



RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Stance of the Israeli Historian Ilan Pappé on the Israeli Transgressions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: “An Analytical Study through Television and Press Interviews”

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Oct 3, 2024 Accepted: Oct 22, 2024	This study aims to shed light on the stance of the Israeli dissenting historian Ilan Pappé regarding the Israeli transgressions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as expressed through his documented statements in television and press outlets. The study focuses on highlighting Israel's repressive practices against the Palestinian people, including the use of Judaization tactics in the West Bank and the violation of agricultural lands in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Additionally, the study emphasizes Ilan Pappé's opposition to these oppressive actions carried out by the Israeli occupation authorities against the Palestinian population. The study concludes that Ilan Pappé consistently rejects all Israeli projects on Palestinian land and asserts that the end of the Zionist project is nearing due to the repeated and escalating Israeli repressive assaults on the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
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INTRODUCTION

Since 1948, the Israeli objective has been to annex the West Bank and Gaza Strip in pursuit of the concept of “Greater Israel.” Although this goal was not achieved at that time, they have been waiting for the opportune moment to realize this dream. The 1967 war presented itself as a golden opportunity for this aim. Subsequently, Israel seized the opportunity to exert control over the West Bank and Gaza Strip by force following the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993. This has ultimately led to the continuation of repeated Israeli assaults on both territories up to the present day. Interestingly, within Israeli society, numerous opposing movements have emerged that reject the Zionist presence in Palestine. Among the most significant dissenters is the Israeli historian Ilan Pappé, who is associated with the New Historians movement and has consistently opposed all Israeli narratives regarding their presence in Palestine.

The reason for choosing this topic lies in the need to reveal and uncover the falsehoods propagated by Israel concerning the events that have transpired in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Problem of the Study

The problem of this study addresses the Israeli focus on the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in order to exploit their economic resources by imposing restrictions on their inhabitants. The opposing Israeli narratives aim to demonstrate the lack of credibility of the occupation authorities in this regard, represented by one of the most prominent scholars in the historical field, Ilan Pappé. Additionally, the study's problem lies in posing several critical questions, the most important of which are:

- How has Israel employed a strategy of arrogance in distorting accepted historical facts?
- How has Ilan Pappé exposed the Israeli falsehoods regarding the events that occurred in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Objectives of the Study

- This study aims to trace the chronological sequence of historical events by relying on the perspectives of dissenting Israeli scholars who have emerged from within Israeli society.
- To clarify the Israeli objective behind the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- To present the Israeli opposition to the issue of expelling and displacing the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- To analyze the media promotion of the underlying Israeli objectives concerning the fragmentation of the West Bank.

Methodology of the Study

In this study, the researcher relied on the historical method to trace the historical events of the Arab-Israeli wars in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Additionally, the researcher employed analytical and descriptive methods to analyze and describe historical events by extracting information through television and press interviews that were utilized in this study.

Preface

The West Bank and Gaza Strip are among the most significant political, economic, and social issues in the world today. They hold great importance for both the Palestinian people and the international community alike. This region boasts a rich cultural and historical heritage, serving as the homeland for numerous sacred sites of the three Monotheistic religions.

The West Bank is considered a central geographical area in Palestine and remained under Arab control after the 1948 war. It was named this way following its integration with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in 1950, based on the decisions made at the Jericho Conference in 1948 that endorsed this move (Benvenisti, 1987: 10-18).

After that, David Ben-Gurion proclaimed the establishment of the "State of Israel" following Britain's withdrawal from Palestine in 1948, which was immediately recognized by the international community. Subsequently, Israel came to control approximately 78% of Palestinian lands, leading to the displacement of more than 750,000 Palestinians to Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon (Al-Missairi, 2024: 113-120).

The Arab-Israeli war concluded with the signing of the armistice "Rhodus Agreements" in 1949, which established the boundaries of the "Green Line," serving as a dividing line between Israel and the West Bank. Following the completion of this agreement, the West Bank and East Bank were unified in 1950, resulting in the residents of the West Bank becoming Jordanian citizens (Al-Sourani, 2016: 15-17).

Based on the aforementioned, Israel continued its gradual expansion in the region by occupying the Gaza Strip and the West Bank during the June 1967 war. This conflict led to the displacement of Palestinians from their lands until the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, which called for Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories and the return of the refugees (Ilan Pappé, 2004:72-80).

Regarding the fate of the West Bank, King Hussein bin Talal announced the legal and administrative disengagement between the West Bank and Jordan in 1988 at the request of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Then, in 1987, the First Intifada, or "Stone Uprising," began and lasted until 1993, coinciding with the signing of the Oslo Accords, which are considered the first peace agreements between Palestinians and Israelis. These agreements stipulated the establishment of the Palestinian Authority to manage Palestinian affairs and maintain internal security in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for a transitional period (Hawat, 2006: 47). Subsequently, the West Bank was divided into three areas based on the Oslo Accords:

1. **Area A:** This area is fully governed by the Palestinian Authority and represents 18% of the West Bank.
2. **Area B:** This area is jointly administered by the Palestinian Authority and the Israelis, with Israel retaining security control, and it also represents 18%.
3. **Area C:** This area is completely under Israeli control, including security, planning, and construction matters, and it constitutes 60% of the West Bank.

As for the remaining land of the West Bank, which comprises about 4% of its total area, it includes nature reserves and areas that are administratively under the Palestinian Authority but security-wise under Israeli control, along with other areas that remain unclassified.

With the onset of the Second Palestinian Intifada, which lasted for five years from 2000 to 2005, the idea of constructing a separation wall emerged. Israel claimed that this wall was a means of protection against Palestinian attacks. Consequently, Israel began building this wall in 2002. Although the stated objective was to ensure security, it resulted in the repression and isolation of the Palestinian people and the impoverishment of their economy (Atiany, 2004: 118-130) by placing barriers and obstacles in their way, in addition to the continued construction of Israeli settlements within the territories of the West Bank (Ilan Pappé, 2022:30). With the onset of the Second Palestinian Intifada, which lasted for five years from 2000 to 2005, the idea of constructing a separation wall emerged. Israel claimed that this wall was a means of protection against Palestinian attacks. Consequently, Israel began building this wall in 2002. Although the stated objective was to ensure security, it resulted in the repression and isolation of the Palestinian people and the impoverishment of their economy (Atiany, 2004: 118-130) by placing barriers and obstacles in their way, in addition to the continued construction of Israeli settlements within the territories of the West Bank (Ilan Pappé, 2022:30-35).

As for the Gaza Strip, the Israeli army occupied it along with the Sinai Peninsula during the June 1967 war, and the area remained under occupation until September 2005, which is regarded as the date of the Israeli withdrawal that included the evacuation of the settlements that had been established on Gaza's land (Weshah, 2020: 50-60).

According to the autonomy agreement reached between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the occupying authorities, Hamas took control of the governance of the Gaza Strip in 2007, which caused confusion and concern for the occupying authorities (Al-Batsh, 2005:50-55). In 2008, Israel launched a series of wars against the Gaza Strip under various pretexts, resulting in thousands of martyrs and injured individuals, as well as widespread destruction. Each time, Palestinian factions responded by targeting various Israeli objectives (Al-Batsh, 2005:57).

The Israeli objective of occupying the West Bank and Gaza Strip according to Ilan Pappé's statements

The dissenting Israeli historian Ilan Pappé emphasized that the Israeli objective behind the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip was covertly embedded within a systematic plan aimed at achieving several goals, including (Ilan Pappé, 2018: 96-97):

1. To exploit the lands of the West Bank for agriculture, making it the primary food source for the population, as the West Bank is considered the breadbasket of the region due to its fertile soil, moderate climate, and availability of fresh water (Information Report (6) - Archives and Information Department, Beirut, Zaytouna Center, 2008:41-44).
2. The Judaization of the West Bank and the construction of settlements around Jerusalem aim to displace and expel the Palestinian population. This policy has been employed by the occupying authorities to tighten restrictions on the residents of the West Bank and to separate Jerusalem from the Arab communities (Ilan Pappé, 2006: 30).
3. To implement the water project that Israel referred to at that time as the "National Water Carrier" project, which involves the construction of bridges, pipelines, and water channels from the outlets of the Jordan River to the lands of the West Bank, reaching down to the Negev, as well as cooling the nuclear reactor located in the Dimona area south of the Dead Sea.

4. The construction of residential and industrial settlements in the Gaza Strip and the exploitation of its water resources, whether surface or groundwater, in order to implement Israeli projects along the Mediterranean Sea, which is rich in oil and gas reserves.
5. The displacement of Palestinians to Arab countries in order to realize the Zionist dream, which ultimately leads to ethnic cleansing (Ilan Pappé, 2016: 30-40).
6. Transforming Gaza into a closed "ghetto"; however, this ghetto has demonstrated its resistance and unwillingness to live under oppressive conditions, isolation, starvation, and the artificially induced economic collapse.

Pappé stated, "Israel has continued to resort to ethnic cleansing as part of its efforts to ensure complete control over historical Palestine while keeping the number of original Palestinian residents as low as possible" (Al-Akhbar Newspaper, 4/8/2018). This included the expulsion of 300,000 Palestinians during and after the 1967 war and the expulsion of more than 600,000 from the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip since then" (Al Jazeera, television interview with historian Ilan Pappé on 2/12/2023).

The Historical Context of the West Bank and Gaza Strip from Ilan Pappé's Perspective

Pappé also held the view that the real issue concerning the West Bank and Gaza Strip has persisted for the past fifty years, not just in the present period. During this time, the occupying forces have imposed continuous collective punishment on Palestinians in these territories, subjecting them to ongoing harassment by Israeli settlers and security forces, and imprisoning hundreds of thousands of them. In this context, Ilan Pappé argued that the worsening of the situation in the West Bank and Gaza began with the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, due to the blockade on Gaza and the Judaization of the West Bank. From the Israeli perspective, this was seen as an occupation rather than a peace agreement (Pappé, 2013:80-90).

As a result, Israel controlled the entry and exit points to the Jewish quarter in Gaza, even monitoring the type of food that entered. At times, it also observed the resident's movements across political, economic, and social aspects, fearing the formation of militant groups, as it claimed. Hamas responded to this systematic blockade by launching rockets at some Israeli areas. According to Pappé, this was a positive and expected reaction from Hamas and the Palestinian resistance factions (TRT Arabic, television interview with historian Ilan Pappé).

Ilan Pappé views Hamas in the Gaza Strip as a liberation movement that emerged from the suffering of the Palestinian people, contrary to Israel's claim that it is a terrorist organization that must be eradicated (Al Jazeera, television interview with historian Ilan Pappé on October 21, 2023). Pappé believes that Israel's occupation of Gaza is not aimed at eliminating Hamas, but rather at renewing its ambitions in the region by enforcing a policy of complete ethnic cleansing, with a Jewish majority and a Palestinian minority in Gaza and the West Bank (Al Jazeera, television interview with historian Ilan Pappé on December 9, 2023).

What Israel is doing in the Gaza Strip is nothing more than reckless behavior aimed at implementing a policy of ethnic cleansing and displacing nearly two million people from their homes. What Israel is engaged in is not a war, as wars are fought between armies, not by killing civilians, including women and children, in an attempt to legitimize its actions (Al Jazeera, television interview with historian Ilan Pappé on December 9, 2023).

Ilan Pappé asserts that what Israel is doing is not a religious war, contrary to Benjamin Netanyahu's claim, "We, the children of light, are fighting a religious war against the children of darkness (the Palestinians)." Pappé argues that this war is, in fact, a settler-colonial conflict against the indigenous people of Palestine. At times, colonizers use religion to justify their criminal acts. What is currently happening in Palestine is a war launched by Zionism, with the support of colonial powers, against the Palestinians (Al Jazeera, television interview with historian Ilan Pappé on December 9, 2023).

It is natural for there to be liberation movements, such as Hamas and others, defending what remains of Palestinian lands (Al Jazeera, television interview with historian Ilan Pappé on October 21, 2023). No free people can accept occupation and colonialism in all its forms without the emergence of resistance movements, as has occurred throughout various parts of the world (Palestinian Studies

website, article: "Ilan Pappé: To My Israeli Friends: This is Why I Support the Palestinians," published on October 19, 2023).

Pappé emphasizes that Western media and politicians have endorsed the Israeli narrative and rhetoric, urging the Israeli public not to believe their government's political discourse, as it is simply fabricated. The clearest evidence of this is the falsehood propagated by Zionism since its arrival in Palestine from the very beginning of its establishment.

On another note, Pappé believes that a historical assessment and contextual analysis of Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip, along with all prior attacks since 2006, clearly reveal Israel's consistent policy of genocide. It is a strategy of gradual mass killing, which is the inevitable outcome of Israel's broader strategy towards Palestinians in general, and the territories occupied since 1967 in particular (Pappé, 2014: 14).

Pappé added in his interview with Al Jazeera that anyone should feel apprehensive about Israel's colonial policies against Palestinians, even if they are a Jewish citizen in Israel. He views Zionism, since its inception, as a repressive colonial movement that does not distinguish between individuals when it contradicts its interests (Al Jazeera, interview with historian Ilan Pappé, November 4, 2023).

The Reasons that Led Ilan Pappé to Shift from Pro-Zionist Thinking to Opposing Thought

The researcher believes that Pappé was initially supportive of Zionism, which was masked by a religious facade, as he was raised and educated with those singular ideological beliefs. However, starting in the 1980s, Ilan Pappé began to alter the ideology he had been raised on due to several influencing factors, the most significant of which were:

- 1) His influence from the "Neturei Karta" movement, which emerged in the 1940s, opposing all Israeli narratives regarding the Zionist presence in Palestine.
- 2) His influence from the "Neturei Karta" movement, which emerged in the 1940s, opposing all Israeli narratives regarding the Zionist presence in Palestine.
- 3) His influence from Arab narratives and his interactions with Arabs, as well as sending his students for their master's and doctoral studies to verify the Palestinian narrative regarding the events of the Arab-Israeli wars through the testimonies of Palestinians who participated in those wars.
- 4) The scholarly integrity that Ilan Pappé demonstrated in conveying the distorted and deceptive Israeli narrative, despite facing numerous hardships and harassment.

Ilan Pappé's Stance on the Crimes Committed by Zionism in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

Ilan Pappé has taken an opposing stance against the criminal and aggressive actions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, depicting these actions as inhumane. He has also characterized peace as nothing more than a facade that Israel has used to manipulate the fate of Palestine and the region to achieve its colonial and settlement goals, which are supported by colonial powers. This perspective highlights his belief that Israel's strategies are fundamentally rooted in colonialism rather than genuine efforts toward peace or reconciliation.

Pappé emphasized that Israel has committed numerous war crimes and crimes against humanity that violate international law against the defenseless Palestinian civilians, who are the rightful owners of the land and the cause. The opposing Israeli historian has demonstrated that Zionism is merely a political movement aimed at implementing its objectives in a land it does not own, at the expense of an unarmed people, supported by the world's major powers to politicize mutual interests in the Middle East.

Among the most significant acts of aggression committed by Israel in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, according to the statements of Israeli historian Ilan Pappé:

- ❖ **The Policy of Killing and Terrorizing Civilians:** Pappé has mentioned in various interviews that Israeli occupation forces have killed more than 30,000 civilians, the majority of whom are children and women, in Gaza during the recent war. These individuals account for 72% of the total martyrs, either through deliberate targeting of civilians who had no

participation in military actions or through executing them without prior warning. Pappé also reported that the Israeli occupation carried out hundreds of thousands of military operations and bombings against civilians and civilian targets in a clear manner, especially against hospitals, schools, mosques, churches, and various civil associations (Al-Mamlaka, Date: 25-02-2024).

Based on the acknowledgments of Ilan Pappé as an Israeli historian regarding these oppressive crimes, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics corroborated this with documented figures and facts:

2. The Policy of Torture and Imprisonment: Israel has employed torture and inhumane treatment against Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Pappé clarified that the Israeli occupation has detained 2,700 prisoners and detainees, noting that there are testimonies confirming the use of torture by the occupation against detained prisoners, subjecting them to harsh and cruel treatment that exceeds the bounds of humanity.

3. The Policy of Displacement and Deportation: Ilan Pappé, in various articles and television statements, confirmed that since its inception, Israel has systematically aimed to displace and deport Palestinians from their homes to different areas. Approximately 2 million Palestinians have been displaced, especially during the recent war on the Gaza Strip.

4. The Use of Starvation and Imposing Blockades on the West Bank and Gaza: Israel employed starvation as a psychological warfare tactic, which Ilan Pappé described as inhumane. He stated that the Israeli occupation has been using starvation as part of its strategy of genocide, especially in the northern areas of Gaza since the beginning of the aggression. This tactic extended across various regions of the Gaza Strip, where a comprehensive blockade was imposed on all its inhabitants. This included the continuous deprivation of essential living supplies, the prevention of the entry of food aid, and the targeting of any aid trucks attempting to deliver food. Furthermore, Israeli forces killed Palestinian civilians who were trying to obtain food and other vital assistance (Middle East Eye, March 7, 2024).

5. The Use of Random Destruction of Cities and Villages, and Attacks on Historical, Cultural, and Religious Sites Returning the Gaza Strip to Ground Zero: Ilan Pappé highlighted that Israel has employed random destruction as a strategy, targeting cities and villages in Gaza with the aim of erasing its historical and cultural identity. Pappé argued that Israel seeks to reduce Gaza to "ground zero," stripping it of its landmarks to render the region uninhabitable. This, he emphasized, aligns with Israel's primary objective of displacing the population, pushing Palestinians into the Sinai Desert, and creating a region devoid of Arab inhabitants (IHRCTV, February 13, 2024).

6. Targeting hospitals and medical centers: Ilan Pappé confirmed that the Israeli occupation deliberately launched military attacks on hospitals and various healthcare facilities across the Gaza Strip to deprive its residents of any chance of survival. As a result of these various attacks, most of the main and subsidiary hospitals and medical clinics were destroyed (Al Jazeera English, February 25, 2024). Pappé also believed that Israel has excessively escalated its wars and successive attacks on Gaza since the Palestinian resistance movement " Hamas " took control in 2007, in addition to imposing a constant siege on the Strip. This has led Pappé to predict the eventual downfall of the Israeli project on the Arab land of Palestine.

The Decline of the Israeli Project in Pappé's Perspective

The Israeli historian Ilan Pappé argued that signs have begun to emerge signaling the end of the Zionist settler-colonial project on the Arab land of Palestine (Al-Quds Al-Arabi, February 4, 2024). He called upon Palestinian liberation movements to fully prepare to fill the vacuum left by the colonial Zionist regime, which has seized a land that does not belong to it. Among the most significant indicators that Pappé cited to support this conclusion were the following (Al-Jadeed Al-Arabi, January 14, 2024):

- ❖ Ilan Pappé, the Israeli historian, pointed to the recent emergence of internal Jewish civil conflict between the secular and religious camps within Israel as one of the key indicators of the decline of the Zionist project. According to Pappé, the secular camp, which represents the majority of Western Jews, advocates for an open liberal lifestyle while

supporting oppressive measures against Palestinians. On the other hand, the religious camp aspires to turn Israel into a racist Jewish theocracy. Pappé predicted that these two camps would likely face civil strife in the near future due to their divergent views and objectives (Al-Araby News, April 4, 2024, interview with Ilan Pappé on the program *New Margin*).

- ❖ Ilan Pappé also highlighted the growing global support for the Palestinian cause and the increasing readiness of many countries to economically boycott Israeli investments and products. He argued that this international boycott could lead to an unprecedented decline in Israel's economy (Al-Rai Newspaper, July 4, 2024).
- ❖ The significant economic gap in individual incomes reveals a wealthy class capable of purchasing property, while on the other hand, there is a poor class that cannot afford to buy anything. This, in turn, has created a sense of injustice among the poor class.
- ❖ The Israeli army's preoccupation with waging wars on both the northern and southern fronts without achieving any significant results.
- ❖ The complaints of the families of the dead, injured, and imprisoned in the recent wars waged by Israel, which led to the loss of their children due to being thrust into poorly planned, hasty and ill-conceived wars (Al Jazeera Documentary, April 4, 2024, interview with historian Ilan Pappé regarding the end of the Zionist project).

The rise of young Jewish opposition within Israeli society against the brutal policies adopted by Zionism has begun, with calls for a two-state solution." (Middle East Channel, June 11, 2024).

- ❖ The weakness of the Israeli army: There is no doubt that the Israeli army remains a formidable force with advanced weaponry. However, its limitations became evident on October 7, and many Israelis believe that the army was very fortunate, as the situation could have been much worse had Hezbollah participated in a coordinated attack. Since then, Israel has shown that it heavily relies on a regional alliance, led by the United States, to defend itself against Iran, which demonstrated its capabilities by deploying approximately 170 drones and ballistic and guided missiles in a warning attack in April.
- ❖ The Zionist project depends more than ever on swiftly obtaining large quantities of supplies from the United States. Without it, Israel cannot even fight a small army engaged in guerrilla warfare in the south. (Ilan Pappé, statement regarding indicators that signal the beginning of the end of the Israeli project at a seminar held at Haifa University).

The Study Conclusions

This study aims to demonstrate that the Zionist movement faced strong opposition from some of its most educated scholars within Israeli society, who rejected the idea of occupying land that does not belong to them and the assault on the properties of the Palestinian people, the rightful owners of the land and the cause. Ilan Pappé affirmed in various press statements that the Zionist movement is essentially a colonial settler movement supported by Western countries with shared objectives. The study concluded with the following points:

First: Ilan Pappé expressed complete opposition to all repressive actions carried out by the occupation authorities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Second: Pappé affirmed that the continued insistence of the occupation leaders on the displacement of the residents of the West Bank and Gaza will give rise to numerous liberation resistance movements to defend their land and homeland.

Third: Ilan Pappé revealed all the Israeli policies implemented in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which were inhumane due to their use of civilian killings and intimidation, the strategy of starvation, and the imposition of a blockade on the West Bank and Gaza, as well as the targeting of various medical facilities.

Fourth: Ilan Pappé's ideas received a swift response within Israeli society due to the conviction among Israelis in these ideas, which increasingly hinted at the potential for a civil war within Israeli society.

Fifth: Ilan Pappé revealed the impending end of the Zionist project in Palestine by highlighting certain indicators of its proximity, the most significant of which was the emergence of a Jewish civil war between the secular and religious camps within Israel, in addition to the grievances of the families of the dead, wounded, and prisoners from the recent wars waged by Israel.

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