Israel’s system of permanent violence: The new Palestinian uprising in context

October 13, 2015

Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign

<http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context>

There has been an upsurge of violence in the Palestine-Israel region since October 1st. Settler attacks on Palestinians, which had been running at between 50 and 80 per month, have surged to over 120 attacks in the first week of October. These attacks include firebombings, shootings, burning crops and stoning houses – often under the protection of the army.[[1]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftn1) Israeli army and police have brutally attacked West Bank Palestinian demonstrators, with over 1,300 people injured by live and rubber-coated bullets.

Against this background of widespread colonial violence against Palestinians, condemned by human rights groups like Amnesty International, there have been some especially horrific attacks – the female student, Hadeel al-Hashlamon gunned down at a checkpoint in Hebron for no reason in late September, the 13 year old Abed al-Rahman Obeidallah shot ‘by mistake’ in a refugee camp, 7 protesters shot dead in Gaza, a mother and child killed in an airstrike. Human rights organisations have said many of the deaths to ‘unlawful killings’ or ‘extrajudicial assassinations’.[[2]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftn2) Palestinians in turn have launched individual attacks on Israelis, mostly in stabbing attacks. To date, at least thirty Palestinians and six Israelis have been killed in October.

The Irish media has barely reported the violence, and when it has, this has largely focused on Israeli deaths[[3]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftn3) and perspectives. Palestinians are blamed for the upsurge in violence. We are told that somehow, for some reason, Palestinians are worried that their access to the Al Aqsa Mosque compound (the religious site in Jerusalem housing known as the ‘Noble Sanctuary’ to Muslims and ‘Temple Mount’ to Jews) may be threatened. This is despite Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu being regularly quoted as saying that he is committed to maintaining the status quo.[[4]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftn4) Seen like this, it appears that Palestinians are initiating violence because they are in the grip of mindless religious fears and frenzies. Nothing could be further from the truth.

How RTE has covered the issue.

The attack on Palestinians in East Jerusalem and the West Bank

It is true that one reason for the violence is the Al Aqsa compound. It has been under increased assault by religious settlers, supported by the Israeli government, over the past few months. The mosque compound is in the heart of Jerusalem’s Old City, in the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel wants it for itself. The Israeli government is now restricting Palestinian access and providing military escorts to far-right religious Jewish activists to pray there, deliberately provoking clashes. Describing the situation, Omar Hamilton writes:

*When you live in Jerusalem, the Noble Sanctuary is exactly that. It is a shield from the daily humiliations of occupation, it is the center of traditional life in the city, it is the psycho-social heart. It is the one place that Israel does not own.*

*And so it is under attack. Every day groups of settlers are given armed escorts through its gardens, Israeli soldiers loll on the grass and receive lectures from officers while access to Palestinian residents and worshipers is regularly restricted. At the entrance used for the settlers, the police have dozens of riot shields lined up in preparation for the next clash.**[[5]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftn5)*

The long-term aim of this provocation is clear – to restrict or perhaps even ban Muslims from the site while allowing Israeli Jews free access. Influential Israeli groups – like the government funded Temple Institute – also want to destroy the Al-Aqsa mosque.[[6]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftn6) This is a familiar pattern to Palestinians, who have had hundreds of mosques destroyed by Israel since its inception, and have suffered restricted access to important religious sites such as the al-Ibrahimi mosque in Hebron.

Israel’s assault on Al Aqsa is part of its wider plan to Judaise Jerusalem – something which involves expelling the native Palestinian population, which it has been doing since 1948. Besides evicting Palestinians from their homes in Jerusalem, Israel’s policy is to force them to leave by making life unbearable. For Palestinian Jerusalemites, the lack of basic services, the curfews and restrictions, the difficulty in retaining residency and daily humiliations at the hands of an occupying army has made their life in the city a Kafkaesque nightmare, a series of nooses tightening around their necks.[[7]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftn7)

Palestinian protesters injured and detained by Israeli occupation forces near Ramallah

But it’s not just Jerusalem. Throughout the West Bank, life for Palestinians is becoming harder as Israel’s network of illegal settlements expands. The settlers act like every colonial elite has ever done, visiting acts of mindless random cruelty against the local population, seeking to drive them out. An example of this was the firebombing of the Dawabshe family home in July which killed one-year old Ali Dawabshe, his mother Riham and father Sa’ad. The killers, who have been identified by the Israeli police, remain at large – a microcosm of how Israelis can murder Palestinians with impunity.

A Third Intifada?

Trapped within this circle of despair, Palestinians are fighting back as colonised people have always done, with whatever weapons are close to hand. The Israeli public have gleefully thrown themselves into this fight – the Israeli journalist, Amira Hass is right when she says that ‘Israelis are fighting for the occupation, while Palestinians are fighting for their lives.’[[8]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftn8) But Israelis, and in particular the recently elected government, are committed to the occupation. Since the elections, government ministers have delighted in dismissing the possibility of a two-state solution, of negotiating with Palestinians and of ever ending the occupation.[[9]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftn9)

The Israeli government is full of messianic Zionists who see the occupation as something glorious, a means of ‘redeeming’ the biblical lands of Judea and Samaria (which is how they refer to the occupied West Bank). The upsurge of violence offers them a means of expanding the military occupation, with Benjamin Netanyahu calling for an ‘all-out war’ against Palestinians. The mayor of Jerusalem, Nir Barkat who was elected on a platform of further Israeli colonisation of East Jerusalem, has gone further. He has supported vigilante actions by urging Jerusalem residents (that is, Jewish Jerusalem residents) to carry guns.[[10]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftn10) With fascist mobs in Israeli cities attacking isolated Palestinians and calling for ‘Death to the Arabs’ [[11]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftn11), with rabbis demanding that all ‘terrorists’ be instantly killed, war fever is being stoked once again in Israel.[[12]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftn12) Meanwhile, Israeli occupation troops are shooting down protestors, attacking medics[[13]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftn13), bombing the Gaza strip and arresting countless people.

Palestinian father Yehya Hassan mourns while holding the body of his daughter, Rahaf, during a funeral for the toddler and her pregnant mother in Gaza

It is interesting that protests have spread inside Israel as well, with young Palestinian citizens of Israel taking to the streets and being repressed by police in cities like Haifa, Jaffa, Nazarteth and elsewhere. This reflects the marginalisation of this community within Israel, which faces over 50 discriminatory laws directed at it.[[14]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftn14) A one-day general strike of amongst Palestinian citizens has been called.[[15]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftn15) Meanwhile Nethanyahu has asked the Attorney General to lay charges of incitement against Palestinian member of the Israeli parliament Haneen Zoabi for calling for a ‘real intifada’, and attempts are afoot to outlaw the Islamic Movement in Israel.[[16]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftn16)

There has been talk that this violence is leading to a ‘third intifada’. Some Palestinian leaders have called for this and many Israeli pundits are eagerly predicting a third intifada. They believe that in a situation of increased violence, the world will permit the Israeli government to commit more atrocities against the Palestinians in the West Bank, and perhaps even allow them to achieve their dream – and the Palestinian nightmare – of an ethnically purified Jerusalem.

Palestinian women have been to the fore in demonstrations

Why now?

This is not a war between two equal sides, nor is it about competing but equally valid territorial claims – it is a struggle between oppressor and oppressed, the coloniser and the colonised. It is a struggle against a brutal occupation that is almost fifty years old, and colonial injustices that date back at least seven decades.

With only stones, knives and petrol bombs Palestinian youth – male and female – are taking on the military might of the Israel’s army of occupation. This is a generation that grew up during and after the second intifada, in a period that has seen over 9,000 Palestinians, including 2,000 children, killed by occupation forces while thousands more were imprisoned and tortured. It is a generation that has lived through countless Israeli ‘Operations’, including three massive assaults on Gaza between 2008 and 2014, the latest killing over 2,200 people, 556 of them children. It is a generation that has seen division and acrimony paralyse the Palestinian national movement. It is a generation which has, in the words of Stop The Wall coordinator Jamal Juma, lost their fear and for whom ‘nothing intimidates them; not point-blank killings nor the new law punishing stone throwing with up to 20 years of imprisonment.’[[17]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftn17) Palestinian legislator Mustafa Barghouti has remarked that:

*This generation feels completely deprived from their rights; they suffer from poverty, unemployment and an utter lack of opportunity…the people in the streets feel they’ve crossed into a whole different stage. After 22 years of completely useless negotiations, they are taking things into their own hands.**[[18]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftn18)*

Resisting occupation is a right under international law, and this generation of Palestinian youth are saying ‘Khallas!’, ‘Enough!’

A lawyer in official robes kicks a tear gas canister back toward Israeli occupation troops during a protest

Unfortunately, violence has also been inflicted upon Israeli civilians; all violence against civilians is to be deplored. But it would be wrong to leave such violence without context, as if it existed in a vacuum. As the Israeli journalist Amira Hass has said:

Young Palestinians do not go out to murder Jews *because they are Jews*, but because we are their occupiers, their torturers, their jailers, the thieves of their land and water, their exilers, the demolishers of their homes, the blockers of their horizon.[[19]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftn19)

Many of the civilians who have been attacked have been illegal Israeli settlers. Among the settlers there so-called ‘economic settlers’, who choose to live on stolen land for reasons of personal financial gain. There are also ‘ideological settlers’ whose messianic mission is to drive Palestinians off yet of their land more so it can be colonised and incorporated into a ‘Greater Israel’. It is these ideological settlers – heavily armed, violently racist military-backed militants – who have, in the words of Jamal Juma, played a “prominent role” in Israeli attacks on Palestinians:

The settler population has become a well-armed, well-organised and ideologically driven militia. They maraud in Palestinian villages and attack Palestinians in the streets and even in their homes…settlers have carried out a string of terror attacks on Palestinians. Israel maintains and supports this fanatic militia to carry out the dirtiest parts of Israeli aggression and repression in the West Bank.[[20]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftn20)

Is it thus any great wonder that illegal settlers would become targets of desperate Palestinians who view them as land thieves and colonial enforcers?

This is not to endorse violence against civilians, but to explain why it happens and why such violence has been a feature of anti-colonial movements across the globe, including South Africa and India. Such violence in no way detracts from the legitimacy of the struggle for rights and freedoms. As the Israeli journalist Gideon Levy put it, ‘even Gandhi would understand the Palestinians’ violence.’

Armed Israeli settler stands outside the illegal Israeli settlement of Kiryat Arba, near Hebron

To end the violence, end the occupation and injustice

We don’t predict where the current uprising will lead, whether it will lead to a more generalised popular resistance or will subside over the coming days and weeks. However, we salute the bravery of those who struggle for their rights in the face of discrimination and repression, and against systemised army and settler violence.

As many others do, we hope for a speedy end to the violence. But we understand that colonial control is a system of permanent violence. To bring about an end the violence, the Israeli occupation and associated injustices must end and Palestinians must be free to enjoy their rights. As imprisoned Palestinian political leader Marwan Barghouthi has said:

*No people on the globe would accept to coexist with oppression. By nature, humans yearn for freedom, struggle for freedom, sacrifice for freedom, and the freedom of the Palestinian people is long overdue… the last day of occupation will be the first day of peace. Those who seek the latter need to act, and act now, to precipitate the former.**[[21]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftn21)*

Palestinians demonstrate at the Apartheid Wall

We must act now

Of course, we cannot simply wait for politicians to act to end Israel’s impunity – if we don’t pressure them we will be waiting forever! Palestinian academic and journalist Mouin Rabanni recounted a recent meeting he had with a European diplomat.

*When I asked her to name a single form of Palestinian non-violent resistance her government would be prepared to support, I received nothing more than a bemused stare.*

Is it any wonder Palestinians feel such desperation and frustration? Western political elites are, at best, indifferent to their suffering and unwilling to assist their fightback. At worst – as when the British government announces it is going to make it illegal for local councils to support the global boycott of Israel (BDS), or when the French courts prosecute human rights activists for supporting BDS – they actively undermine effective non-violent opposition to the occupation and all its associated human rights abuses, international law violations, vicious oppression and ongoing killings perpetrated by Apartheid Israel.

We, citizens and civil society groups, must act to bring pressure to bear on Israel and our own political representatives.  That is why we support, and encourage you, to get involved with the global [Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement](http://www.bdsmovement.net) for Palestinian rights – one way to do this is to get [active with the Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign](http://www.ipsc.ie/get-involved) and help us in our campaign to assist Palestinians in their struggle for freedom, justice, equality and peace!

We also ask you to take action to [End The Irish Arms Trade With Israel](http://www.ipsc.ie/noarmstrade), to ask [supermarkets to stop stocking Israeli goods](http://www.ipsc.ie/campaigns/consumer-boycott), and to come to the [Emergency Demonstration in Dublin](http://www.ipsc.ie/event/dublin-emergency-protest-for-palestine-end-israeli-attacks-on-palestinians) on Thursday 15th October.

Palestinians symbolically smash the Apartheid Wall with sledgehammers.

ENDS

*[[1]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftnref1) ‘There have been over 122 Israeli settler attacks on Palestinians in the first week of October’* [*http://mondoweiss.net/2015/10/settler-palestinians-october*](http://mondoweiss.net/2015/10/settler-palestinians-october)

*[[2]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftnref2) ‘Bringing into question Israel’s extra-judicial killings’* [*http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/10/bringing-question-palestine-israel-extra-judicial-killings-151012070120570.html*](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/10/bringing-question-palestine-israel-extra-judicial-killings-151012070120570.html)

*[[3]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftnref3) For instance the violence has not appeared on RTE evening news over the past week, and it has carried few reports on its website.*

*[[4]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftnref4) For instance: ‘Netanyahu cancels German visit as violence spreads across Israel: Number of incidents yesterday sees flashpoints spread beyond Jerusalem’* [*https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/middle-east/binyamin-netanyahu-cancels-german-visit-as-violence-spreads-1.2382938*](https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/middle-east/binyamin-netanyahu-cancels-german-visit-as-violence-spreads-1.2382938)

[*[5]*](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context#_ftnref5) *‘Jerusalem at a breaking point’* [*http://mondoweiss.net/2015/10/jerusalem-breaking-point*](http://mondoweiss.net/2015/10/jerusalem-breaking-point)

*[[6]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftnref6) ‘Destruction of Jerusalem’s al-Aqsa mosque is Israeli groups’ ultimate goal’* [*https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/destruction-jerusalems-al-aqsa-mosque-israeli-groups-ultimate-goal*](https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/destruction-jerusalems-al-aqsa-mosque-israeli-groups-ultimate-goal)

*[[7]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftnref7) ‘Jerusalem at a breaking point’* [*http://mondoweiss.net/2015/10/jerusalem-breaking-point*](http://mondoweiss.net/2015/10/jerusalem-breaking-point)

*[[8]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftnref8) ‘Palestinians Are Fighting for Their Lives; Israel Is Fighting for the Occupation’* [*http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-1.679129*](http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-1.679129)

*[[9]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftnref9) ‘Israel 2015: A government of extremists in charge of an-out-of control military’* [*http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/israel-2015-a-government-of-extremists-in-charge-of-an-out-of-control-military-new-ipsc-briefing-paper*](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/israel-2015-a-government-of-extremists-in-charge-of-an-out-of-control-military-new-ipsc-briefing-paper)

*[[10]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftnref10) ‘Jerusalem Mayor Urges Residents to Carry Personal Firearms’* [*http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/201569#.VhkE5yt4FXt*](http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/201569#.VhkE5yt4FXt)

*[[11]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftnref11) ‘There is no co-existence with cancer’: Right-wing Israelis demand gov’t give military ‘free hand’ to fight Palestinians’* [*http://mondoweiss.net/2015/10/existence-military-palestinians*](http://mondoweiss.net/2015/10/existence-military-palestinians)

*[[12]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftnref12) ‘Leading Rabbi Rules: Terrorists Must Not Be Allowed to Live’.* [*http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/201633#.VhkGFSt4FXs*](http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/201633#.VhkGFSt4FXs)

*[[13]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftnref13) The Palestinian Red Crescent notes 53 attacks on its personnel by Israeli forces, ‘Israeli Occupation Forces Intentionally Target PRCS Teams and Ambulances in Occupied Jerusalem’* [*http://www.palestinercs.org/en/details.php?nid=1073*](http://www.palestinercs.org/en/details.php?nid=1073)

*[[14]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftnref14) ‘The Discriminatory Laws Database’* [*http://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/7771*](http://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/7771)

*[[15]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftnref15) ‘Palestinians in Israel call for strike as protests grow’* [*http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/10/palestinians-israel-call-strike-protests-grow-151012160902402.html*](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/10/palestinians-israel-call-strike-protests-grow-151012160902402.html)

*[[16]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftnref16) ‘Netanyahu: Indict Arab MK for incitement’* [*http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4709570,00.html*](http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4709570,00.html)

*[[17]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftnref17) ‘The next Intifada: A struggle against the Bantustans’* [*http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/next-intifada-struggle-against-bantustans-1061996685*](http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/next-intifada-struggle-against-bantustans-1061996685)

*[[18]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftnref18) ‘Party politics irrelevant to Palestinian youth in new uprising’* [*http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/party-politics-irrelevant-angry-palestinian-youth-new-uprising-2046822105*](http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/party-politics-irrelevant-angry-palestinian-youth-new-uprising-2046822105)

*[[19]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftnref19) ‘Palestinians Are Fighting for Their Lives; Israel Is Fighting for the Occupation’* [*http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-1.679129*](http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-1.679129)

*[[20]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftnref20) ‘The next Intifada: A struggle against the Bantustans’* [*http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/next-intifada-struggle-against-bantustans-1061996685*](http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/next-intifada-struggle-against-bantustans-1061996685)

*[[21]](http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/a-system-of-permanent-violence-the-new-palestinian-uprising-in-context" \l "_ftnref21) ‘There will be no peace until Israel’s occupation of Palestine ends’* [*http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/oct/11/israel-occupation-palestinian-territory-peace-diplomacy*](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/oct/11/israel-occupation-palestinian-territory-peace-diplomacy)

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