



Palestine in Pieces: Graphic perspectives on the Israeli Occupation

By Kathleen and Bill Christison

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Palestine in pieces: Graphic perspectives on the Israeli Occupation is the most recent contribution by Kathleen and Bill Christison in their long standing effort to bring into the public domain the realities and horrors of the Palestinian people's plight as a colonised and oppressed nation living under the belligerent occupation of Israel.

It is an insightful, authoritative and comprehensive account of the physical manifestations of the political and ideological reality of Zionism in the context of occupation and as an "aggressive, exclusivist movement of Jewish redemption intended from the beginning to sweep everything non-Jewish from its path." Zionism's objective of total Jewish implantation across Palestine is highlighted by its destructive expansionism, the vanguard of which is the settlements and which thus form the cornerstones of the occupation. *Palestine in Pieces* persuasively demonstrates that from this ideology and its perceived need to protect and ensure the permanence of the ever expanding settlements flows all of Israel's increasingly repressive methods of consolidating its occupation and domination of Palestinians and their land. It argues that the long term goal of policies such as house demolitions, land appropriation, impediments to movement, the West Bank wall, sieges, killings, the system of bypass roads and the strangulation of the economy is to cause hardship and misery enough that Palestinians will voluntarily emigrate. Additionally and most significantly as the title of the book alludes, it is to "so fragment the Occupied Territories that any sustainable presence in the land by Palestinians as a nation will be negated."

Through this book, the authors endeavour to counter the Zionist propaganda which began at its inception and which continues to this day; misinformation and fictions that down play the significance of 1948 and attempt to negate the very existence of Palestinians as a people. This is demonstrated by Israeli map making practices which attempt to literally erase proof of the existence of Palestinians from the world stage. For this reason, the authors have included several maps; of Palestine-Israel, Jerusalem, Palestinian enclaves in the West Bank and the pathway of the West Bank Separation Barrier. Such erasures and denial is no doubt accompanied by and allows the denial of basic Palestinian human rights; of the existence of their suffering and of their right to independence to name but a few.

A key theme of *Palestine in Pieces* is that of bearing witness; breaking the taboo and silence that

surrounds the Palestinian occupation and giving a voice to those without one. As former CIA political analysts and respected authors on Palestinian issues as well as having visited the Occupied Territories numerous times - almost yearly since 2003, Bill and Kathleen Christison offer a perspective of objectivity and authority supported by three decades of activism. They are a reservoir of first hand knowledge and here they provide personal accounts of their experiences of the occupation through which we are allowed to hear the stories and daily struggles of individual Palestinians. This real life look at the people 're-humanises' them and allows a western audience to more readily identify with them and to perceive them as more than mere statistics or 'the other' as is often the case in western media. For Palestinians, the purpose is that "We resist watering down our truths into vague and generalized abstractions; we maintain the urgency and intensity in the concrete." The anecdotes that chronicle their journey tell the story of great loss but also of the determination, resilience, humanity and the power of the Palestinian spirit in the face of great adversity.

Through their writing they are able to evoke images of stark change over time - images of the land itself; of a vast Palestinian wilderness; fertile lands, mountains and breathtaking beauty pillaged as Israeli expansionism seeks to overtake it. It allows you to visualise a hopelessness and misery; "It is the poverty that hits you in the face, although that is only the surface: donkey carts everywhere, children in bare feet or only flip-flops walking through cold puddles in the winter rain, flea markets on many corners selling old clothes and run-down shoes - and the walls covered everywhere with endless graffiti in Arabic."

The catalogue of more than 50 photographs is worth a thousand times as many words. They visually hammer home the vivid reality of the situation emphasising, as with much of the book, the real human cost and impact of the occupation. The strategic positioning and enormity of settlements like Maale Adumim as well as their apparent luxury juxtaposed against the rural sparsity of Palestine is seldom seen. And images of the imposing, prohibitive permanence of the wall as it divides communities; checkpoints, bars, gates and razor wire that pens people in and the bulldozers, house demolitions, anguish and desolation are all clearly captured.

The pictorial and illustrative distinction of the book in combination with its brevity aims at rapidly educating those with little or no knowledge of the occupation or the goals of Zionism and as such, it is an invaluable contribution to existing literature. The perspective it lends to the occupation, its astute political observations and commentary underpinned by the courage, conviction and humanism of the authors makes it a convincing read.

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