinians economically as they lost work places as well as income-generating farms. This led to either unemployment or necessitating Palestinians to work within Israel and both of the circumstances were highly distressful for the occupied people. As pointed out by Nassar and Heacock, in addition to the confiscated land of East Jerusalem, over 52 percent of the West bank as well as over 30 to 40 of the Gaza Strip came under Israeli military installations or settlements.<sup>15</sup> However, the Palestinian lands which were taken and controlled by the military and settlers did not only harm the Palestinians economically, but also socially.

### **Habitual Social Oppression at the Hands of Settlers and Military Occupation**

Day in and day out following the illegal occupation of 1967 Palestinians were subjugated to mental, verbal, and physical abuse at the hands of those Israelis who occupied their land: the soldiers and the settlers.

Palestinians were treated as second class citizens by Israeli occupation forces in their own homeland. Ariel Merari, Tamar Prat, and David Tal concur that Palestinians felt personally humiliated because they were regarded, at gun point, as hostile and vicious people until proven otherwise.<sup>16</sup> Thomas M. Ricks, a modern cultural historian of

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<sup>14</sup> Beitler: p58.

<sup>15</sup> Nassar and Heacock: p22.

<sup>16</sup> Merari, Ariel, Prat, Tamar, and David Tal. "The Palestinian Intifada An Analysis of a Popular Uprising After Seven Months." *Terrorism & Political Violence* 1.2 (1989): p177.

Palestine describes the agonizing military presence in the occupied lands in the following way:

The checkpoints and roadblocks throughout the occupied West Bank, estimated to be over 400, are placed between Palestinian towns and villages, between villages and highways, and, at times, multiple roadblocks are placed between refugee camps, villages, and towns. In comparison, there are only a dozen checkpoints between the Occupied Territories and Israel proper. The great disparity led most Palestinians to conclude that the purposes of the 'little hills' of dirt, movable spiked anti-tire barriers, and concrete blocks that are placed on roads used only by Palestinians are there not to protect Israelis as much as to humiliate and harass the Palestinian civilian population for no apparent security reasons.<sup>17</sup>

Such daily treatment by a foreign, powerful, and intimidating occupier over a 20 year span would undoubtedly not only create a desire for change, but also an ample amount of abhorrence towards the oppressor. Everyday exposure to not only the treatment but also the sight of this kind of abusive occupation understandably continually reinforces a rebellious psyche.

While volumes can be written on the abusive ways of the Israeli occupation forces, the actions of the settlers must also be taken into account. The machinegun-touting Israeli settlers who took over much of Palestine after 1967 verbally and physically abused Palestinians of all ages as well as their property and land, and often under the protection of the Israeli occupation forces. While Palestinians are not allowed to be armed, it is odd to find an unarmed settler. The settlers' racist attitudes towards the Palestinians were a further source of social injustice. This racism is vastly documented. For example, Abraham Isaac Kook, the founder of the most prominent settler movements after the Six Day War, Gush Emunim, and the leader of the settlers has said "The difference between a Jewish soul and souls of non-Jews--all of them in all different levels--is greater and deeper than the difference between a human soul and the souls of cattle."<sup>18</sup> Allan Brownfeld described just a few actions of these settlers explaining that to pursue its goals, terrorism was permissible in the eyes of Gush Emunim settlers. He then documents how in 1980, the Jewish Underground, a secret society of militants, booby-

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<sup>17</sup> Ricks, Thomas M. "In Their Own Voices: Palestinian High School Girls and Their Memories of the Intifadas and Nonviolent Resistance to Israeli Occupation, 1987 to 2004." *NWSA Journal* 18, no. 3 (2006): p96.

<sup>18</sup> Brownfeld, Allan C. "Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel." *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* 19.2 (2000): p108.

trapped the cars of three mayors of Arab towns, leaving two of them severely maimed. Furthermore, in 1983, gunmen killed three students and wounded 30 at Hebron's Islamic college.<sup>19</sup> These are only two of many atrocities undertaken by settlers in the occupied territories. With Kook being one of the more liberal leaders compared to the likes of Meir Kahane of the Kach movement, one can understand why the abuse Palestinians took during the 20 year occupation continuously brought them closer to the brink of an uprising. While the settlers and occupation forces were detrimental to the lives of the Palestinians' social freedom and protection from social abuse, the occupiers also attempted to crush the Palestinians' nationalist sentiments, further frustrating them while motivating them towards a push for sovereignty.

### **Denial of Ideological and Nationalist Ambitions for a Palestinian Identity**

Israel's denying the Palestinians' desires for an autonomous national identity was another major point of agitation which eventually surfaced in the form of the *Intifada*. Palestinians have had a history of being under the control of others, be it the Ottomans, British, Jordanians, or Egyptians but under Israeli rule they found themselves to be stripped of their Palestinian identity. Furthermore, while under the rule of other powers they maintained their own land. However, with the war of 1967 the Palestinian's land became occupied as well as inhabited by Israeli forces and settlers, which was particularly distressing and entirely new. This was a particularly sensitive issue for the Palestinians as they had already lost more than half of their lands to Israel in 1948. The loss of land after 1948 was still an open and painful wound for the Palestinians and land seizures following the 1967 occupation also acted as salt and lemon juice for the Palestinians' injuries. Nassar explains this aspect of the occupation in the following way:

During the earlier phase, Palestinian political culture was characterized by its emphasis on the lost homeland and the dream of "Return." It was alienation from the homeland that gave the Palestinians their most powerful common cultural bond. Now, after the defeat of 1967, Palestinians began to combine their longing for the "Return" with emphasis on the maintenance of their identity<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Brownfeld, Allan C. "Religious Zionism: A Growing Impediment To Middle East Peace." Washington Report on Middle East Affairs 21.9 (2002): p75.

<sup>20</sup> Nassar: p80.

After the Six Day War, Palestinians were routinely denied an identity which only furthered their resolve to be an autonomous people with a very strong identity. This was logically impossible if the Palestinians were under foreign occupation and rule. To make matters worse, even the United Nations which advocated the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories in the UN Security Council Resolution 242 made no mention of the Palestinian people except as refugees<sup>21</sup>. Israel, however, actively did the most to crush the Palestinians' goal of achieving their own sovereign identity. Nasser documents this in the following way by referring to

Mrs. Golda Meir's infamous speech of 1969. In it, she said: 'It was not as though there was a Palestinian people in Palestine considering itself as Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them.' The Israeli Prime Minister after 1967 proclaimed, 'They did not exist.' In addition, Israeli occupation authorities were busily strangling Palestinian expression in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Together, these activities prompted Palestinians everywhere to emphasize their own identity.<sup>22</sup>

Prime Minister Begin said "The term West Bank means nothing. It is Judea-Samaria. It is Israeli land belonging to the Jewish people."<sup>23</sup>

Such rhetoric by the heads of Israel speak volumes about the lengths Israel went to deny Palestinians an identity but practical actions were also taken to destroy a culture and to leave the Palestinians without any nationalist individuality. Cultural strangulation took many forms such as the way it was manifested in restrictions on freedom of expression within peaceful public gatherings opposing the occupation and calling for a nationalist endeavor, repression of education by censoring pro-Palestinian teachings, suppression of literature and art which often took the form nationalist poetry, and the curtailment of symbolic national expression such as wearing or displaying the colours of the Palestinian flag<sup>24</sup>. Moreover, universities were closed by the occupying power without notice on the grounds that they were havens for the development of national consciousness.<sup>25</sup> Nasser explains how the Israeli government went as far as removing the

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<sup>21</sup> Nassar: p79.

<sup>22</sup> Nassar: p80.

<sup>23</sup> Nassar: p82.

<sup>24</sup> Nassar: p82.

<sup>25</sup> Meghdessian, Samira. "The discourse of oppression as expressed in writings of the Intifada." *World Literature Today* 72.1 (1998): p43.

word “Palestine” from school textbooks and replacing it with “Israel”. He also documents how Palestinian products and cultural symbols were being marketed by Israel internationally as Israeli.<sup>26</sup> According to Samira Meghdessian, an underground system of oral and popular communication developed to reinforce national identity. The fact that the movement went underground following Israeli repression illustrates a build up and resistance to Israeli rule.<sup>27</sup> As the build up became larger, it could no longer be encompassed underground and thus was a supporting factor in the outbreak of the *Intifada*. Art, poetry, and prose took on a symbolic character to avoid censorship according to Meghdessian. This deepened the consciousness of the Palestinians and was influential in creating the culture of the *Intifada*. The frustration of the Palestinians regarding censorship was not limited to the repression of nationalist consciousness; political and legal action against Israeli occupation was also common practice after the Six Day War.

### **Blockade of Political and Legal Avenues to Achieving Freedom**

During the 20 year illegal occupation of Palestine following the Six Day War Israel suppressed all attempts of Palestinians to gain their autonomy via political and legal channels. This facet of Israeli oppression led to mass violent channels of the Intafada.

One tactic of political repression deployed by Israel was of deportation. During the 20 year build up leading to the *Intifada* thousands of Palestinians who went against the grain of the Israeli political policies were kicked out of their motherland. These deportations, according to Eytan Gilboa and Manuel Hassassian of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, included politicians, mayors, and activists<sup>28</sup>. According to Nassar the expulsion of nationalist Palestinian figures became even more intensified with the election of 1977 when the Likud's Menachem Begin's Israel brought a new approach to Israel's behavior. Nassar goes on to say that “Several mayors were ousted from office, others were expelled from the country, and yet others faced attempts on their lives or

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<sup>26</sup> Nassar and Heacock: p27.

<sup>27</sup> Meghdessian: p44.

<sup>28</sup> Hassassian, Manuel, and Eytan Gilboa. "The Intifada: Two Assessments." Terrorism & Political Violence 3.2 (1991): p110.

were maimed.”<sup>29</sup> By deporting the very group of people who tried to bring about political change Israel believed that it was extinguishing the growing fire of Palestinian frustration. In reality, and as the breakout of the *Intifada* displayed, the deportations and therefore the closing of political and legal avenues for change lead to the avenue of violence in the objective of gaining freedom.

Legal institutions were useless and unjust. The most prominent example of such an institution can be seen in the military government which ruled over the occupied territories. With little discrimination and never with a sound explanation the military government would, for example, grant settlers land which belonged to Palestinians. Palestinians did not have a say in the manner. Palestinians’ only avenue of any opposition to Israel’s rule was solely through the Military Objections Committee. Without much surprise, this Committee consisted of the same members of military government<sup>30</sup>. Politically, the rulers were the judge and the jury and the Palestinians were always subject to Israel’s unilateral decisions. The legal impediments the military government had on the Palestinians’ political freedom extended to the very basic needs of the Palestinian people such as freedom of expression, use of water, mobility rights, construction of buildings, investment, and much more. Denial of political rights resulted in mass irritation for the Palestinians who were trying to reach their aims in a peaceful manner. Being denied such a path to the goals made them turn towards, and thus learn the use of, violent tactics<sup>31</sup>.

Another example of political repression can be witnessed in the banning of the National Guidance Committee which sought the self-determination of Palestinians. At the same time, Palestinian political parties, demonstrations, and gatherings of more than 10 people were outlawed by the occupying power.<sup>32</sup> Contact with the Palestinian Liberation Organization who were nearly unanimously recognized by the Palestinians as their sole representative, was made illegal by the occupying power after 1980.<sup>33</sup> As of 1987 over

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<sup>29</sup> Nassar: p90.

<sup>30</sup> Shelley and Cashdan: p68.

<sup>31</sup> Vogele, William B. "Learning and nonviolent struggle in the Intifadah." *Peace & Change* 17.3 (1992): p315.

<sup>32</sup> Shelley and Cashdan: p20.

<sup>33</sup> Shelley and Cashdan: p20.

4700 political prisoners were held inside Israeli prisons.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, Israeli abuse of the legal system resulted in the arrest of 200 000 people out of the 1.7 million Palestinians in the occupied territories during the 20 year occupation.<sup>35</sup> Israel's demonstration that not only were the Palestinians subject to Israeli will, but also that there was no disputing or negotiating it, caused the already bottled up frustration of the Palestinians to boil over into what became known as the *Intifada*. Additionally, certain actions by Israel as well as Palestine's Arab neighbors accelerated the emergence of the *Intifada*.

### **Abandonment of the Palestinian Cause by Former Arab Allies**

Prior to the Israel's victory in the Six Day War, Palestine's Arab neighbors took up many relentless and largely unsuccessful campaigns against Israel. Comparative to all of her neighbors, Palestine was by far the weakest but nonetheless allied with the other Arab countries against Israel. The repeated crushing of the Arab countries by Israel eventually shifted the Arab's defiant and pugnacious behavior towards Israel to one of truce regardless of resentment. This was clear in a few different ways. For one, Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979<sup>36</sup>. This sent a clear signal to Palestinians that Egypt had significantly eased its stance against Israeli oppression of Palestine. A Similar hint was sent Palestine's way 6 years earlier when in 1973, the entire Arab League recognized the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people<sup>37</sup>. This was very significant as it displayed that the former caretakers of the Palestinian people were disconnecting themselves from the role of Palestine's defenders. While many other similar incidents took place during the 20 year occupation, the two most significant and relevant, especially considering their timing in regards to the break out of the *Intifada*, took place in 1986-1987. First, in February of 1986 King Hussein of Jordan condemned the PLOs policies and severed ties with Arafat<sup>38</sup>. Furthermore, before the Intafada Jordanian ties to Palestine were constantly detonating faster and worst than any Arab

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<sup>34</sup> Shelley and Cashdan: p21.

<sup>35</sup> Shelley and Cashdan: p21.

<sup>36</sup> Beitler: p68.

<sup>37</sup> Beitler: p60.

<sup>38</sup> Gause, F. George. *The Intifada: Its impact on Israel, the Arab world, and the Superpowers*. Miami: Florida International University Press, 1991: p193.

neighbor Palestine had.<sup>39</sup> Second, and much more importantly, the issue of Palestine was left out of the Arab League summit of 1987 which was held in Amman.<sup>40</sup> These behaviors of Palestine's former protectors had one vital effect: it sent a significant signal to the Palestinians which demonstrated that Israel would no longer be fought on behalf of Palestine by her neighbors. Thus, Palestinians knew that they had to take matters into their own hands and that, for the first time since the creation of Israel; they could no longer depend on Arab neighbors to free them from their frustrations and deliver them autonomy nor initiate a battle against Israel. Therefore, one catalyst for the Intafada was abandonment of Palestine by her Arab neighbors. Thus, beyond an overload of frustrations, the Palestinians also came to full grips with the fact that they had to be self-reliant in the conflict against Israel and for the first time take their own action. Understandably, this facet of the Intafada also strengthened the Palestinians autonomous and nationalist sentiments<sup>41</sup>.

### **Belief that Israel could be Made to Concede to Nationalistic Palestinians**

Israel was largely seen as an invincible force for most of the 20 year occupation leading to the *Intifada*, however, key downfalls of the military war machine inspired Palestinians to believe that Israel could indeed be defeated. One key event which supported this view was the poor Israeli outcome following the war in Lebanon in 1982. Israel had to retreat from the invasion of Lebanon due to strong Lebanese resistance. Amos Perlmutter wrote accurately in 1982 when he said that the Lebanese war had put Israel in a state of self doubt and made it too tired to fight.<sup>42</sup> This Lebanese ordeal, according to Nassar and Heacock broke the myth of Israeli invincibility.<sup>43</sup>

Another incident which signaled a gap in the Israeli war machine took place in November of 1987 when a Palestinian hang-glider penetrated Israel's Northern border by landing in a military base and killing 6 soldiers before being killed himself<sup>44</sup>. Thus, the Palestinians who were greatly mistreated and frustrated and who were coming to learn

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<sup>39</sup> Schanzer, Jonathan. "Palestinian Uprisings Compared." *Middle East Quarterly* 9.3 (2002): p30.

<sup>40</sup> Gause: p193.

<sup>41</sup> Beitler: p60.

<sup>42</sup> Perlmutter, Amos. "BEGIN'S RHETORIC AND SHARON'S TACTICS." *Foreign Affairs* 61.1 (1982): p83.

<sup>43</sup> Nassar and Heacock: p30.

<sup>44</sup> Hiltermann, R. Joost. *Behind the Intifada*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991: p3.

that they had to be self-reliant in order to achieve their freedom saw just what they needed: an Israeli weak point. Weakness in Lebanon was interpreted by Palestinians as a signal that Israel's jugular was more exposed than ever and that it would be strategically beneficial for Palestinians to show their teeth and attack. The tragic incident on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1987 which saw an Israeli vehicle kill 4 Palestinians<sup>45</sup> was the spark which set the Intafada, due to its supporting causes and catalysts, into motion after 20 years of a boiling frustration and oppression at the hands of a military and civil occupation.

## **Conclusion**

The affects of the accumulation of the abuse, oppression and marginalization the Palestinian people suffered over two decades became blatantly obvious with the outbreak of the Intafada. Given the harsh circumstances that Palestinians were faced with, one cannot be surprised that they finally and collectively struck back. Rather, the only question one is left asking is why did the Palestinians not stand up in the face of oppression earlier? Following the occupation which came after the Six Day War, the Palestinians entered a completely new and unique phase of their modern existence which entailed adjusting and coming to terms with the new and distant role that Palestine's Arab neighbors played in regards to her cause which, prior to 1967, had without exception been taken up on her behalf by her Arab allies against Israel ever since it was created in 1948. With this independence and increased passion for self-determination as a new mode of Palestinian thought, the rarely before seen signs of Israeli military weakness also accelerated the speed at which the first largely self-sufficient, reactive, and nationalist Palestinian uprising took place.

However, these factors would be irrelevant had Israel not occupied and treated the Palestinians as it did after 1967. Israeli policy, presence, and action within the illegally occupied territories created an unbearable atmosphere for the Palestinians. Mental, verbal, and physical abuses were widespread during the two decades of occupation and came at hands of both the military occupation and the religious settlers. All institutions further marginalized the Palestinian people, be it via gross economic oppression or education reforms which sought to teach Palestinians that they were non-existent peoples,

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<sup>45</sup> Hiltermann: p3.

and everything in between. This was an unprecedented new low for the Palestinians. The Israeli occupation dramatically changed the lives of the native population and virtually all aspects of Palestinians' lives were obstructed. The age old desire for freedom was met with more oppression, leading the Palestinians to be even more angry and determined to bring about a just change. Frustrations continuously grew and all outlets to accommodate the Palestinians' aspirations and needs were denied. Israel's denial of Palestinian efforts to win their human rights and autonomy via peaceful avenues left Palestinians with the option of pursuing their political agenda by violent means. Given the accumulation of grievances, over-looked ambitions, and aggravation which came about due to an all encompassing and overwhelming mistreatment that the Palestinians were faced with in every aspects of their lives for the 20 years of occupation, the eventual opting for the use of a violent avenue became more and more likely and was steadily viewed by the Palestinians as not only a desired path to travel, but also a viable one given the circumstances which were imposed on them.

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