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Who Was There to Vote For?

The 2012 elections again revealed the bankruptcy of the current election process and the people's alienation from the political system.

For one thing, only about 50% of the country's voting age population cast ballots. This low voter turnout reflects the fact that from the standpoint of the workers and people the elections are meaningless because the people have absolutely no say-so in the selection of the candidates. The Democratic and Republican parties maintain a monopoly over the electoral system, even though tens of millions of people long-ago rejected both these parties. Thus

the elections are *not* about the people choosing their representatives; the elections are, at most, a contest between various millionaires and their paid hirelings over who will get the spoils of office.

Furthermore, the political "messages" and "programs" of the Democratic and Republican candidates showed how decayed and rotten the system is. Billions of dollars were spent on mud-slinging and empty breast-beating. None of the concerns of the people were taken up for discussion. In fact, the whole election process is part of a program of *de-politicizing* the people – of

writing off the people's concerns and excluding the people from participating in political affairs.

Thus, since the entire electoral process is rigged and organized *against the people*, it is not at all surprising that such a huge section of the population refused to vote or give their consent to the present system of government.

Fundamental change is needed.

The urgent political task of the times is for the workers and people to carry out a thoroughgoing renewal of the political process and political system. The

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Roots of the Conflict in the Middle East

The following reference article shows how the state of Israel was founded through the imperialist ambitions and intrigues of Western colonialism (today Israel remains a creature of U.S. imperialism) and by violently usurping the national homeland of the Palestinian people. The article also outlines the expansionism of the Israeli state and its program of terror and genocide against the Palestinians.

Origins of Zionism

The current state of Israel is the product of a political move-

ment known as zionism. Political zionism arose in Europe around the turn of the 20th century. At that time, the area in the Middle East now occupied by the state of Israel, was Palestine and had been inhabited and developed not only for hundreds but actually thousands of years by Palestinian people and their forebears. As far as religion is concerned, Palestine was the birthplace of three religions and was well-known as a land of religious tolerance in which Moslems, Christians and Jews lived together without an-

tagonisms and contradictions between them.

Political zionism arose not in the Middle East but in Europe and it grew and gained its strength as a creature of Western colonialism. The founder of zionism was a man named Theodor Herzl, an Austrian upper-class Jew. Herzl looked at the problem of persecution of Jews in Europe by various reactionary ruling classes and concluded that Jews could never get along with others and could only overcome their persecution

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by separating themselves into an exclusive group and founding their own state. The first thing that must be said about Herzl's zionism is that it was in direct opposition to the long tradition of the Jewish laboring masses who, scattered throughout Europe, had always fought against their persecution side-by-side with other laboring and oppressed people. The truth is that Herzl's political zionism was a mirror image of the anti-Jewish ideology of the ruling circles. Herzl actually stated that the Jew carries anti-Semitism with him in his knapsack. And in fact, political zionism won almost no support among the Jewish laboring classes and would have withered and died had it not gained the support of Western imperialism which was looking for ways to replace the Ottoman empire, become the colonial master of the Arab world and suppress the national movements of the Arab masses. With this political situation in mind, Herzl lobbied for his zionist project with all the biggest anti-Semites – the Russian Czar, the Turkish Sultan, the British imperialists, suggesting to them that the establishment of a zionist colony in the Middle East could serve as a "rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization against barbarism." (Herzl, *The Jewish State* 1896).

The zionist movement eventually found its sponsor in British imperialism which, after World War I, became the colonial ruler of Palestine, and through the Balfour declaration officially de-

clared its support for zionist colonization of the area. Chaim Weizman, Herzl's successor and for many years the leader of the world zionist movement, elaborated the basis of the British zionist alliance in this way: "We can reasonably say that should Palestine fall within the British sphere of influence, and should Britain encourage a Jewish settlement there, as a British dependency, we could have in twenty or thirty years a million Jews out there, perhaps more; they would develop the country, bring back civilization to it and form a very effective guard for the Suez Canal."

Zionist Terror

Under the umbrella of the Balfour Declaration, the years of British Mandate rule in Palestine (1918-1947) were years of increased zionist colonization. The Jewish National Fund (JNF), established by the World Zionist Organization, set about buying up land in Palestine. In the main, the JNF purchased land from absentee Arab landlords, forcibly evicted the peasants who actually tilled the soil, and replaced them with zionist settlements. But the plan of the JNF was much more than the innocent capitalist buying of land. Lands purchased by the JNF were to be held "in perpetuity as a trust for the Jewish people." That is, the zionists considered JNF lands as separate and apart from the centuries-old civil society already existing in Palestine. In fact, the zionists considered these settle-

ments as both the embryo of an exclusively Jewish state and as a base of operations for the establishment of such a state. Joseph Weitz, director of the JNF for many years, wrote: "After the Second World War the question of the land of Israel and the question of the Jews would be raised beyond the framework of development amongst ourselves. It must be clear that there is no room for both peoples in this country. No development will bring us closer to our aim, to be an independent people in this small country. If the Arabs leave the country, it will be broad and wide-open for us. And if the Arabs stay, the country will remain narrow and miserable....and the only solution is Eretz Israel, or at least Western Eretz Israel, without Arabs. There is no room for compromise on this point. The zionist enterprise so far, in terms of preparing the ground, paving the way for the creation of the Hebrew State in the land of Israel, has been fine and good in its own time

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and could do with "land-buying" but this will not bring about the State of Israel, that must come all at once, in the manner of salvation (this is the secret of the Messianic idea) and there is no way besides transferring the Arabs from here to the neighboring countries, to transfer them all. We must not leave a single village, not a single tribe."

The Zionist vision of an exclusively Jewish state has always meant precisely a state "without Arabs." Herzl had planned "to spirit the penniless population across the border" and Weizmann, when questioned about the future of Arabs in a Zionist state, remarked: "What Arabs? They are hardly of any consequence." But since the purchase of land was not a sufficient means of emptying Palestine of its native inhabitants, the Zionist project relied on terror to forcibly expropriate, exile and exterminate the Palestinians. The JNF settlements became bases for Zionist gangs such as the Irgun (headed by Menachem Begin) and the Stern Gang (in which Yitzhak Shamir was a prominent member) to carry out a war against the indigenous Palestinian population.

In the years since the establishment of the Israeli state, the Zionist policy of genocide and dispersal of Palestinians has only intensified.

After the 1947-48 war, the Israeli regime forced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians into exile, razing their homes and expropriating their lands. The same

process has been carried out since 1967 in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Within a week after seizing these territories by force of arms, the Israeli Knesset (Parliament) declared its intention to annex the areas and has proceeded not only to kill and deport thousands upon thousands of Palestinians but also expropriate, by military decree, 70-80% of the land.

Again, during the 1982-83 invasion and occupation of Lebanon, the state of Israel pursued with a vengeance its genocidal policy against the Palestinian people. Tens of thousands of Palestinians were killed, hundreds of thousands dispersed. For days on end the Israeli airforce bombed the civilian population of West Beirut and after taking control of

the area, Ariel Sharon sent Israel's Phalangist allies into the Sabra and Chatilla refugee camps to carry out one of the most infamous massacres ever, murdering thousands of Palestinian women and children in 48 hours of continuous atrocities.

Israeli Expansionism

The state of Israel was founded in 1947 through the intrigues of the British, American and French imperialists.

At that time, although Jews constituted only one-third of the population in Palestine, a UN partition plan, drawn up without considering the will of the Palestinian people, designated that 54% of the land of Palestine would be used to establish a Jewish state while the remaining 46% would

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people themselves must be the sovereign power and, amongst other things, have the right and means to bring forward their own agenda and initiate political, economic and social changes. The people must decide directly, through referendum and other means, on the fundamental direction of the country. Further, a new electoral system must be created through which the people themselves have the direct power to nominate the candidates for office and to run themselves. Government officials must remain, at

all times, under the direct supervision of the people and represent their interests and agenda, not the narrow interests of a few.

As the current political system continues to rot, the governmental power will only become more arbitrary and opposed to the needs of the overwhelming majority of the people. The workers and people must take the future of our country into their own hands by organizing their independent movement with the aim of creating a new political power.

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constitute a Palestinian state.

But even this did not satisfy the appetite of the Zionists. Before the UN plan could be put into effect, the Zionists announced the formation of the state of Israel and then proceeded to wage war against the native population and grab 80% of the territory of Mandated Palestine.

Yet more. Expansionism has always been an inherent part of the Zionist "vision." Herzl and the other fathers of Zionism were intent on controlling "Greater Palestine" – that is, Palestine and its neighboring lands, and the Israeli Knesset has declared its "biblical right" to control all the land of "Eretz Israel," which is defined as stretching from the Nile River in Egypt to the Tigris and Euphrates in Syria. Since its founding, the state of Israel has waged several expansionist wars.

In 1967 Israel took control over the West Bank and Gaza (the last 20% of the territory of Palestine) through a war of conquest. The entire history since 1967 shows Israel plans to annex these territories. In violation of international law, Israel has steadily pursued the program of establishing Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza by illegally usurping Palestinian land and exiling local residents.

Through settlements and a network of military access roads, Israel has crisscrossed the occupied territory with military bases. The settlements themselves are often little more than armed outposts of the Israeli army.

Already more than 150 settlements (including 350,000 Israelis) have been set up in the

West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza. These include 190,000 settlers in 145 settlements in the West Bank, 6,000 in the Gaza Strip, and 180,000 within the illegally extended municipal boundaries of East Jerusalem. There are also 36 settlements in the Golan Heights.

The settlements occupy around 7% of the occupied Palestinian territory. This percentage dramatically increases when calculations include the land designated for planned expansion of settlements. The Sharon government is continuing the settlement program, having established at least 15 new settlements and ex-

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panded several others since coming to power.

note: The above article was reprinted from *The Worker*, Special Edition, April 2, 2002.

As of 2005 there have been no settlements in Gaza.

Today, there are 136 settlements (including over 500,000 Israelis) in the West Bank and Jerusalem.

According to a report released in July 2010 by B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, Israeli settlements and their infrastructures occupy 42% of the West Bank.

Palestine Brief

Reprinted from the *Anti-Imperialist News Service*.



Gaza City, November 21 – Palestinians celebrate after resistance forced the U.S.-backed Israeli aggressors to quit aerial and sea bombardment of the Gaza strip.

Over 169 people were killed and hundreds more wounded in the Israeli military operation which began on November 14.

In Palestine, the people are fighting against imperialism and for their national salvation.

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