

The map the Israeli Left doesn't know

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Conflicts are resolved when the two warring sides arrive at a shared narrative, at an agreement (more or less) on what really happened during the history of the conflict. The Jewish public in Israel is still at the stage of denial and lying about its true history. We still live according to the myths of making the desert bloom, a land without a people for a people without a land, no such thing as a Palestinian people, an empty market square. We also continue to stuff the next generation with these lies. I hope that this Nakba map will serve as a tool for exposing the truth about what happened in Israel, so that the public can wake up and begin speaking the truth.

Why am I focusing on the Israeli Left? I can understand that there is something outrageous about this, when such terrible things are happening around us - incitement and the horrific arson at Duma, for example - that are not directly connected to the Israeli Left. The reason is that we need to ask ourselves: What is the source of the Left's colossal failure to expand its ranks? The lifeblood of a political movement comes from recruiting large numbers of people and the Left in Israel has failed at this time after time, for decades.

There are those who say that the public is idiotic and use phrases such as "false consciousness" in order to explain the public's stances. I think that whoever says these things is idiotic himself, ignorant himself. One needs to reflect on the history of the Left in order to understand exactly what is happening here. Perhaps in this way the map of the Nakba will be acknowledged by the general public, and not just in forums such as this one.

I will present a few examples of how the Left simply denies the Nakba map. It denies the expulsion of Palestinians in 1948 and yet purports to adopt an egalitarian and enlightened position.

Regarding relations between the majority and the minority in Israel, almost every organization that speaks about a shared society and shared lives does so only in relation to citizenship for Arabs. There is a very small minority that treats Palestinians as a collective with its own history. By contrast, it is clear to us as Jews that there is a Jewish state within which we will continue as a collective. Palestinian activists in these organizations are forced to accept this Jewish hegemony. The Jewish activists who established the organizations that work for a shared society are the ideological descendants of the same political and ethnic group that is considered the "Left" in Israeli politics, in spite of their broad responsibility for the Palestinian Nakba - both during and after the war - when they blocked the return of refugees and settled their land. The same institutions have continued to be established, from the Jewish "founding generation" of 1948 right through to the organizations of today; they spoke about "co-existence" but decided in advance that certain issues would lie outside the political discussion between Jews and Palestinian citizens of Israel - and chief

among these is the Nakba. They still support the political dialogue within the political framework of the “Zionist Left” that takes an active part in the denial of the Nakba.

A clear example of the argument in my title is the well-known “Supreme Court Kaadan” petition, submitted by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI). Adel and Iman Kaadan applied to live in the town of Katzir but were refused. ACRI petitioned the Supreme Court in their name, demanding that Katzir be forced to accept the family. The Supreme Court accepted the petition. We are talking about a petition that, ostensibly, everyone must agree with. It’s terrible that a person cannot be someone’s neighbor just because they have a different national identity. But it’s worthwhile looking at the language of the Supreme Court and ACRI, which closely guards the interests of the Ashkenazi elite. The judge, Aharon Barak, is dealing with a relatively trivial issue - the right of a citizen to live in a community - and from that he progresses to denial of the Palestinian Nakba; in fact, he denies the map we are discussing here. This is what ACRI wrote in its petition, strongly endorsed by Aharon Barak:

“The petitioners have no intention of instigating a judicial review of long-standing policies, according to which communities have been established throughout the country with the help of settlement organizations: kibbutzim, moshavim and outposts, which in the past and today have almost always been inhabited exclusively by Jews. The petitioners are not focusing their claim on the legitimacy of this policy as practiced in the period prior to the establishment of the state or since its inception. Nor are they challenging the decisive role played by the Jewish Agency in Jewish settlement throughout the country during this century.” This is a display of hegemony disguised as a show of subversiveness. Aharon Barak effectively said, “We will not speak about all the elite Ashkenazi apparatuses that were built here and all that is connected to settlement and the confiscation of land and Judaization and kibbutzim and communal settlements and all the measures that are in the hands of a particular group. Of this we will not speak. We will speak about the racism of today alone, from the moment that we and ACRI have designated. And we have placed that point somewhere in the 1990s.” That is to say, there is no history. History started from the point that Aharon Barak and ACRI agreed on between them.

Another example that is difficult for me on a personal level is an article written by a dear friend, attorney Michael Sfar, who represented me 12 years ago when I refused an army order and was sitting in prison. His article was published in Haaretz newspaper under the heading “48 years since the occupation of '67.” It was a clear example of the Left’s almost exclusive focus on the occupation of 1967, compared with the very rare discussion of what took place in 1948. Michael Sfar claimed that since the establishment of the state there have been two entities struggling with one another. The first is liberal and pluralistic with strong democratic foundations, according to its own definition. The second is the entity of settlers in the territories occupied in 1967. The Left promotes this narrative, according to which Israel’s ideological base - the old and established elite - is worthy and democratic, and was sucked dry by the occupation of '67. This map shows that this is not the case. The occupation of 1967 is a direct continuation of a logic that was here before that. It’s a demographic and geographic logic of Judaizing the region. One cannot exclusively blame settlers for this, even if some of them do horrendous things. And one also

cannot blame this logic either on those who shout “death to Arabs” or on the fans of Beitar Jerusalem.

It’s worth examining the ethnic dimensions of this issue, namely what occurs between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim. The line that Aharon Barak and ACRI stuck to attributes racism solely to the fans of Beitar Jerusalem. Their own hands are clean; they want Arab neighbors, the Kaadan family. They ignore this map and Israel’s political roots, so it is not surprising that a SHATIL campaign represented a racist as a Beitar Jerusalem fan with dark skin and a Star of David pendant. This is how it works today. In a Haaretz campaign, titled “Until an Arab plays for Beitar,” who are the terrible racists? Fans of Beitar Jerusalem. But if we look at what happened in communal settlements and kibbutzim, we find the same element of “eternal purity.” It’s also important to mention that these places have profited far more from the Palestinian Nakba than have Beitar Jerusalem fans.

As a Mizrahi that grew up in Gilo and who was a Beitar Jerusalem fan, this entire matter upsets me. Why are neighborhoods in Jerusalem, for example Gilo, called settlements? I can understand why a Palestinian would relate to me as a settler, of course, but when a Jew who lives in Talbiye or Katamon claims that Gilo and Pisgat Ze’ev destroyed the chance for peace it’s outrageous.

Another important aspect is the denial of crimes against the Mizrahi public. The politics of the Left does not include, in its platforms, party activism and civil society organizations, the history of the kidnapping of babies from Yemen, the East and the Balkans. This crime did not take place. The clinical experiments on children, children with ringworm, also did not take place. There is also no tracking of the education system, something which continues to the present day. The education system continues to operate according to the logic that the "Oriental mind" is possessed of lower cognitive ability and should therefore be at a vocational school. This shows that the Left denies the causes of its privileges. The same goes for the economy, education, and representational centers of power such as the Supreme Court and various boards. There is total denial alongside the talk of striving for enlightenment and equality. In my view, failing to talk about the matters above is preventing the chance to shuffle the deck in the Israeli political system.

To close I will present two sections from the book "Gate of the Sun," by Elias Khoury (published by Andalus, edited by Yael Lerer). It's a book about the Galilee, about Palestinian refugees in Lebanon that have succeeded in entering [Israel], what we refer to as "infiltrating." Of this "infiltration," there is unmistakable evidence that they shot anyone who was outside during curfew hours. In the book the same refugees return and meet with the new residents. In these two events Khoury is speaking about the Mizrahi public in a way from which the Left can learn. However, he points out that these people are settling on the land of Palestinians, of the same returning refugees.

In the first section Umm Hassan from Shatila refugee camp returned to visit her house and meets Ella Dweik, who Yael Lerer tells me is based on Ella Shohat. "Ella Dweik told Umm Hassan how she lived in the transit camp and how they sprayed the Eastern Jews with insecticide like animals, before admitting them to the stone

barracks. She cried when they'd forced her to take off her clothes. A blond woman approached her with the long, cylindrical sprayer and showered every part of her body mercilessly. She told how her father, a man in his fifties, began howling when they ordered him to remove his red fez. He was standing when suddenly a hand approached his fez and his fez flew and turned into a football while the soldiers played and laughed. When he could see the fez was destroyed he started howling, repeating, "There is no god but God." So they assumed he was a Muslim and subjected him to a prolonged interrogation before asking him to remove his clothes and spraying him – letting him get used to standing there naked, without a fez, forever (pg. 117). The Left in Israel is afraid of the Arabness of those who came from Arab countries, and thus stripped them of their Arab style. My father, for example, was ashamed of speaking Hebrew with a guttural "chet" and "ayin."

The second extract takes place in Al-Birwa, I have a good friend from there. Ahihud is a Yemeni moshav located on the land of Al-Birwa. And this section deals with the kidnapping of Yemenite children. Yunes returns from Lebanon and meets his beloved Nahilah. He tells her that at night he sees a female spirit. Nahilah responds: "A spirit woman! The Yemenis are everywhere. That was a Yemeni Jewess.' Nahilah told Yunes about the sobs they'd heard coming from the moshav the Yemenis had built over al-Birwa and about the mysterious rumors that of children dying and disappearing. She said the Yemeni Jewesses would go out into the fields and lament like Arab women and that she'd started to fear for her children. 'If the children of the Jews are disappearing, what will happen to ours? That sprit woman was no spirit,' said Nahila. 'She was a poor woman like most of us who must have lost one of her children. So when she saw you, she probably thought you were a vision of the prophet Elias.' Nahila laughed at you, at Yunes, and called you Elias, saying that with your beard you'd started to look like a Jewish prophet. You cannot forget the scene – a black ray emerging from the red rays of the sun, a woman kneeling on the ground and crying out in a voice to rend the heavens" (pg. 500).