Speech at Sydney demonstration against Netanyahu’s visit to Australia  
by Randa Abdel-Fattah

I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we gather today and pay my respects to elders past and present. This was, is and always will be Aboriginal land.

This is a government without shame. It is an opposition without shame. Political leaders who bask in the glory of courting a war criminal, laying out the red carpet to him, snuggling up tight to the leader of a racist, outmoded, ethno-religious colonial state founded on ethnic cleansing. What a legacy. What a way for our country to go down in history.

We should not be surprised that our government and opposition are so sickeningly eager to reassure the war criminal Netanyahu of Australia’s friendship. This is not a Palestinian problem. It is a settler colonial problem and Australia knows all about settler colonialism. We are still celebrating our own indigenous population’s Nakba on 26 January. Little wonder our government is so quick to emphasise Australia’s shared values with Israel. It’s important to make these connections. These are the connections and solidarities that racist systems and governments want to deny.

This is why the global BDS movement terrifies Israel. Because while the occupation, settlement and apartheid machinery have worsened, the moral force that used to drive that process is wearing away - and this is what Israel is scared about: being delegitimised. Israel is rightly worried about the largely symbolic victories to be gained from BDS and the potential for this to erode Western support for its brutality and further isolate it from the family of democratic nations.

From Lebanon in 2006, to Operation Cast Lead, to the Gaza Flotillas, to the siege on Gaza, to the bombing of Gaza in 2012, to Operation Protective Edge, to the UN resolution in December condemning settlements as a flagrant violation of international law, Israel has lost its credibility in the eyes of the international community. There is an undeniable shift in the balance of moral power.

And then there’s Australia. So quick to support this military juggernaut and covertly nuclear state. Even when the US abstained from the vote, Julie Bishop and Malcolm Turnbull defended Israel and reminded the world that Australia will support Israel through every human rights abuse and every international law violation. What a friend.

Yet we should not be disheartened by our government laying out the welcome mat to Netanyahu. Our government is only embarrassing itself, inviting Netanyahu here when so many Australians oppose his visit.

Every time we hear our leaders bleat on about a two state solution we should hold them to account. Because we know this is more than cynical lip service. We know the two state solution is dead. Everything Israel does with the support of our government is a guarantee that there is zero chance of resuscitation. Anybody who still talks about a two state solution is either hopelessly ignorant of the facts on the ground, romantically delusional or willfully deceitful. There is only one state, a racist apartheid state. It occupies the West Bank. It holds Gaza under siege. It discriminates against its Palestinian citizens.

When Netanyahu was asked about recognition of a Palestinian state -- simply a symbolic act by the way - he suggests that such a state would be one that calls for Israel's destruction and be “used immediately for radical Islam?” So the two state solution is not a solution after all. It’s just a slogan. An empty slogan. But there’s more to these comments.
This is the racism we are fighting against. The assumption that Palestinians seeking justice and freedom are simply terrorists in disguise. We shouldn’t be surprised by this racism, it is an extension of the racism of our governments towards asylum seekers. These racist postures and policies are all connected. For Netanyahu, Malcolm Turnbull, Julie Bishop and their like, there’s a terror plot behind every Arab or Muslim aspiration for freedom.

So of course Netanyahu and our leaders are best buddies. It’s racism that connects them. Racism that cements their relationship and makes them all warm and fuzzy.

How shameful, how utterly shameful, that Australia should welcome Netanyahu instead of taking him to the International Criminal Court.

There has never been a better time to stand beside Palestinians. Each week BDS achieves another victory. More and more politicians are growing a backbone and realizing they’ve been on the wrong side of history.

Israel’s actions are its undoing. Its salvation and security lies only in freedom, dignity and justice for Palestinians. Then, and only then, will Palestinians and Israelis enjoy real peace and security.

We stand here united against Israel, calling loudly and clearly for decolonisation, an end to the occupation, a return of refugees, the dismantling of the apartheid wall, and equal rights for all. Netanyahu - murderer and oppressor - and his loyal supporters, Malcolm Turnbull, Julie Bishop: hear us loudly and clearly. The Palestinian people will never give up. They will not be bullied into defeat. They will never stop resisting and fighting.

As Edward Said said: this is a just cause, a moral cause.

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