
BTTN Journal

p-ISSN 2958-1214

e-ISSN 2958-1222



BOOK REVIEW

Book Name: *On Palestine* written by Noam Chomsky & Ilan Pappé

(Penguin Publishers, April 2015)

Review by Asad Asadullah Raisani¹

On Palestine is an interactive book authored by an expatriate Israeli historian & social activist Ilan Pappé and the famous American linguist, philosopher, cognitive scientist, historical essayist, social critic, and political activist Avram Noam Chomsky. It is edited by Frank Barat, a French author and film producer. It is published by Penguin Books in 2015. This book is known as Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé's indispensable update on a suffering region.

On Palestine is divided into two parts; part one deals with the past, present & future of the state of Israel - a Zionist state, while the second part elaborates reflections of Israeli atrocities and Zionist projects. Ilan Pappé stresses in the first part on the old peace paradox and its challengers. In this regard, he argues that there is a great change in world public opinion towards Palestine today. Back in the 1970s, we could not talk against Israeli atrocities as openly as we do today, it means people are listening to us now. While the continuous support of the Western political and economic elites, with the United States on the top, to Israeli apartheid and oppression

¹ The author is currently working as Research Officer at Balochistan Think Tank Network, at BUIITEMS. He can be reached at asadullahraisani@bttn.org.pk

is a hurdle to creating any positive impact on the ground. At worst, any interference against Israeli brutalities is considered naïve or anti-Semitic.

Throwing light on the events that occurred in the past, both authors talked about the Balfour Declaration of 1917 as it gave Jews the right to live in Palestine. Then in 1948, the state of Israel was established giving 56 percent of the Palestinian land to the Jews. Noam Chomsky argues that separate land for Jews was not a Zionist project in the beginning. He says that he was a young Zionist then and Zionism at that time was established to create a state of harmony between Arabs and Jews, not a separate Jewish or Zionist state. Later, the Oslo Accord of 1993 gave some 80 percent of the Palestinian lands to the Israelis. On the question of apartheid, Frank Barat received the answer that inside Israel, there is repression, but not apartheid whereas in the occupied territories it is much worse than apartheid.

Authors criticized the negative role of international media as well, particularly BBC and CNN. They argue that such media channels have made and are still making every possible effort to justify Israeli repression and expansionism. They have also suggested that terms like “the only democracy in the Middle East,” and “Palestinian primitivism” should be changed to give a clear picture of Israeli atrocities in Palestine.

While speaking on the chances of dialogue between the Palestinians and the Israelis, the authors argue that for Israel, Greater Israel is a starter, which includes no Palestinians or a few Palestinians. However, there was a chance of dialogue in April 2014 when an agreement was reached between the Gaza-based Hamas and the Occupied West Bank-based Palestinian Authority. It was called the Unity Agreement. This unity snatched a great excuse from Israeli authorities who used to claim that how can Israel start a dialogue with the people who are internally divided. Israeli state

then raided West Bank and Gaza creating a war-like situation to unofficially alarm both sides to remain divided.

Moreover, the authors also emphasize upon Israeli atrocities; for the past fourteen years, Israel kills two Palestinian children a week, in 2012 an Israeli was killed by fire from besieged Gaza while 78 Palestinians were killed in retaliation, and in 2014 after a fifty days long Israeli assault on Gaza some 2,100 Palestinians were killed. Amid such barbarity when Hamas reacts, it is blamed for terrorizing Israel. While talking about the role of the international community in this regard, Noam Chomsky argues, “What international community is doing right now reminds us once more the famous Jewish joke of someone looking for a key lost where there was light, but not where he lost the key.”

Talking about a way forward the authors have rightly suggested that academia should change its use of terms to target Israeli atrocities. Like, Ilan Pappé argues that what Israel is doing is hardly a peace process, so people should stop calling it a peace process. Noam Chomsky suggests not to recognize Israel as a Jewish state as we do not recognize the United States as a Christian state. They further argue that the international community, particularly the West should not back Zionist’s illogical logics and inhumane projects.

To conclude, *On Palestine* is an exceptional book to get to know the Palestine issue at its core. Both authors are Jews, but are brave enough to criticize Zionist objectives which is admirable. Ilan Pappé has served in the Israeli forces and has spent a great share of his life in Israel. While Noam Chomsky has remained a young Zionist and he has been vocal about Israeli atrocities for a long time earning the title of “global phenomenon” by The New York Times Book Review. Moreover, as the book is an interactive one based on the interactions of the authors and editor, it makes it more interesting and worth reading.