

Mexico and Israel's shared thirst for war

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A person selling helium balloons with a watermelon shaped balloon represents links of solidarity and struggle between the people of Palestine and Mexico. Mezzotint on an engraved copper plate. @ChikaMineral.

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Without any clarity on next steps, the leaders of the United States and Israel—who are the most despotic in recent memory, which is saying a lot—stopped the genocide in Gaza by demanding nothing less than unconditional surrender from Palestinians.

The dust has barely settled and crucial food supplies are only beginning to trickle into Gaza, but the vultures are already circling: US, Israeli, European and Gulf-owned companies seeking to speculate and profit from the supposed peace.

“They call it peace, but for the Palestinians, it risks to be Apartheid at its worst,” wrote Francesca Albanese, UN Special Rapporteur in the Palestinian territories of the announced truce.

As the future of Palestine hangs in the balance, the ceasefire in Gaza offers a respite after more than two years of incessant bombing, war and the negation of the basic necessities for human survival. The fate of Palestine is tied up in so many key global issues. It is crucial to understand how Israel's influence is embedded in international politics, and how much closer it is to us than we think.

Just a few weeks before the ceasefire, Claudia Sheinbaum described the war in Gaza as genocide. Months earlier, her government officially recognized the State of Palestine and its embassy in Mexico.

This is a step forward from the previous administration's stance, which was limited to reaffirming "support for Palestine to become a full member of the UN." In March, Palestinian diplomatic personnel were granted formal credentials, and the Mexican president posed for a photo with the first Palestinian ambassador to Mexico, Nadya Rasheed.

But, as in many other matters, Mexican populism can be characterized by token gestures with minimal impact on substantive issues. The rhetoric is often combative, but the actions are measured. The issue of Palestine confirms this pattern.

Mexico remains very close to the colonialist state of Israel, with which it is a close collaborator. The pro-Palestine movement has organized consistently from Tijuana to San Cristóbal de las Casas to demand an end to genocide and a break in diplomatic relations with Israel, the latter is still far from taking place.

Israel has an embassy, a trade office, and four honorary consulates in Mexico. It actively promotes Israeli companies, which export the tools for war with the full backing of the Mexican government and army.

Thirst, profit, and dispossession

Mexico established relations with Israel in 1952, and since then, Israel has become Mexico's trading partner in the Middle East. Mexico, in turn, is Israel's second-largest trading partner in Latin America, after Brazil.

Mexico and Israel signed a free trade agreement in 2000. More recently, the president of the Mexico-Israel Chamber of Commerce and Industry highlighted that there was unity and agreement between Israel, Mexican corporate elites and the Mexican government on the issue of tariffs.

The Mexico-Israel Chamber of Commerce and Industry promotes investment and "Israel's expertise" in four areas: agriculture and agrotechnology, renewable energy, health and biotechnology, and "security and defense."

The role of Israeli companies involved in water-related projects is particularly telling.

In 2023, we learned of a mega-project proposed by Israeli company IDE Technologies in the form of a desalination plant in Puerto Peñasco, Sonora. Were it to go ahead, the project would pose a serious threat to the Gulf of California and local communities, as the proposal involves piping desalinated water to Phoenix, Arizona.

We tried our best to think of a more colonial project, but we couldn't come up with anything that could best this one.

Although the Peñasco project is on pause, IDE Technologies has strong ties to the Mexican government. In fact, it has already captured part of the national budget: during Andrés Manuel López Obrador's six-year term, the company built a desalination plant for the Dos Bocas refinery in Tabasco state.

There are also several Israeli companies engaged in water treatment and desalination in Mexico, including Mekorot, the state-owned water company that has caused widespread concern and protest in Argentina and other Latin American countries.

During Enrique Peña Nieto's administration, Mekorot signed cooperation agreements with Mexico's

National Water Commission.

Then there's the investments by Mexican capitalists in occupied Palestine. Orbia, formerly known as Mexichem, stands out: the company has owned the Israeli firm Netafim since 2018.

Orbia specializes in drip irrigation for agriculture in arid areas and is the largest of its kind in the world. Its business includes irrigating land stolen from Palestinians in the West Bank, directly benefiting from the Israeli occupation.

According to a company financial statement, about a quarter of Orbia's fixed assets are located in Israel (it is not specified how much is in occupied land). Francesca Albanese, UN Special Rapporteur in the Palestinian territories, places Netafim among companies profiting from the "economy of occupation."

The company "has designed its agritech in concert with

the expansion imperatives of Israel," writes Albanese. "Netafim brands itself as a sustainable innovator, while perfecting age-old techniques of colonial exploitation."

Experts in armed territorial control

Countries around the world are customers of Israeli military technology and services, which are tested against the people of occupied Palestine.

Globally, Mexico is the "most prolific user of Pegasus," a state-deployed surveillance program owned by Israeli company NSO Group. Pegasus has been used by the Mexican army to monitor human rights activists, journalists, and those investigating crimes against humanity.

The Mexican army has been purchasing Israeli military equipment for surveillance since at least 2008. Since the beginning of the "Fourth Transformation" in 2018, the Mexican government has purchased at least \$50 million worth of equipment and services from Israeli arms companies, including Elbit Systems, Israel Aerospace Industries, and Rafael Advanced Defense Systems.

Elbit Systems, Israel's leading producer of weapons, reports on its website that Mexico is a buyer of its Hermes 900 drones. The company also profits from its role in the border wall and surveillance along the north border.

Elbit also claims to have a military training academy in Mexico that offers "comprehensive solutions for government agencies, the army, special forces, and police." In October, with pressure mounting with the return of six Mexican activists who were intercepted and deported for their participation in the Global Sumud Flotilla, Sheinbaum denied Israel was involved in military training in Mexico.

In September, Oaxaca Governor Salomón Jara Cruz presided over a ceremony celebrating the purchase of assault rifles from Israel Weapon Industries and their delivery to state police. During the ceremony, officials stated that the purchase was made through the Secretary of Defense—a claim later denied by the president, who said the contracts were signed by specific states.

Let us be clear that what Israel practices is not self-defense, it is occupation and genocide. It is far too easy to imagine these rifles ending up being used against the people of Oaxaca who are organizing for their lands and lives.

Other governments, including some that are far from progressive, have suspended the sale and purchase of weapons with Israel, a minimal attempt to try to curb its killing capacity. But not

Mexico. Here, public funds continue to be used to purchase weapons from Israeli weapons manufacturers.

And the government does so while talking about peace, with a tinge of *humanism* for good measure.