

The Tide Is Turning Against Israeli Apartheid

Via [Jacobin](#)

With enormous pro-Palestine demonstrations erupting across the world – including a historic general strike today in Palestine itself – Israeli apartheid is feeling the heat. The next step is to bring it down.

“Do you support the protests, the *violent* protests, that have erupted in solidarity with you and other families in your position right now?”

“Do you support the violent dispossession of me and my family?”

Last week, CNN [interviewed](#) Mohammed El-Kurd from Sheikh Jarrah, Jerusalem – almost certainly the first time a Palestinian resisting dispossession was given the chance to speak on the network. With that brief opportunity, the young Palestinian swiftly challenged decades of malicious portrayals of the Palestinian struggle in [mainstream media](#).

The interview was emblematic of a broader shift in perceptions about the reality of Israeli apartheid. Mohammed is part of a new generation of Palestinians whose indignation is breaking through to people all over the world – and fueling resistance across Palestine.

One People, One Struggle

On Tuesday, Palestinians launched a historic nationwide general strike dubbed the [Unity Intifada](#). Millions participated shutting down businesses and gathering in large demonstrations in numerous cities across Palestine. Another 1.6 million Palestinian workers in Israel went on strike,

including transit workers, teachers, and nurses, [despite the threat of termination](#), cutting through decades of political and geographic fragmentation.

“The scenes across Palestine are breathtaking,” Palestinian writer Salem Barahmeh said. “Ramallah chanting for Gaza, Haifa singing to Ramallah, the Palestinian flag raised in Jerusalem. It is an incredible day led by the people for their liberation from the subjugation of a tyrannical regime. Long live Palestine.”

The [historic protests](#) are being organized by young Palestinians who reject any association with the traditional Palestinian leadership. When a member of the Palestinian Authority attempted to visit Sheikh Jarrah, the neighborhood committee released a statement repudiating those who cooperate with Israeli security forces. As Palestinian journalist Amjad Iraqi recently [noted](#), “An extraordinary feature of the demonstrations is that they are primarily being organized not by political parties or figures, but by young Palestinian activists, neighborhood committees, and grassroots collectives.”

And it’s not just Palestinians in occupied Palestine resisting. [Jordanians have been protesting](#) the Israeli embassy for days despite violent police crackdowns. Last Friday, hundreds assembled at the infamous Allenby Bridge connecting Jordan and the West Bank, chanting “open the border.” Several managed to break through.

In Lebanon, too, people gathered at the border, chanting and waving flags, preparing to cross and march to Jerusalem. Palestinians in Haifa tweeted instructions about which roads to use when entering the country. (One demonstrator was [shot and killed](#) by Israeli troops.)

Beyond acts of solidarity, these border protests are declarations of Palestinians’ wish to return to their land.

Millions of Jordanian and Lebanese citizens are in fact Palestinians, displaced in 1948 and 1967.

And the border protests are historic. Many have commented that the last time Palestinians were so unified was in 1947, ahead of Israel's violent founding.

The Tide Is Turning

Things are changing outside of Palestine as well.

[Solidarity protests](#) have erupted throughout much of the Middle East, from the Levant to the Gulf to North Africa, signaling the potential for a much broader uprising in the region.

In London, one hundred thousand marched over the weekend. In Paris, protesters rebuffed a [government prohibition](#) on Palestine solidarity demonstrations to turn out in the thousands. Carrying homemade signs with the slogans "We Can't Breathe," "Save Sheikh Jarrah," and "Free Gaza," thousands protested in dozens of cities across the United States last weekend. In Washington, DC, ten thousand people in a sea of Palestinian flags marched to demand an end to US funding for Israel's war crimes. Twenty thousand marched in downtown Chicago.

Palestinian voices on CNN and the [Washington Post](#) and an unprecedented number of statements by celebrities are making it clear the struggle for justice in Palestine is no longer a fringe issue. Mark Ruffalo joined longtime advocate Susan Sarandon in calling for sanctions on Israel. [Viola Davis](#) put out an explanation of the ethnic cleansing in Sheikh Jarrah. John Oliver delivered a [damning segment](#) on Israel's war crimes.

Equally significant was the intervention last week by pro-Palestine members of Congress, including members of "the Squad," who went [well beyond](#) hollow statements about the "cycle of violence" and pain felt by "both sides" and spoke

out explicitly against the impunity that the US government grants Israel.

Palestinian American Rashida Tlaib, in what was truly a historic act, called on fellow members of Congress to recognize the *nakba* and acknowledge the ethnic cleansing campaigns of 1947–1948. Ayanna Pressley and Cori Bush powerfully connected the Palestinian struggle to Black Lives Matter, with Bush declaring, in no uncertain terms, “we are anti-apartheid.”

And Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez drew links between Israel’s onslaught on Gaza and US imperialism in Puerto Rico:

My family comes from the island of Puerto Rico, and I grew up visiting my family on the island of Vieques, where the United States bombed its own territories. . . . And I would go to sleep as a little girl to the sound of US bombs detonating. Practice is what it was called at the time. Practice. And when I saw those air strikes that are supported with US funds, I could not help but wonder if our communities were practice for this. This is our business because we are playing a role in it.

This Is Our Business

Over forty thousand Palestinians in Gaza have lost their homes in the last seven days of Israel’s assault. Over two hundred Palestinians have been killed, including fifty-nine children. Israel has bombed a media building, a power plant, schools housing refugees, Gaza’s largest library and publishing house, and roads to hospitals. During a twenty-minute bombing interval last Thursday, a Palestinian in Gaza [tweeted](#): “I lived through three wars in this country. The last 20 minutes were worse than all of them.” There is nothing defensible about Israel’s so-called [right to self-defense](#).

Time and again the United States has [defended](#) Israel’s war

crimes as US-manufactured bombs rain down on Palestinians from US-manufactured warplanes. Just this month, Joe Biden approved a \$735 million arms sale to Israel. A movement to put sanctions on Israel could undermine all of that.

The world is finally seeing the truth about Israel, and the tide is turning in our favor. With a [push for sanctions](#) in the United States and from movements on the ground in Palestine, Israeli apartheid could finally begin to crumble. And indeed, this is exactly what Palestinians are asking us to do. The strikers called for sanctions on Israel and for a boycott of Israeli products, stating simply, "Don't support those who occupy."

Moral appeals have not brought down Israeli settler-colonialism. Only a movement that pushes the US and other governments to halt their support for Israel's war machine can hold Israel to account – and bolster the struggle for Palestinian liberation.