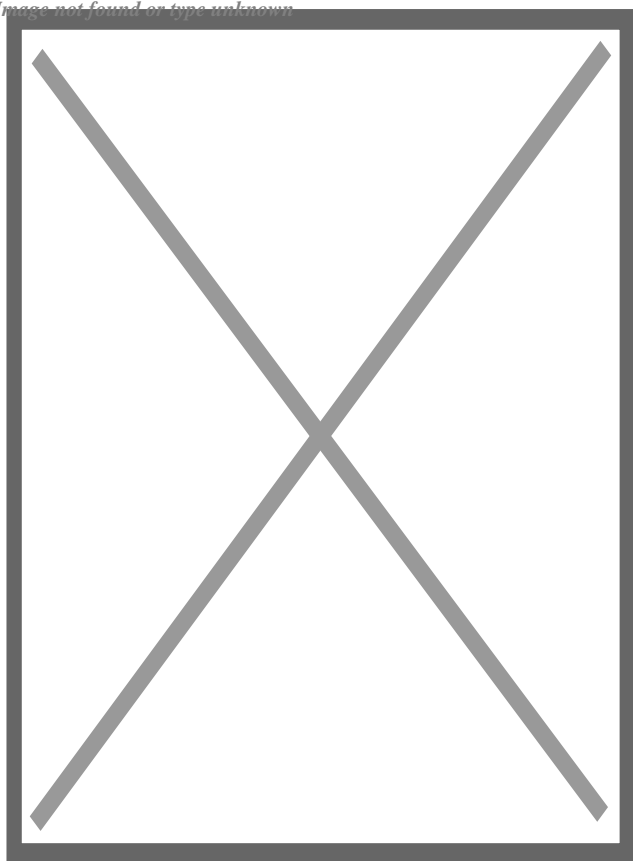


The so-called Land of the Free has been the enemy of freedom around the world

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By Eman Abdelhadi

Washington, July 4 (RHC)-- For hundreds of millions across the world, the stars and stripes are symbols of U.S. empire, not independence.

On July 4th, streets and lawns throughout the United States bristle with red, white and blue, and a settler colony built on genocide and slavery seeks to depict itself as a scrappy young underdog that overthrew the yokes of British tyranny. Yet for hundreds of millions around the world, the stars and stripes have

been a symbol not of independence but of coercion, oppression and forced dependence.

From Latin America to Southeast Asia, and from the Middle East and North Africa to Eastern Europe to sub-Saharan Africa, the so-called "Land of the Free" has often been an enemy of self-determination. No people — including this country's native inhabitants — have been safe from the reach of U.S. empire, which insisted on making the world an ungated playground for its interests.

I am Palestinian. For 76 long years, the U.S. — the nation of my birth — has materially and militarily backed a state that displaced my grandparents from their home in 1948 and rendered them and their children stateless — a nation that has been cleansing my people from their land since its founding, and in its latest act of genocide, has cut short the lives of 37,953 Palestinians within the last nine months alone.

The United States, the so-called land of the free and the home of the brave, has spent 76 years providing endless weapons and funds to Israel and shielding it from any international criticism or intervention.

Internally, it has silenced Palestinians and our allies, criminalizing our activism and erasing our histories. In other words, the United States has ensured that Palestinians have no right to decide their own fate, to remain on their own land, or even to live. Today, the U.S. is co-authoring the ethnic cleansing of Gaza through yet another round of genocide and displacement.

I am also Egyptian. My mother grew up in an Egypt forced open by U.S. foreign policy and the army of technocrats at the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Their social safety nets disappeared as Egyptian resources were sold to American investors, and Egypt became a U.S. client state that answers to Washington, not Cairo.

U.S.-forced neoliberalization enriched the few and immiserated the many, forcing my mother and cohort to wander in search of dignified lives outside their now unlivable homeland. My mother, medical degree in hand, had to knock on her oppressor's door to ask for the leftover, unwanted jobs that would feed her children. For years, she worked as a home health aide, earning poverty wages for 14-hour shifts. Now, even more of her family has been exiled by the U.S.-backed Sisi regime, simply for daring to have a political voice.

Despite the Egyptian people's solidarity with Gazans and Palestinians more broadly, the Egyptian government has been a partner to the U.S. and Israel's 17-year-seige on Gaza. Now Sisi is expanding his role as prison ward, building a "security zone" to wall displaced Palestinians into the Sinai as Israel pushes them out of their homes. Those daring to call for solidarity for Palestine or aid Gazans at the borders have been detained and tortured.

I am an Arab and a Muslim. At 34 years old, I have already watched the United States slaughter millions of my people. I witnessed the murder of a million Iraqis and tens of thousands of Palestinians, Yemenis and Libyans. I have watched the U.S. destroy Afghanistan and leave it to the wolves. I have watched it impose sanctions that starve Sudanese, Iranians, Syrians, and so many more — all while lecturing the world about democracy and freedom.

All I want for Independence Day is a world independent of U.S. empire. And here, on Turtle Island, I want freedom. From sea to shining sea, I want liberation from billionaires, corporations and right-wing lobbies.

I want choice beyond two decrepit parties that are neither by nor for the people. By the dawn's early light, I dream of real democracy — one that no Electoral College, Senate or Supreme Court can overrule. I want the world's masses to throw off the yokes of all empires of oppression — to replace states with communities. In that future, no flag ever waves.

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