

## Jared Kushner's Cynical 'Deal of the Century'

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Hindsight is unfair – but it might tell the truth. First, Donald Trump proclaims Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, thus depriving the Palestinians of their capital in the east of the city. The Palestinians are appalled. Mahmoud Abbas says he will no longer talk to the United States. So Trump rages that “we pay the Palestinians hundreds of millions of dollars a year and get no appreciation or respect.” It was only a tweet, but he means it. Those ungrateful Palestinian wretches! And he cuts \$300m from America’s aid to the refugees, giving the oppressed and besieged and dispossessed Palestinians a mere \$60m.



***Kushner the 'unbiased' Jew with Bibi***

Already the United Nations Relief and Works Agency – recipients of international aid for 5.3 million Palestinian refugees – is having to get rid of its employees, 113 of them in Gaza alone last week. Unrwa has been caring for the Palestinians since 1949, and already has a current deficit of \$49m. Its 30,000 Palestinian doctors, nurses, teachers and other staff face unemployment. Starvation thus threatens even more of the tired, poor and huddled masses of Gaza. One 53-year-old father of six has just been told he’s got no job after 32 years working for Unwra.

But wait. Help is at hand. For did not Jared Kushner, son-in-law of the aforesaid Trump and giver of a future peace “deal of the century” to Palestinians and Israelis alike, promise a better life for the losing side?

Why, he did indeed. Just a month ago. Let me quote: “I believe that Palestinian people are less invested in the politicians’ talking points that they are in seeing how a deal will give them and their future generations new opportunities, more and better paying jobs and prospects for a better life.” I’ve remarked before that this is cash for peace instead of land for peace – dollars instead of a Palestinian capital in Jerusalem, an end to Jewish colonisation, a “right of return”, and so on. A truly Trumpian solution.

But the playback of chronological events makes the “deal” even more cynical. First Trump gives Jerusalem to the Israelis. Then, when the Palestinians dare to complain, he cuts their humanitarian

aid and drives them to despair. Then, courtesy of young Jared, Trump offers to shower them with money in the “ultimate deal” if they will just stop making these exorbitant, irrational, antisemitic, Nazi-like and racist demands for statehood, dignity and an end to colonisation.

Their hearts may thus be empty but their stomachs shall be filled. Their hopes may be dead but their bank accounts will be in the black. Instead of all the gloom and violence fostered by their corrupt political leaders who can neither pay nor feed their people, the Palestinians can walk tall with “new opportunities... better-paying jobs and prospects for a better life”. Yes, do watch the “prospects” bit.

And with that much lolly floating around, there won't be any need for Unwra, will there? Because there will be no more poverty-stricken refugees. For the refugees will be well-off, if not rich, with all those better-paying jobs and “prospects”. Goodbye the middens of Gaza. Goodbye all threats to Israel. And since the same financial salvation will be available to the Palestinians of the West Bank, why should its inhabitants care any more about the campaign of Israeli land theft which engulfs them? Just remember the dog-day destitution of the summer of 2018 when even Unwra could no longer relieve their oppression.

The equation is impossible to conceal. When the Palestinians objected to the destruction of their political aspirations – refused to “talk peace” in the obscene semantics of the Americans and Israelis – they would be quite deliberately impoverished. “With the Palestinians no longer willing to talk peace,” Trump said, “why should we make any of these massive future payments to them?”

More than half of Gaza's 2 million population, with a 44 per cent unemployment rate, are dependent on Unwra. The Palestinian cause, in other words – and one Unwra staffer put it like this – must be replaced with a humanitarian cause. Peace will therefore be economic, rather than political.

The Saudis and Emiratis and Egyptians are being hustled to share in this new Levantine bonanza. Electricity stations paid for by Abu Dhabi, Egyptian duty free shops in Raffah, Saudi shares in Palestinian firms; dreams, perhaps, but suitable for the masses.

In some ways, it's back to the old fantasy of a Dubai in the West Bank, a Singapore in Gaza, which Shimon Peres used to espouse and which even the lamentable John Kerry suggested. For who now remembers the forgotten Secretary of State's \$4bn economic “plan for Palestine” which he proposed at the World Economic Forum more than five years ago? The same old Abbas was then, too, being told he “must” restart negotiations with Israel, as Kerry waffled on about a “ground-breaking plan to develop a healthy, sustainable, private sector-led Palestinian economy ... bigger, bolder and more ambitious than anything proposed since Oslo more than 20 years ago.” But then at least Kerry was offering a Palestinian state in return for Abbas's compliance.

Nothing, however, is “groundbreaking” about the Trump “deal of the century” today, except the continued breaking of ground for new Jewish “settlements”, as we still must call them, on the hilltops of the West Bank. But I suppose if they're less hungry, better fed, look forward to better jobs and “prospects” for the future and don't have the nightmare Unwra to watch over them, the Palestinians will be able to reflect how much worse off they'd be if they had their own state, borders, security, East Jerusalem and no more Israeli colonies on occupied Palestinian land.

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