



**Israel at 70** By intervening in Gaza and Syria, Israel shows that dispossession once begun is irreversible  
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### STATES OF MATTER

# A birthday gift

With the US embassy in Israel slated to shift to Jerusalem, the Zionist state is a step closer to erasing a people's history even as it continues its war without end against neighbours



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It is not clear yet if US President Trump will leave stormy Washington DC long enough for in-person delivery of gifts promised to Israel on its 70th anniversary. A trip that plays to his base of religious zealots may be welcome diversion from preoccupations with porn stars and lies. However that pans out, he has already rendered his gratitude to Las Vegas casino operator Sheldon Adelson, a shady financial benefactor he shares with Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

On May 14, with the US embassy in Israel shifting to Jerusalem, the Zionist state would have completed one more step in its grand project of erasing another people's history and culture. After a brief interlude when it played the charade of seeking justice, the US would have signalled that dispossession once begun is irreversible, international covenants be damned.

The only recourse for the affected people is to get used to it, something the people of Gaza have shown no inclination for. From weeks before the anniversary of the Zionist state, Gazans have been asserting their claim over lost homelands by marching to the highly fortified fence that marks the land formally colonised by Israel. They have faced brutal force which, in six weekly protests following Friday prayers, claimed 51 lives. Human Rights Watch called the killings "unlawful", going right up the military chain of command to the apex of the political leadership, meriting an investigation by the International Criminal Court.

A week before the key date in Israel's history rolled around, Trump was working on adding a bonus to the gift already announced. All through the 2016 election campaign that he won, Trump kept up a stream of invective against a deal forged by the Barack Obama administration to induce a reluctant Iran to mothball its nuclear research programme. That manner of visceral outrage at anything chalked up as a policy gain for the Obama administration was safe political strategy.

Ever since the discovery of Iran's borderline

transgressions of its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Israel had been an enthusiastic campaigner for sanctions, possibly extending to punitive military action if the Islamic Republic failed to comply with a regime of "anytime, anywhere" inspections. The template was the punishing regime that the US and UK — with an acquiescent UN Security Council failing to offer resistance — imposed on Iraq through the 1990s, often seeking provocative intrusions into the innermost precincts of the Iraqi state on laughable grounds.

It was a policy of regime change pursued through a disarmament agenda, which led by its own logic to the invasion of 2003. Obama's decision to change tack in 2013 came from intimate encounters with the toxic legacy of that invasion, including the vast increase in strategic clout that accrued to Iran from the collapse of the Iraqi state.

Unrepentant war hawks were pushing for escalation in line with a blinkered military reading. Pragmatists spoke of the need to keep Iran onside to stabilise the situation in Iraq. Obama saw the sense of the latter viewpoint but had to placate the paranoid anxieties that Iran's borderline violations of NPT rules induced.

Long and arduous negotiations led to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), agreed in July 2015 between Iran, the P5 of the UN Security Council, Germany, and the European Union. Israel reacted furiously, alleging a persistent record of violations and hostile actions by Iran, with Netanyahu working himself into a lather over ancient Persian plots against the Hebrew people.

The expert consensus today is that the agreement has worked. Iran has been in compliance with its commitment to eliminate stockpiles of medium-enriched uranium and reduce its inventory of low-enriched uranium. It will also strictly limit its inventory of heavy

water, the complex technological product that could be used for generating fissile plutonium out of low-enriched uranium.

The war plans, meanwhile, have shifted to another front. The collapse of the Iraqi state has sent tremors across the region, now playing out with brutal effect in Syria and Yemen. The US has deployed its Saudi Arabian proxies to deal with the Yemeni theatre and got directly engaged in Syria where its proxies are fighting an uneasy alliance that unites the Bashar Al-Assad regime, Iran and Russia.

Israel has, at the same time, chosen to flagrantly disregard the unstated rule for any theatre in the Arab world the US gets engaged in, by intervening repeatedly in Syria. It sees no need for the earlier delicacy, since its alliance with US proxy regimes such as Saudi Arabia and the Emirates is now out in the open.

In recent months, Israel is believed to have carried out aggressive military strikes against Iranian military personnel and assets deployed within Syria.

On April 30, Netanyahu pulled off another of his multi-media stunts to prove Iranian cheating, rehashing information from

2005 and before, long taken on board in negotiations and incorporated into fresh commitments. That very day, the Israeli parliament invested the Prime Minister and Defence Minister with the authority between them, to determine when the country would go to war, divesting the cabinet of that collective power.

Aside from the historical prize of Jerusalem, which the US has awarded it as a 70th birthday present, Israel has also extended its mandate to continue its war without end against neighbours, near and far alike.

(This article was written 24 hours before Trump was due to announce his decision on the Iran nuclear deal.)

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