

The 'Barghouti Solution' To End the Killing, Free Marwan Barghouti Now!

by Daniel Platt

Dec. 29—The issue of the formation of a stable Palestinian government, and with it a resolution to the long-festering Israeli-Palestinian conflict, could have been settled two decades ago. The problem at the time was that the obvious unifying individual, Marwan Barghouti, the leader of the West Bank Fatah, was in an Israeli prison. Almost 20 years later, Barghouti is still in that prison cell. He is considered Fatah's most capable leader and it has been widely suggested that he be released to revitalize the Palestinian National Authority, since he is the most popular leader among Palestinians, and one committed to making the two-state solution work.

Early Life and Imprisonment

Barghouti was born in 1959 near Ramallah, and joined Fatah at age 15. He was a co-founder of the Fatah Youth Movement on the West Bank. By the age of 18 he had been arrested by Israel for his involvement in Palestinian militant groups, and he completed his secondary education and received a high school diploma while serving a four-year term in jail, where he gained fluency in Hebrew.

Barghouti was imprisoned again in 1985 for six months, then deported to Jordan in 1987, where he joined the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Tunis alongside Yasser Arafat. An active supporter of the Oslo Accords, he returned to Palestine in 1994 and, in 1996, he was elected to the Palestine Legislative Council. He was active with

Israeli counterparts in trying to make the peace process a success, and he worked to transform his Fatah from a resistance operation to a civil political party. He did not hesitate to go to the Israeli Knesset to set up an Israeli-Palestinian parliamentary friendship group.

But the serious and illegal expansion of Israeli settlements into the West Bank in 1998 forced his hand, and Barghouti led massive demonstrations. Then, Likud party leader Ariel Sharon's infamous march onto the Temple Mount in 2000 provoked rioting by Palestinians, leading to the second Intifada, of which Barghouti was the embodiment. However, throughout the Intifada, Barghouti always rejected attacks on Israeli civilians.

Yet it is in the name of attacks on civilians that Israel imprisoned him in 2002. He is condemned to life imprisonment, accused of having organized five murders; and to a 40-year sentence for murder attempts. Barghouti refused to present a defense to the charges brought against him, maintaining throughout that the trial

was illegal and illegitimate.

Response from Political Leaders

On November 11, 2004, the American political leader and *EIR* founder Lyndon LaRouche addressed an Argentine and Peruvian public event:

There is a man in an Israeli prison, who if [Israeli



Marwan Barghouti Facebook page

Popular Palestinian leader Marwan Barghouti has been incarcerated in an Israeli prison for the past 22 years after a failed attempt to assassinate him. His freedom is critical to the formation of a stable Palestinian government and the effort to make a two-state solution work.

Prime Minister Ariel] Sharon wanted to, and if the United States would pressure Sharon to do it, could be pulled out of prison as a negotiating partner with Sharon, for bringing about, or negotiating, some kind of peace between the Palestinians and the Israelis. If they did agree to acceptable terms, that would in a sense bring the crisis in the entire Southwest Asia, into some kind of order.... We are obviously going to work for that.

That same day, former Secretary of State James Baker III stated:

There is now in Israel—in an Israeli prison, a man named Marwan Barghouti, who is one of the young guard of Palestinians, and if the Palestinians are going to make this work against the really hard-line elements, the Islamists and some of the people of Hamas, they're going to have to have a coalition of the young guard and the old guard. And it would be really a very positive step in the right direction if Israel would release Marwan Barghouti, so that he could participate in bringing about this transition.

Both quotes appear in the *EIR* Nov. 26, 2004 [article](#) by Dean Andromidas, “LaRouche and Baker Call for Freeing Barghouti,” in which he pointed out that Barghouti was widely trusted amongst Palestinians. A poll at that time put Barghouti at 51%, far ahead of Hamas’ leader, Ismail Haniyah, at 28%.

Barghouti’s Message to Americans

Barghouti [wrote](#), in an opinion piece in the Jan. 16, 2002 *Washington Post*:

The only way for the Israelis to have security is, quite simply, to end the 35-year-old Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory. Israelis must abandon the myth that it is possible to have peace and occupation at the same time, that peaceful coexistence is possible between slave and master. The lack of Israeli security is born of the lack of Palestinian freedom. Israel will have security only after the end of the occupation, not before.

Once Israel and the rest of the world understand this fundamental truth, the way forward becomes clear: End the occupation, allow the Palestinians to live in freedom and let the independent and equal neighbors of Israel and Palestine negotiate a peaceful future with close economic and cultural ties.

Let us not forget, we Palestinians have recognized Israel on 78 percent of historic Palestine. It is Israel that refuses to acknowledge Palestine’s right to exist on the remaining 22 percent of land occupied in 1967. And yet it is the Palestinians who are accused of not compromising and of missing opportunities. Frankly, we are tired of always taking the blame for Israeli intransigence when all we are seeking is the implementation of international law.

And we have no faith in the United States, the provider of billions of dollars in annual aid to fund Israel’s expansion of illegal colonies, the “fighter of terrorism” that supplies Israel with the F-16s and helicopter gunships used against a defenseless civilian population, the “defender of freedom and the oppressed” that coddles Sharon even as he faces war crimes charges for his responsibility in the 1982 massacre of Palestinian refugees. The role of the world’s only superpower has been reduced to that of a mere spectator with nothing to offer other than a tired refrain of “Stop the violence” while doing nothing to address the root causes of that violence: denial of Palestinian freedom.

I am not a terrorist, but neither am I a pacifist. I am simply a regular guy from the Palestinian street advocating only what every other oppressed person has advocated—the right to help myself in the absence of help from anywhere else.

This principle may well lead to my assassination. So let my position be clear in order that my death not be lightly dismissed by the world as just one more statistic in Israel’s “war on terrorism.” For six years I languished as a political prisoner in an Israeli jail, where I was tortured, where I hung blindfolded as an Israeli beat my genitals with a stick. But since 1994, when I believed Israel was serious about ending its occupation, I have been a tireless

advocate of a peace based on fairness and equality. I led delegations of Palestinians in meetings with Israeli parliamentarians to promote mutual understanding and cooperation. I still seek peaceful coexistence between the equal and independent countries of Israel and Palestine based on full withdrawal from Palestinian territories occupied in 1967 and a just resolution to the plight of Palestinian refugees pursuant to U.N. resolutions. I do not seek to destroy Israel but only to end its occupation of my country.

Exactly three months later, on April 15, 2002, Barghouti was arrested at his home, and has been kept from seeing his wife and four children from then even until now.

Where Is He Now?

In August of 2023, Barghouti's wife, Fadwa Barghouti, met with the Jordanian foreign minister in Amman and announced the launch of an international campaign for the release of her husband, called "Freedom for Marwan Barghouti, the Mandela of Palestine." In the months that have followed the Oct. 7 attacks by Hamas, the savagery of the Likud government's response and the growing danger that the conflict will spread throughout the region have focused world attention on Gaza, and a fresh chorus of voices has been heard, calling for the release of Barghouti as a crucial step toward breaking the Gordian Knot of the conflict. Articles have appeared in *Ha'aretz*, *Al Monitor*, and other publications.

On December 18, the Palestinian Revolutionary Council, the general assembly of the Fatah movement, of which Marwan Barghouti is a senior leader, issued a [statement](#) warning that Barghouti's life "is at real risk" in Israeli jails. Also on December 18, the Prisoners' Affairs Commission and the Prisoners' Club accused Israel of "forcible disappearance" of incarcerated Palestinians from Gaza, detained since Oct. 7. Before Oct. 7, Israel held some 5,000 Palestinians in its jails, including 1,300 without charges or process. Another 4,500 Palestinians have since been detained, with about 2,000 of them under administrative detention without charges.

These statements follow another by the Palestinian Prisoners' Club that Barghouti had been transferred

from his previous detention location, at the Ofer detention center, to an unknown location. According to the [Palestine Chronicle](#), it was later revealed that he had been transferred to the Ramon Prison, where he is currently held in solitary confinement.

Both the Prisoners' Affairs Commission and the Prisoners' Club have called upon international human rights bodies to pressure Israel to release information about Palestinian Gazan detainees. They referred to news reports in the Israeli press about the death of some Gazan detainees, the most recent of which was a report by the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*: "The occupation's insistence not to reveal the fate of Gaza's detainees, and to continue to disappear them forcibly, only has one explanation, which is that there is a decision to commit crimes against them away from the public eye," the statement read.

French Developments

One month ago, a [commentary](#) appeared on *France24* with the title, "Can Marwan Barghouti, the 'Palestinian Mandela,' bring peace to Gaza?" (A similar article appeared in *The American Prospect*, titled "Time to Free Palestine's Nelson Mandela.") The article states that Barghouti "has emerged in Palestinian polls as the most popular figure among young people," the only person capable of uniting rival Palestinian political groups. It quotes French geopolitical scholar Frédéric Encel saying, "He spent many years in prison in Israel, which obviously gives him a reputation of probity, heroism, and patriotism in the eyes of Palestinians."

In December, a new voice emerged in France for peace in Palestine, that of [Ofer Bronchtein](#), who is Israeli, and a personal friend of Barghouti. Bronchtein holds an honorary Palestinian passport and has been fighting for the two-state solution for years.

Bronchtein gave a most interesting interview to the "Mardi Politique" broadcast of [RFI/France24](#) Nov. 28, in which he said that freeing Barghouti would be a positive development for peace; the Palestinians recognize his leadership and even Hamas would accept it. He called attention to the lack of empathy on both sides of the conflict, and reminded viewers that the Likud Party of Netanyahu has had a policy of supporting the religious fundamentalists of Hamas in order to weaken the secular, nationalist faction, of which Barghouti is a leading figure. He added that Hamas cannot be defeat-

ed without addressing the poverty and ignorance which enable it to recruit. Bronchtein says that the error lies in giving the residents of Gaza alms, while denying them development: “We give them fish; we do not give them a fishing rod.”

Bronchtein has a significant profile as a past advisor to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and negotiator of the Oslo Agreements. He was once imprisoned in Israel for his cooperation with the PLO, and today is the president of the International Forum for Peace and Reconciliation in Paris. It turns out that Bronchtein has been advising French President Emmanuel Macron since 2020, on how to find the solution to the Israeli-Palestine war.

Bronchstein’s call is not the first time that Barghouti’s possible role has been put forward internationally. The Communist Party of France also came out in favor of the “Barghouti solution” in late 2023. Following that, former Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin, in an interview with *France Inter*, also called for the liberation of Barghouti, so he can become the leader of Palestine.

Peace Feelers from Israel?

On Dec. 25, the Arabic *Ultra Palestine* news site reported that Israel offered, in talks with Qatari mediators on a ceasefire or truce deal, to release Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti and Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) head Ahmed Sa’adat. *Ultra Palestine*’s source was identified as a PFLP official for international relations, Maher Al-Taher, who has been involved in the ongoing negotiations.

Al-Taher revealed to *Ultra Palestine* Dec. 25 that the Israeli negotiator had presented the seven-point proposal four days earlier through the Qatari mediator, but the resistance factions rejected the proposal because it does not stipulate both halting aggression against the Gaza Strip and the release of all Palestinians held in Israeli prisons. He reported that the Israeli offer consisted of:

First: a two-week calm, which can be extended for more days.

Second: A deal to exchange “civilian” prisoners held by the resistance in Gaza along with captive female soldiers, in exchange for a number of Palestinian prisoners to be agreed upon later.

Third: Israeli withdrawal from the cities of the Gaza Strip, and maintaining a barrier separating the north of the Strip from its south, with a security belt in the northern areas.

Fourth: Introducing relief aid, in an unspecified manner.

Fifth: The return of the population to the northern Gaza Strip and allowing relief and humanitarian institutions to set up tents and provide services.

Sixth: The release of key fighters, including the Secretary-General of the Popular Front, Ahmed Sa’adat, and a member of the Fatah Central Committee, Marwan Barghouti.

Seventh: Preparing for the second stage, negotiating for all the prisoners, and withdrawing from Gaza later.

The Israeli proposal, as described, also indicated that the United States does not oppose Hamas’ participation with others in managing the Gaza Strip after the war, but refuses to let it remain in control.

Al-Taher revealed that a delegation from the Popular Front is expected to visit Egypt in the coming days to discuss Qatari and Egyptian efforts aimed at stopping the aggression against Gaza, and that the position is unified among the resistance factions on the aforementioned points.

If this story is true, it represents significant concessions. So far, while the story has been noted on an Israeli blog and an Israeli radio/TV [news site](#), there has been no comment from any official Israeli source.

The establishment of a viable, secular Palestinian state, as mandated by the Oslo Accords, would create the basis for the long-term solution: the economic development of the region to the mutual benefit of Israelis and Palestinians, as envisioned by Lyndon LaRouche in his [Oasis Plan](#). Benjamin Netanyahu and his Likud party have continually rejected this option, preferring to fund and bolster Hamas in order to disrupt the movement toward Palestinian sovereignty. The consequences of their policy are now abundantly clear. Marwan Barghouti must be freed, as the first step in turning away from the Likud’s disastrous course.

David Shavin, Dean Andromidas, and Christine Bierre contributed to this article.