

Ronit Lentin, “Traces of Racial Exception. Racializing Israeli Settler Colonialism.”

Preface

We stole the lands of another people, but that’s not who we are, we are better than this.

We expelled 800,000 of the owners of the land, or made them flee; we renamed their villages and urban neighborhoods and settled our own people in them, but that’s not who we are, we are better than this.

We uprooted the trees planted by the owners of the land and planted European conifers to cover the ruins of their depopulated villages, which they are not allowed to settle in and many of which we have made our own, but that’s not who we are, we are better than this.

We massacred the populations of whole villages, tortured their men, raped their women and beat and tortured their children, but that’s not who we are, we are better than this.

We occupied and annexed those parts of the land we had conquered in our “war of independence” that the owners of the land call their Nakba, or catastrophe, but that’s not who we are, we are better than this.

We bombed their cities, demolished their homes, flattened their refugee camps and since 2002, built a 700-kilometers long concrete wall, which we call the separation barrier and the owners of the land call the apartheid wall, to cut off the owners of the land from each other; but that’s not who we are, we are better than this.

We installed hundreds of checkpoints preventing the owners of the land from getting to work, visiting their families, or reaching the hospital to receive medical treatment or give birth, but that’s not who we are, we are better than this.

We started war after war outside the 1949 armistice borders of our state, making hundreds of thousands homeless, claiming self-defense, but that’s not who we are, we are better than this.

We put the owners of the land under a military government regime, ruled them with emergency regulations inherited from the British colonizers, enlisted them as collaborators and informers, and controlled their freedom of movement and expression, but that’s not who we are, we are better than this.

We operate a separate military court system to try the owners of the land, imprison thousands of them including women and children, and put hundreds in administrative detention without trial, but that’s not who we are, we are better than this.

We build our settlements on their lands and allow our illegal settlers to prevent the owners of the land from herding their flocks, tilling their fields and picking their olives, but that’s not who we are, we are better than this.

We allow Jewish settlers to take over the homes of the owners of the land and to beat their children while on their way to school, but that’s not who we are, we are better than this.

We transferred thousands of Bedouin citizens off their lands and left them in “unrecognized villages” without electricity, water, roads and schools, and demolish these “unrecognized villages” again and again, but that’s not who we are, we are better than this.

We extrajudicially execute the owners of the land when we suspect that their resistance amounts to “terrorist” acts, even after they are “neutralized” and lying defenseless on the ground; we arrest their children in dawn raids, interrogate them without any adult present, and try them in military courts, but that’s not who we are, we are better than this.

We lock up asylum seekers, who we call “infiltrators,” and most of whose cases we never process, in concentration camps away from our towns that they are not allowed to enter, but that’s not who we are, we are better than this.

We deny the owners of the land the right to remember and commemorate their Nakba and force them to study our history and our writers and poets, but that’s not who we are, we are better than this.

You see, we are victims of persecution and Holocaust survivors, and their land had been promised to us by our god, and is thus legally ours, and anyone questioning our rights to conquer, settle, expropriate, kill, imprison, shoot, bomb, torture, transfer, and deport is an antisemite or a “self-hating Jew.”

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