

# Passports to progress

Israelis and Palestinians alike should join me in taking dual citizenship - for we share one destiny

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I have often said that the destinies of the Israeli and Palestinian people are inextricably linked and that there is no military solution to the conflict. My recent acceptance of Palestinian nationality has given me the opportunity to demonstrate this more tangibly.

When my family moved to Israel from Argentina in the 1950s, one of my parents' intentions was to spare me the experience of growing up as part of a minority - a Jewish minority. They wanted to me to grow up as part of a majority - a Jewish majority. The tragedy of this is that my generation, despite having been educated in a society whose positive aspects and human values have greatly enriched my thinking, ignored the existence of a minority within Israel - a non-Jewish minority - which had been the majority in the whole of Palestine until the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. Part of the non-Jewish population remained in Israel, and other parts left out of fear or were forcefully displaced.

In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict there was and still is an inability to admit the interdependence of their two voices. The creation of the state of Israel was the result of a Jewish-European idea which, if it is to extend its leitmotif into the future, must accept the Palestinian identity as an equally valid leitmotif. The demographic development is impossible to ignore; the Palestinians within Israel are a minority but a rapidly growing one, and their voice needs to be heard now more than ever. They now make up approximately 22% of the population of Israel. This is a larger percentage than was ever represented by a Jewish minority in any country in any period of history. The total number of Palestinians living within Israel and in the occupied territories (that is, greater Israel for the Israelis or greater Palestine for the Palestinians) is already larger than the Jewish population.

At present Israel is confronted with three problems: the nature of the modern democratic Jewish state - its very identity; the problem of Palestinian identity within Israel; and the problem of the creation of a Palestinian state outside of Israel. With Jordan and Egypt it was possible to attain what can best be described as an ice-cold peace without questioning Israel's existence as a Jewish state. The problem of the Palestinians within Israel is a much more challenging one to solve, theoretically and practically. For Israel it means, among other things, coming to terms with the fact that the land was not barren or empty, "a land without a people" - an idea that was propagated at the time of its creation. For the Palestinians, it means accepting the fact that Israel is a Jewish state and is here to stay.

Israelis must accept the integration of the Palestinian minority, even if it means changing certain aspects of the nature of Israel; they must also accept the justification for and necessity of the creation of a Palestinian state next to the state of Israel. Not only is there no alternative, or magic wand, that will make the Palestinians disappear, but their integration is an indispensable condition - on moral, social, and political grounds - for the very survival of Israel.

The longer the occupation continues and Palestinian dissatisfaction remains unaddressed, the more difficult it is to find even elementary common ground. We have seen so often in the modern history of the Middle East that missed opportunities for reconciliation have had extremely negative results for both sides.

For my part, when the Palestinian passport was offered to me, I accepted it in the spirit of acknowledging the Palestinian destiny which I, as an Israeli, share. A true citizen of Israel must reach out to the Palestinian people with openness, and at the very least an attempt to understand what the creation of the state of Israel has meant to them.

May 15 1948 is the day of independence for the Jews, but the same day is al-Nakba, the catastrophe, for the Palestinians. A true citizen of Israel must ask himself what the Jews, known as an intelligent people of learning and culture, have done to share their cultural heritage with the Palestinians. A true citizen of Israel must also ask himself why the Palestinians have been condemned to live in slums and

accept lower standards of education and medical care, rather than being provided by the occupying force with decent, dignified and liveable conditions - a right common to all human beings.

In any occupied territory, the occupiers are responsible for the quality of life of the occupied, and in the case of the Palestinians, the different Israeli governments over the past 40 years have failed miserably. The Palestinians, naturally, must continue to resist the occupation and all attempts to deny them basic individual needs and statehood. However, for their own sake, this resistance must not express itself through violence. Crossing the boundary from adamant resistance (including non-violent demonstrations and protests) to violence only results in more innocent victims, and does not serve the long-term interests of the Palestinian people.

At the same time, the citizens of Israel have just as much cause to be alert to the needs and rights of the Palestinian people (both within and outside Israel) as they have to their own. After all, in the sense that we share one land and one destiny, we should all have dual citizenship.

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