

*The unity of our struggle:
Mustafa Barghouti on the role of
the Palestinian diaspora in the
struggle for liberation*



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Mustafa Barghouti addresses attendees at the People's Conference for Palestine (Photo: Zoe Alexandra)

By Peoples Dispatch

Detroit, May 26 (RHC)-- From Friday, May 24th to Sunday, May 26th, thousands of activists, organizers, educators, and others in the global Palestine solidarity movement are convening in Detroit, Michigan, for the People's Conference for Palestine.

The conference was convened by Palestinian and anti-imperialist organizations from across North America, including the Palestinian Youth Movement, National Students for Justice in Palestine, the US Palestinian Community Network, the People's Forum, Al-Awda: The Palestine Right to Return Coalition, the ANSWER Coalition, the Arab Resource and Organizing Center (AROC), and many others. Almost 300 organizations have endorsed the conference, including Dissenters, Artists Against Apartheid, Autonomous Tenants Union Network, Black Alliance for Peace, Black Lives Matter-Canada, the Party for Socialism and Liberation, Cooperation Jackson, and American Muslims for Palestine.

On the first day, conference attendees heard from key figures of the global Palestinian movement, including physician and activist Mustafa Barghouti, secretary general and co-founder of the Palestinian National Initiative, member of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), and president of the Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees. Barghouti focused his address on uniting the Palestinian people around the world for the task of defeating settler colonialism.

"The main difference between us and the Zionist movement is that it is so well organized, and we have to be even better organized," he entreated.

Below is a transcript of his address on the first day of the conference which has been lightly edited for clarity.

First of all, I would like to say that the first real interesting thing was the failure of the so-called Oslo Agreement and the Oslo approach of building illusions about the possibility of having compromise with the Zionist movement. After 30 years, all of that collapsed.

The second interesting character was that there was a rise and shift in Israel and towards fascism, and in that sense, the rise of illegal settlers and their power and the Israeli political establishment was instrumental. And that was accompanied by the rise of religious Jewish fundamentalist fascist tendencies.

The third one was the effort to try to use normalization, the unfortunate normalization with Arab countries, as a way of liquidating the Palestinian cause and some real reactionary forces hoping to build a military alliance between Israel, the United States and some Arab governments.

And finally, it was Netanyahu who thought he succeeded, standing up in the General Assembly of the United Nations and showing the map of Israel. And that included the annexation of all of the West Bank, all of the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights. And in parallel to that was the unprecedented level of settlement expansion.

That all meant two things for Palestinian people.

First, the failure of all these illusions about the possibility of a compromise or a settlement with the Zionist movement. And second, the end of the illusions that the United States could be playing the role of a mediator, in the light of its absolute and total bias to Israel.

Al-Aqsa floods, which came on the 7th of October, actually represented a continuation of a true new kind of uprising that started in 2015 in the occupied territories. It was a continuation of the Palestinian struggle and steadfastness during the attacks of Israel on Gaza in 2008, 2012, 2014. It was a continuation of the popular mass struggle against the illegal settlements and the illegal apartheid wall and a continuation of the marches of return and break the siege that took place in Gaza.

And it was a continuation of the great uprising in 2021, which took place in Jerusalem and then spread to all of the occupied territories. Regardless of how much sacrifices we have to make, in reality, what we have seen since the 7th of October is a return to the roots of the issue, to the roots of the problem, to the roots of why we are suffering as Palestinians.

And that is not only the occupation and not only the system of apartheid that we've been subjected to, but more than that, it's a return of the consciousness and the understanding that what we face is what our people have been facing since the end of the 19th century, which is nothing but the settler colonial project that we have to stand up and fight against.

That is the main conclusion.

And during the last seven, eight months, Israel committed terrible crimes. Up to now, we've lost 45,000 Palestinians. If we count the 10,000 people under the rubble. Including no less than 17,000 children and more than 10,000 women. And we had 8,000 people injured. If we put them together, that is 125,000 Palestinians killed or injured in Gaza and less than eight months, that is 5.3% of the Palestinian population in Gaza.

This is a huge number. If this had happened in the United States of America, you would be talking about 18 million people killed or injured in less than eight months.

And these are not just numbers. Each one of the 125,000 Palestinians killed and injured, each one is a person, a family, a history, a dream. And sometimes it's children who did not yet have the time to dream about their future.

They've killed everybody.

They didn't allow a single journalist to enter Gaza except one for 3 hours, from outside. And they killed 144 Palestinian journalists on the ground to prevent the truth from coming out. But it came out regardless of all their oppression.

They killed 430 of my colleagues, doctors, nurses and health professionals. They destroyed universities, hospitals, houses, factories, most of the medical system.

But they could not kill the will and determination of the Palestinian people.

And what we see today is a great failure of Israel. They have failed in destroying the Palestinian resistance, neither in Gaza nor in the West Bank. They failed in imposing their control over the land. They have failed in getting back their prisoners by force. And they failed in conducting the main goal of the Israeli operation in Gaza, which was the ethnic cleansing of the Gazan population and forcing them to go to the desert of Sinai.

The failure is the title of what has happened to the Israeli army in Gaza. Yes, we paid a very high price, but they couldn't achieve what they wanted to achieve.

And in parallel to that, what we have witnessed is the decline of so many Israeli myths. The myth about Israel, the powerful army that Israel that cannot be defeated, the Israel that defeated three Arab armies in less than five days in 1967 was incapable of destroying the Palestinian resistance movement, regardless of the huge difference in resources and numbers.

What we witnessed is the fall of that whole claim about Israel being a democracy, a democracy that violates every international law and every international and human norm. It was a failure of Israeli impunity, the impunity that Israel enjoyed since 76 years in front of international law. And finally, it was a failure of the ability of the Zionist movement, even to keep the people unified and united.

On the other hand, what we have seen during the last eight months is that in the re energization of a whole generation, a whole Palestinian generation or a whole Arab generation and a whole international young generation, and what we see in this world today is a reflection of that, an uprising that is unprecedented and a popular youth movement that we did not see since maybe the Vietnam War and since the rise of the solidarity movement with the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa.

Our struggle today, as Palestinian people, our struggle today and our revolution is not only to end occupation and it's not only to bring down this system of racism and discrimination, and not only to eliminate the results of the ethnic cleansing that took place in 1948, but more than that, it is now, as every Palestinian must understand, about a struggle to bring down the whole system of settler colonialism that has been attacking our people during more than 100 years.

And the role of the Palestinian diaspora today is even bigger than any time before. I know that many of you have felt during many decades, during the last maybe 30 years, you felt marginalized. You felt that you are outside the ranks of the Palestinian decision making. You were ruled out from the possibility of participation in a Democratic process in Palestine.

And all of that, of course, or to a large extent, was related to the terrible system of the Oslo process that divided our people and marginalized many, many of the Palestinians.

But today, the roads are open for reunifying all the efforts of all Palestinian people, whether they live in 1948 areas, whether they live in the occupied territories in West Bank and Gaza and Jerusalem, or whether they live like you do in the diaspora.

Our future is one, and our struggle is one, and we have to all be unified. And whether you are men or women, young or old, students or teachers, workers, businesspeople, lawyers or doctors, there is a very big opportunity for each one of you now to participate in the Palestinian struggle.

And the way to get there is through the unity of our activities and unity of our work and the unity of our struggle.

And there are three arenas which I feel are very important for our diaspora. The first one is to continue to bring to everybody in the world the true narrative about the reality of Palestine, and the true narrative about the heroism and the struggle of the Palestinian people.

Second, it's to do everything that one can do to influence the people with media, with social activities, and especially to influence the younger generation.

And third, to transform this wonderful and amazing energy that we have seen in different universities that we have seen in the streets of different cities in the United States, to transform all of that into a powerful boycott, divestment, sanctions movement against the Israeli establishment in every possible way. BDS is the way. Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions is the way to translate solidarity into a material effect that affects Israel. And it is a movement that is growing worldwide now, everywhere in the world, in Europe, in Asia and Latin America and North America, everywhere.

I've just participated two days ago in a huge, wonderful conference in South Africa, which declared the creation and the initiation of a global anti-apartheid movement in Palestine, very similar to the anti-apartheid movement that prevailed and helped bring down the apartheid system in South Africa.

And here we are not talking only about bringing down apartheid and occupation. We're talking about bringing down the whole settler colonial system that has affected our people.

The key point in making your work and the struggle effective is organization. The main difference between us and the Zionist movement is that it is so well organized, and we have to be even better organized. And I believe that if this wonderful and amazing mass of energy that we have seen everywhere in every city in the United States of America, in every city in Europe, and so many other places, if we can translate that wonderful energy into an organization that continues to work, that continues to struggle, and that continues to mobilize people and transform their energy into an effective material impact, we will succeed, and we will be victorious and we will support our people in their struggle.

What we need now is the integration of all our people, as I said, in the diaspora and in Palestine, to achieve the same goals that I spoke about. And life has shown that the national strategy we've been talking about all the last years is the right strategy, is the successful strategy.

The strategy that is built on the four pillars, the steadfastness of the Palestinian people on the land of Palestine. And I'm so proud to tell you that regardless of the fact that seven million people more of our people are refugees that are not allowed to come back to Palestine since the Nakba. Regardless of that, our number today on the land of historic Palestine, is bigger than the number of the Israeli Jewish people, and that's what drives them crazy.

That's what drives them crazy because it means the Zionist movement has failed. Yes, they managed to occupy the land by force, but they could not kick us all out of Palestine. The steadfastness of the people there, and helping them and supporting them to stay on our homeland, is a key point in our struggle and our success. The second point is the resistance in all its forms.

Resistance is our right. Resistance is our way. And resistance is our guarantee to succeed in our future.

And third, it's the mobilization of the global boycott, divestment, sanctions movement all over the world. This is a key instrument in the success of our struggle. And finally, the unity. The unity of our people. The unity of our struggle. I know there are some flaws here and there. We still have some flaws, but we will try to overcome them. And please show us also a very good model of unity and your wonderful work in the United States.

I want to finish by telling you that our people now in Gaza are doing everything they can. I'm so proud of being also part of the medical work there. We have now, 45 medical teams that work around the clock in Jabalya and Beit Lahia and Gaza City, in Khan Younis, in Rafah, everywhere, and jointly with all other medical teams.

They are doing everything they can to help our people, to treat the injured, to help those who need medications. And they are doing wonderful work, refusing to leave their people and insisting to be with them, whatever it takes.

To the heroism of the people of Gaza, which has made Israeli aggression fail, we all stand and greet them and say that people who have such a spirit, such a determination, such a level of steadfastness, cannot be defeated, and they will succeed.

And together with you, our people will overcome, and we will be successful. And you will see, sooner rather than later, the day of victory in Palestine.

<https://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/internacionales/355660-the-unity-of-our-struggle-mustafa-barghouti-on-the-role-of-the-palestinian-diaspora-in-the-struggle-for-liberation>



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