

A Royal Need for Political Education

Despite Israeli bullets ‘clashing’ with the bodies of unarmed indigenous people attempting to walk back to the houses and the land from which they were expelled at gunpoint; despite Israel being in breach of international law and more than sixty UN resolutions (over 100 without the US veto); despite the illegal occupation of so much land, including a huge part of Syria; despite a continuous history of massacre and expulsion; despite all this and more the visit of Prince William is scheduled to go ahead as if all was sweetness and light. Some commentators are linking the visit to the revival of a ‘two-state solution’. That ‘solution’ has been dead in the water for decades but still gullible governments in the west try to pump oxygen into it.

You hear massacre described as ‘conflict’. You hear defenders of truly Semitic people being described as anti-Semitic by non-Semitic people; you hear criticism of Israel described as ‘racist’ even although there is no Israeli race; and you hear talk of a ‘peace process even although that is a cynical joke. Tacitus quoted a British chief’s comment upon the Romans, ‘Ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant’: ‘Everywhere they have created desolation, peace they call it.’ He could have been talking about the government of Israel.

What you will not hear very much of, unless you strain your ears, is the voice of dispossession, of death and destruction. That is the voice of the indigenous. That is the voice of the oppressed: oppressed by colonisers with no connection to the land at all.

If you visit any Royal Family website/home page you will be told that they do not intervene in political matters. In an attempt to indicate that the visit is nothing but such an intervention, one that shall be captured and deployed by those with the power to control the narrative, I sent the following to Prince William.

Dear Prince William,

I welcome your plan to visit Palestine and other places in the region. For so many indigenous people, including those suffering an inferior status within Israel and the Occupied Territories and those displaced from their ancestral homes news of your visit comes as a reminder that they are not forgotten.

May I suggest that if your trip includes a visit to Yad Veshem you ask about Dier Yassin? That is only one example of many such massacres but the siting of Yad Veshem overlooking it raises its significance.

In Britain we are fortunate to have easy access to internationally renowned Israeli historians such as Ilan Pappé at the University of Exeter and Avi

Shlaim at the University of Oxford. Shlaim also wrote *The Lion of Jordan: The Life of King Hussein in War and Peace* (2007). As you will be visiting Jordan you might find the book useful. Also based in Britain (Sheffield) is Mushier El-Farrar whose *GAZA, when the sky rained white fire* (2012) provides so much first hand information.

I could mention so many other sources of information. Others would, I know refer you to many more. Perhaps while you are there you will find time to talk to people such as Hanan Ashrawi and Nurit Peled-Elhanen. Nurit's book, *Palestine in Israeli School Books, Ideology and Propaganda in Education* (2011) shines a light on a topic largely ignored in Britain. Nurit's husband Rami could introduce you to so many people from families who have suffered bereavement and yet have crossed boundaries in order to provide mutual support.

My own experience of Israel includes thirteen years of working with people in education: people from all sorts of backgrounds. Among the many lessons that I learned was the importance of opening my eyes and my mind to much more than the official perspective.

I note that you do not intervene politically. I very much hope that people with the power to make it seem that you endorse that official perspective shall not misuse your visit.

Cliff Jones, 19th. May 2018