

May 11, 2007

Boston Commemorates the Nakba: 59 Years of Colonialism and Genocide in Palestine

For the past five years, Palestinians and their supporters have protested the "Boston Celebrates Israel" event held yearly by Zionists in Boston. As the crimes of "Israel" have been more exposed, it has become harder for Zionists to hold their celebration in the open. In the past five years, attendance for the celebration has dwindled from several thousand down to a few hundred people. This year, to avoid the political attention generated by holding their event in accessible public space, the organizers have moved the celebration out of Boston to Gillette stadium in the remote town of Foxboro, Massachusetts and renamed it "New England Celebrates Israel."



Settlers, Al-Khalil, Palestine

Gillette Stadium is owned by American/Israeli billionaire Robert Kraft of Brookline, who also owns the New England Patriots. His wife, Myra Kraft, is Chairperson of the Board of the openly Zionist Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Boston. Among many other activities in support of Israel, the Krafts endow a "Passport to Israel Program" to bring Boston teenagers to stolen Palestinian land. Combined Jewish Philanthropies has been involved in the attack on the Islamic Society of Boston and its newly constructed mosque in Roxbury.

According to the flyer for the Gillette Stadium event, registration and ID are required to get in, indicating that people will be screened, just as they are at checkpoints in Palestine. In Jerusalem, Robert Kraft paid for the building of the Kraft Family Stadium, featuring American football under the Israeli flag - again using sports in the cause of colonialism.

At past "Israel Day" celebrations, it was clear that these were not grassroots events, that the festivities were organized and paid for from the top down. This year is the most extreme example - a large piece of private property has simply been provided by a single wealthy patron. In much the same way, the entire state of "Israel" has been bought and paid for with US dollars, and couldn't survive otherwise.

The New England Committee to Defend Palestine congratulates the supporters of Palestine who have protested this event since the year 2000 for finally getting "Israel Day" off the streets of Boston. "Israel Day" is political propaganda for the Zionist cause masquerading as a cultural festival. Its aim is to attract ordinary people - many with no particular commitment or connection to the Zionist project - and to present "Israel" as one more nation among the world's nations, with its own food, music, and culture (much of which has been - like the land of Palestine itself - quietly stolen from the indigenous people). As propaganda, it is effective to the degree that it does not call attention to itself as such. The lie comes in the form of silence - silence about the very recent origin of the "Israeli" settler state in genocidal militarism and colonialism.

For this reason, protest - even with limited numbers - has been able to defeat the purpose of the yearly "Boston Celebrates Israel" festival. The presence of Palestinian protestors, the massive security measures taken by the festival sponsors in reaction to this presence (a cordon of special operative police in riot gear and on horses, perimeter fences with metal detectors), and the mobilization of the most right-wing supporters of the Zionist cause, have unmasked the political nature of the festival, with the result that only hard-core supporters have chosen to attend for the last few years. Even before the sponsors moved the festival out of Boston and into a fully private arena, it had ceased to fulfill its original mission.

The creation of "Israel" in May of 1948 is called the Nakba (or 'catastrophe') by Palestinians. It is a time when more than 80% of the people of Palestine were driven from their land to make way for European settlers. We do NOT celebrate 59 years of racism, colonialism and land theft, the building of walls around human communities, military checkpoints, aerial bombardment, mass imprisonment, or the shooting of children.

We say that the people of Palestine have rights: a right to all of their historic land, and a right to resist colonialism and systematic genocide.

Signed,

The New England Committee to Defend Palestine

www.onepalestine.org