

# Shlomo Sand, The Arabs' Darling

by Shaul Bartal

Jewish Israeli researchers whose books and writings achieve great appreciation among Arab communities in the Middle East are few and far between. Shlomo Sand is the exception. Since the initial publication of *The Invention of the Jewish People* five years ago,<sup>1</sup> every interview with the Tel Aviv University historian has achieved great popularity in Arab media. Headlines refer to his name endlessly though his theories are anything but new and have long been popular in the Arab world, just as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and *Mein Kampf* have been widely distributed in the Arab language for many years.<sup>2</sup> In essence, Sand's book has become a plank of Palestinian and Arab propaganda, the purpose of which is to undermine the right of the Jewish people to its ancestral homeland.



*Sand's claim—that Jews never existed as a national group with a common origin in the Land of Israel/Palestine—has been disproved by scores of historical writings and archaeological discoveries. In 2008, archaeologists from the Hebrew University found five lines of text written in black ink on a shard of pottery dug up at Elah Fortress, or Khirbet Qeiyafa, in Israel. Carbon dating of artifacts found at the site indicates the Hebrew inscription was written about 3,000 years ago, predating the Dead Sea Scrolls by 1,000 years.*

<sup>1</sup> Shlomo Sand, *Matai ve-Eich Humtsa Ha'am Hayehudi* (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Hadassa Ben-Itto, *Hasheker Mesarev Lamut: 100 Shnot "Haprotokolim shel Ziknei Zion"* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1998), pp. 332-9.

## Old-New Denial

According to Sand's "revolutionary" theory, throughout history the Jews were never one common nation but rather a mixture of different races that happen to share one faith. In his opinion, the biblical stories are amazing and interesting, but at the same time, historically inaccurate. The Bible is a literary creation, "a historical myth" written in the sixth century B.C.E., that shaped the world of the Jewish communities, who received Judaism from many different sources. But the Jews never returned to their land because they were never actually exiled from it. As a result, modern Zionist history developed a racial theory of Jewish unity, a national Jewish myth of exile and return that did not exist earlier. This myth was primarily created to enable the expulsion of the indigenous Palestinian population that may actually have originated in the ancient kingdom of Judah.<sup>3</sup>

It is an argument that runs against the entirety of legitimate scholarship on Jewish history, and Sand's specific claims have been disproved by scores of historical writings and archaeological discoveries. Since Sand published his book, many distinguished historians have disagreed with him, including Israel Bartal who published a powerful response.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Dov Ben-Meir's book, *Exile and Redemption of the Jewish People*, is also a pointed and well-researched

refutation of Sand's theory.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, it has been shown that Sand's ideas regarding race theory are borrowed from Nazi, Islamic, Arab, and Palestinian sources that claimed to have scientifically proven that the Jews of today do not descend from ancient Israel stock.<sup>6</sup>

One example is a book by the Islamic activist Hassan Bash, *at-Tarbiya as-Sahyonia, Min Ansariyat at-Torah ila Damu'ya al-Ihtilal* (Zionist Education, from the Racism of the Torah to the Bloodletting of the Occupation).<sup>7</sup> Born in 1947 in Haifa, Bash and his family fled during the 1948 war to Syria where he received his teaching certificate in Arabic at the University of Damascus in 1973, completed a doctorate in religious studies, and worked in journalism. Bash is considered a leading researcher of Zionist culture and Jewish religion and has written thirty-two books, most of which slander the Jewish religion, the Torah, and Christianity. His primary conclusions are that

- Palestine is Canaanite Arab land originating from 3,000 B.C.E. with the Jews arriving there in flocks from the start of 1,200 B.C.E.

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<sup>3</sup> Sand, *Matai ve-Eich*, pp. 266-97; Dan Lahman, "[Shlomo Sand](#) /Matai ve-Eich Humtsa Ha'am Hayehudi," *e-mago*, Apr. 30, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Israel Bartal, "Hamtza'at ha-Hamtza'ah," *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), May 28, 2008.

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<sup>5</sup> Dov Ben Meir, *Aliyyato ve-Geulato shel Ha'am Hyehudi, Hisardut, Yetsira, Kommemyut* (Tel Aviv: Mishkal, 2010); Arthur Hertzberg and Aron Hirt-Manheimer, *Jews, the Essence and the Character of a People* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Muhammad Musbah Hamdan, *al-Isti'mar wa-l-Sahyonia al-Alamiya* (Sidon: Dar al-Maktaba al-Asriya, 1967), pp. 94-112.

<sup>7</sup> Cairo: al-Mualef, 2002-03.

- The Jews, who founded Zionism, do not have roots among the ancient Hebrew peoples, which are distinct.

The new Jewish people of today are descendants of the Khazar Aryan people and do not belong to the Semitic race.

- An in-depth review of the Jews shows that they are not associated with only one race but rather comprise seventeen races, all of which have common communal traditions.<sup>8</sup>

The first edition of Bash's book was published at least five years prior to Sand's book. Bash also analyzes what he calls "Zionist incitement literature," which he claims is based on the belief in an imaginary Jewish past. This literature allegedly teaches violence and aims at justifying the theft of Palestine from the Palestinian people, who are "descendant of the ancient Canaanite Arab and Amalekite people and of others who lived in this country since the beginning of time."<sup>9</sup> This is precisely Sand's conclusion of several years later.

The unique aspect of Sand's book thus is not its content but rather its context. Sand's innovation is that he, a Jewish professor of history from a leading "Zionist" university, step-by-step, in beautifully phrased Hebrew, justifies and approves all

**Sand's book became a major best-seller in the Arab world and is treasured by Palestinians.**

the Palestinian historical claims. It is no surprise that *The Invention of the Jewish People* became a major best-seller in the Arab world and is

treasured by Palestinians.

### **The Damage from Sand's Book**

The damage caused by *The Invention* stems from its misrepresentation of established historical facts as lies. Leon Hadar, in an analysis review, summarizes the point well:

Countering official Zionist historiography, Sand questions whether the Jewish people ever existed as a national group with a common origin in the Land of Israel/Palestine. He concludes that the Jews should be seen as a religious community comprising a mishmash of individuals and groups that had converted to the ancient monotheistic religion but do not have any historical right to establish an independent Jewish state in the Holy Land. In short, the Jewish People, according to Sand, are not really a "people" in the sense of having a common ethnic origin and national heritage. They certainly do not have a political claim over the territory that today constitutes Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Hassan Bash, *at-Tarbiya as-Sahyonia, Min Ansariyat at-Torah-ila Damu'ya al-Ihtilal* (No location, 2002-03), pp. 18-19.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

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<sup>10</sup> Leon T. Hadar, "Book Review: *The Invention of the Jewish People*," *Middle East Policy*, Aug. 26, 2010.

So the Jews as a nation have no real historical claim to the territory of the State of Israel, including Jerusalem. That this ignores millennia of Jewish theological focus on the ideas of return and the place of Jerusalem is obvious. Among other things, the mysterious Jewish blessing said by Jews for thousands of years, “And to Jerusalem Your city, may You return in compassion and may You rest within it, as You have spoken. May You rebuild it soon in our days as an eternal structure and may You speedily establish the throne of David within it,”<sup>11</sup> must be regarded as irrelevant or anachronistic. The Jewish people, according to Sand, were never exiled and—in distinction to Zionists—the majority of Jews have adopted this myth for no reason.<sup>12</sup>

It should be emphasized that in the past Jewish rights to a national homeland flowed from widespread appreciation of history and were recognized without any hesitation. For example, at the Peace Conference in Paris after World War I, U.S. intelligence officials made a recommendation to President Woodrow Wilson: “It will be the policy of the League of Nations to recognize Palestine as a Jewish state as soon as it is a Jewish state in fact. It is right that Palestine should become a Jewish state, if the Jews being given the full opportunity, make it such.” This historical and moral claim was endorsed by world



*In France, as in many other countries, Sand (above, right) received praise for the book and even won a prize in 2009 from the French press. More than 25,000 copies of Sand’s book were sold in France, and it topped the best-seller lists for seven weeks in a row. Not one of the reviews bothered to address the book’s countless flaws exposed by academics in Israel and elsewhere.*

powers in the Treaty of Sèvres of 1920 and the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923.<sup>13</sup>

Contrary to Sand’s opinion, the Jewish nation has been recognized not only by Europeans but also by Arabs. Testimony for this is the best-seller *Ma’arakatuna ma al-Yahud* (Our War against the Jews) by Sayyid Qutb, the eminent Muslim Brotherhood ideologue central to modern Islamist thought. In his book, Qutb described the struggle against the Jews throughout the ages and the obligation to carry out war against them. He also recognized Jews as a nation with a special tie to Palestine that he

<sup>11</sup> Hebrew *Amida* prayer.

<sup>12</sup> Sand, *Matai ve-Eich*, pp. 182-3.

<sup>13</sup> Dore Gold, *The Fight for Jerusalem: Radical Islam, the West, and the Future of the Holy City* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2007), pp. 123, 126-30.

hoped would be destroyed.<sup>14</sup> But Sand's a-historical, indeed, anti-historical, presentation is powerfully attractive.

In France, as in many other countries, Sand received praise for the book and even won the "Prix Aujourd'hui" in 2009 from the French press.<sup>15</sup> In France alone, more than 25,000 copies of Sand's book were sold, and it topped the best-seller lists for seven weeks in a row. Not one of the reviews bothered to address the book's countless flaws exposed by academics in Israel and elsewhere. These showed, among other problems, that Sand used sources erroneously, took material out of context, and in fact, totally adopted the Palestinian narrative of a Jewish ethnic cleansing carried out in the name of an imagined ideology.<sup>16</sup> In the words of Anita Shapira of Tel Aviv University, "Reconciliation between peoples makes necessary a mutual recognition of truth, not an artificial analysis that presents a fabricated front."<sup>17</sup> Sand's narrative resonated in France because it is, in effect, strongly pro-Palestinian.

### **Sand's Palestinian Communist Connection**

In Maher Sharif's editorial, "Shlomo Sand and the *Invention of the Jewish*

**Sand's conclusions are directly related to his political stand as an ex-activist of the Israeli communist Rakah party.**

*People*,"<sup>18</sup> the author, a member of the Palestinian People's Party, the re-incarnation of the Israeli communist Rakah party, praised Sand's creation, specifically the French

version entitled *How the Jewish Nation Was Invented, from the Torah to Zionism*. The Rakah context is vital. Sand's conclusions are directly related to his political stand as an ex-Rakah activist, his familial background, and his connections and friendship with the famous Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish. Darwish was also a Rakah activist until he left Israel in 1970 and joined the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Lebanon.<sup>19</sup>

Sharif noted that he learned of Sand's book in May 2009 when, during a conference in Rome, he was given the book's French edition, dedicated to Bassel Natasha and to "Palestinians and Jews who wanted to live in liberty, equality, and brotherhood." (The Hebrew edition was dedicated to Sand's "daughters Edith and Liel and all children of their generation who yearned for equality.") Sharif's review began with Sand's personal story, beginning with his Yiddish-speaking family and its immigration to Israel. Sharif emphasized that "even then, the young man Shlomo felt that he was sitting on lands that were taken from another people."<sup>20</sup>

With great appreciation, Sharif analyzed each chapter in the book and agreed with Sand's historical analysis. Sand's conclusions are not new and are accepted in every branch and form of the communist

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<sup>14</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *Ma'arakatuna ma'a al-Yahud* (Cairo: Dar ash-Shuruk, 1993; first published 1954), pp. 20-38.

<sup>15</sup> France 2 TV (Paris), [Mar. 5, 2009](#).

<sup>16</sup> Eric Rouleau, "The 'Ethnic Cleansing' of Palestine. [Judaism Is Universal](#)," *Le Monde Diplomatique* (Paris), May 2008.

<sup>17</sup> Anita Shapira, "Review Essay, The Jewish-People Deniers," *The Journal of Israeli History*, Mar. 2009, pp. 63-72.

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<sup>18</sup> Maher Sharif, "[Shlomo Sand](#) wa-Ikhtiraa ash-Shaab al-Yahudi," Palestinian People's Party website, June 6, 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Sand, *Matai ve-Eich*, pp. 16-19.

<sup>20</sup> Sharif, "Shlomo Sand."

movement, both in Israel and the territories. So, Sand's book is, in effect, a product of the communist Rakah party.

**Fatah, the PLO's largest constituent organization, continues to support Sand's research.**

### **Reaction in the Arab and Palestinian Press**

A wide-ranging article on Sand was published in the *al-Quds* newspaper, the most widely read East Jerusalem newspaper in Palestinian society. The title of the article speaks for itself: "The Israeli historian Shlomo Sand: The 'Jewish people' is such an extensive figment of imagination that even the act of return was invented retroactively, and the 'myth' was created based upon which the State of Israel was founded."<sup>21</sup>

The article dealt with a conference held in Brussels during which Sand presented his main conclusions and in which Arab intellectuals and Europeans participated. Sand explained to the reporter that he did not accept the theory that the Jewish people was exiled from its land and sent into captivity. But to his dismay, he could find no book that told the truth regarding the origins of the Jewish people. The newspaper quotes Sand as saying that "there is a greater possibility that the Hamas fighters are the descendants of King David than the possibility that he [Shlomo Sand] could be the descendant of David."<sup>22</sup> Sand emphasized that "the state of Israel was founded through exploitation of its original residents in 1948 ... Zionism does not try to hide this."<sup>23</sup>

The conference participants and Lebanese author Elias Huri, who called Sand his "friend," complimented the Israeli professor for his brave position. Huri even stated

that "we turn to all participants and to all those who believe in justice and in the rights of the Palestinian people for self-determination to participate in the fight against the Zionists ... Sand's book calls for action for the Palestinian people."<sup>24</sup>

During the conference, calls to boycott Israel were frequent as were voices against maintaining normal relationships with the Jewish state. Huri noted that the Association of Lebanese Authors first thought that it should prevent the distribution of the book because it was written by an Israeli professor. However, parties responsible for censorship had not read the book, and the decision was later reversed. At the end of the conference, Sand was quoted as saying that today there is "an Israeli people" comprising Jews and Arabs and based on Israeli language and literature. The only solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in his view, was the establishment of one nation in which Israelis and Palestinians would live together. But Sand added that he was pessimistic about this possibility, an assessment he had made previously.<sup>25</sup>

Sand's perceptions continue to cause waves across the Arab world. For example, the popular Egyptian newspaper, *ash-Shuruk al-Jadid*, published an article, "Shlomo Sand:

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<sup>21</sup> Assam Kurd, "[al-Muarikh al-Israili Shlomo Sand: 'ash-Shaab al-Yahudi', Shi Khayali Tum Ikhtiraa Bimaful Raj'ai wa-Astura' Kamat Aliha Dawlat Israil,](#)" *al-Quds* (Jerusalem), Dec. 4, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>23</sup> [Ibid.](#)

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<sup>24</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>25</sup> Shlomo Sand, "[Eich Mishtaichim le-Am,](#)" *Haaretz*, Sept. 26, 2010

There is no such thing as the Jewish people,<sup>26</sup> as part of a series that examined the “institutional myths” of the Israeli government. The author focused on two issues—the illusion of the Chosen Jewish People and the illusion of the Promised Land—that have (allegedly) been marketed by the Zionists as historical justification for the foundation of the “Zionist entity” on Palestinian land.<sup>27</sup>

The article emphasized that the awakening to this false Zionist belief comes from within Israel itself via an Israeli, a Tel Aviv University professor of modern history. It focused on Sand’s belief undermining the legitimacy of Zionist claims that Jews today are a mix of different races and that Palestinians are the dispersed Jewish descendants. The author added that it took Sand considerable time to publish his book and that he did so only after receiving his professorship at Tel Aviv University because this position offered him a kind of academic immunity and the opportunity to expose the truth of the imagined Jewish people.

Reader reactions were joyful: “This person, Shlomo Sand, is truly something amazing. I feel pride and truly want to thank him for his book. He is a true Jew.” Other readers commented that “the Jews, and the whole world know the truth according to

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which the Jews have no rights to Palestine, and so why do the Jews continue living there.” One even posed this question to Sand. There is no doubt that Sand’s book perfectly mirrored the opinion of

the Arab community.

### **Fatah and PA Praise**

Fatah, the PLO’s largest constituent organization, has and continues to support Sand’s research. On September 30, 2010, the Palestinian Center for Israeli Studies advertised the book on Fatah’s *al-Moukaf* website, informing its readers that a new edition in Arabic had been published in Amman. The book was translated into literary Arabic by Saaid Ayash and was edited by As’ad Zu’bi. One reviewer complimented the book as

one of the most exciting books I’ve read ... Shlomo Sand began a journey of in-depth research that begins from thousands of years ago. His final conclusions, which he proves in detail, are that the Jews, who are living today in Israel and in other places in the world, have no relationship to and are not the descendants of the earlier nation that lived in the kingdom of Judah during the period of the Second Temple ... this of course, contradicts the Zionist claim regarding the return of Israel to its land.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Azat Hussein, “La Yuyad Shi Asama ash-Shaab al-Yahudi,” *ash-Shuruk* (Cairo), updated Feb. 19, 2011; Hadi Hussein, “[Shlomo Sand](#): La Yuyad Shi Asama ash-Shaab al-Yahudi,” *Liwaja Allah wa-l-Misr*, Mar. 23, 2010.

<sup>27</sup> Hussein, “La Yuyad Shi Asama ash-Shaab al-Yahudi; Hussein, “[Shlomo Sand](#).”

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<sup>28</sup> “[Sader An al-Markaz al-Filastini li-l-Dirasat al-Israiliyya](#): Kitab al-Ikhtiraa ash-Shaab al-Yahudi li-Shlomo Sand,” *al-Moukaf* (Palestinian Authority), Sept. 30, 2010.

Quoting from Sand's book at length, the article repeated its claims regarding the origin of today's Jews as a mixture of different peoples, emphasizing that Jews were not one race as claimed by "Zionist" historians during the nineteenth century and beyond. These historians took advantage of Jewish mythology to create a Jewish nation, which both exists and does not exist, and developed a racist theory that led to the Arab expulsion in 1948. It noted that in the preface to the book's Arab edition, the editor added that Zionist historians should be blamed for the historical distortion that led to the crimes against the Palestinians. The Palestinians are, after all, part of one unified Muslim nation with common roots. The article also repeated praise from Elias Khuri, Khaled Hroub, and Maher Sharif, all figures who reject the Jewish nation and a common Jewish heritage.<sup>29</sup>

### Dismantling Jewish History

In Hassan Batal's article "Shlomo Sand, History and Historiography,"<sup>30</sup> the author asks: "Why should one believe in the theory of Rachel's Tomb rather than the Bilal Bin Rabah Mosque? What is the Jewish connection to the Cave of the Patriarchs?" According to Batal, the accepted version of Jewish history has recently been criticized in a way that negates that very history. The first

<sup>29</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>30</sup> Hassan Batal, "[Shlomo Sand](#), al-Histiriya wa-l-Historiografia," *al-Ayyam* (Ramallah), Nov. 2, 2010.



*In 2001, the Palestinian Authority changed its textbooks and removed historical Jewish references. Rachel's Tomb (above), which had appeared in Palestinian textbooks as the grave of the mother of the prophet Joseph and wife of Jacob, became the Bilal Bin Rabah Mosque.*

criticism is alleged to come from the Vatican: The concept of the Promised Land is not related to Israel but rather to some other place. The second is from the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and critiques the supposedly politically biased perception of Jewish history that considers the location of the Bilal Bin Rabah Mosque as the location of Rachel's Tomb. UNESCO also is alleged to negate accepted Jewish history regarding al-Haram al-Ibrahimi, or the Cave of the Patriarchs, which appears on an Israeli list of Jewish heritage sites. Batal is at least partially correct. In 2001, the Palestinian Authority changed its textbooks by removing historical Jewish references. Rachel's Tomb, which had appeared in Palestinian textbooks as the grave of the mother of the prophet Joseph and wife of Jacob, became the Bilal Bin Rabah Mosque.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *News 1* (Tel Aviv), [Jan. 20, 2011](#)

Sand, added Batal, is not the first to contradict the fundamental myths upon which the Jewish state was founded. Still, Sand does not contradict the right of Israel to exist but only calls for Jewish myths not to be propagated. This willingness to let some form of Israel survive is an important point of contention.

On this matter, Batal sought Sabri Jiryis's opinion on whether the "Zionist" author Sand's position can be accepted. Jiryis, an Israeli Arab born in Fassuta, is considered by the PLO to be an authority on the origins of Israel. He worked as an advisor for Israeli affairs for Yasser Arafat and managed the organization's Palestinian Research Center.<sup>32</sup> According to Jiryis,

the state of Israel does indeed exist, but the state of Palestine does not. What gave Israel its purpose was the relentless repetition of established myths about the right of return of the Jews to their land after a long expulsion. The Arab Palestinian people is a prisoner of these Israeli myths. Sand's book, therefore, has importance for burying those myths and offering Palestinians their rights to independence and to a state... Sand may not have discovered anything new, but he has renewed the old.<sup>33</sup>

Jiryis' nationalistic positions are well-known as are his views regarding Jewish history in Israel. His position was detailed in

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his book, *Tarikh as-Sahyonia* (*Zionist History*), published in Beirut in 1981.<sup>34</sup> His views are no different

from Sand's. But Jiryis' position as a member of the PLO, Arafat's advisor, and a Palestinian historian on the origins of Israel and Zionism, offers a Palestinian *halal* certification for Sand's book.

Batal noted that it should be agreed that there is an Israeli nation and not a Jewish nation, which was born in sin. On the other hand, there is a Palestinian people with Arab language and culture and deep relations with the Arab and Muslim worlds. In his opinion, it is obvious who does and does not have the legitimate rights to found a state in Palestine.<sup>35</sup>

### Support for Hamas Policies

Hamas is defined as a terrorist organization in Israel, the United States, and the European Union, among other places. The Hamas covenant completely denies the right of the Jewish people to any part of Palestine. Palestinian land is *waqf*—holy land belonging solely to all generations of Muslims—and no Arab or Muslim party has authority to let go of any part of Palestine.<sup>36</sup> As stated in the Hamas covenant,

Initiatives, and so-called peaceful solutions and international conferences are in contradiction to the principles of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas). The waiver of any part of Palestine is intentional excommunication-desecration against part of the

<sup>32</sup> *Haaretz*, [Nov. 17, 2004](#).

<sup>33</sup> Batal, "[Shlomo Sand](#)."

<sup>34</sup> (Beirut: Markaz al-Abhath, m.t.f, 1981).

<sup>35</sup> Batal, "[Shlomo Sand](#)."

<sup>36</sup> "[Hamas Covenant 1988](#)," Aug. 18, 1988, Yale Law School Avalon Project, art. 11.

religion and is a serious religious crime.<sup>37</sup>

On Saturday December 27, 2008, Israel's Operation Cast Lead began and lasted until January 18, 2009. During the war,

Hamas won support from Sand, whose backing was prominently advertised in the Arab world. Sand criticized the State of Israel, which aimed at preventing Hamas from threatening Israeli lives and shooting rockets into civilian areas from the Gaza Strip.

On a Damascus University website, medical student Hakeem Fa'al published an article titled "A Perspective Worth Discussing, Shlomo Sand: Is Israel Losing the War?"<sup>38</sup> In his opening comments, Fa'al notes that he had read many articles about Israeli left-wingers but was most impressed by Sand's writings. He describes Sand as one of the most respected professors in Israel. The author also supported Sand's conclusion that Israel should not be recognized as a Jewish state yet should be allowed to exist, much like a baby born as the result of rape.

In the article, Sand expressed his position against Israel's war on Hamas. When asked about the rocket attacks on Israeli citizens, he is quoted as saying:

It's true; it's not normal that rockets are launched at Israel. But is it normal that Israel has still not decided what its borders are? This state, which cannot stand for rockets, is also the same state that is not willing to declare the borders of 1967.

<sup>37</sup> [Ibid.](#), art. 13.

<sup>38</sup> Hakeem Fa'al, "[Wajaha Nathar li-l-Naqash: Shlomo Sand: Hal Hasart Israil al-Harb?](#)" Damascus University website, Feb. 10, 2009.

**Sand claimed that Hamas offered peace, but Israel rejected the offer because it wanted to continue murdering Hamas members.**

Because Israel has rejected the initiative of the Arab League from 2002 according to which it would be fully recognized by the 1967 borders.<sup>39</sup>

In other words, Israel was at fault for the situation because it had not been willing to declare the 1967 borders as final. According to Sand, Israel's refusal to accept the Arab League plan was enough to deny it the right to self-defense and justified the attacks on its citizens.

Asked what difference Israel's borders made, since Hamas was unwilling to recognize its right to exist, Sand responded: "Hamas is a movement that is not understandable and does not act according to the rules of diplomacy." The movement, according to Sand, offered Israel peace in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, but Israel had rejected the offer because it wanted to continue murdering Hamas members. Instead, Sand stated, Israel should strengthen the moderates of Hamas: "I do not recognize the position of Hamas and the religious ideology of the movement, but as an Israeli and a historian, I cannot forget that those who are shooting rockets now are the descendants of those who migrated from Jaffa and Ashkelon in 1948."<sup>40</sup>

When asked about Hamas's continuing rocket fire despite the fact that Israel had left the Gaza Strip, Sand replied that Hamas had the right to continue firing rockets into Israel until the West Bank was completely freed from Israeli "occupation":

Imagine that Germany today only occupies northern France and not southern France as was the case in 1940. Would

<sup>39</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>40</sup> [Ibid.](#)

Germany deny France the right to self-definition regarding the land that was occupied? Sharon's evacuation of the Gaza Strip was unilateral because he did not want peace with Arafat. Sharon did not recognize the West Bank as being occupied. The Palestinians are not asking for a nature reserve in the Gaza Strip, such as the Red Indians. They are asking for an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.<sup>41</sup>

**In Sand's view, Hamas has the right to operate in areas with civilian populations.**

language of force, and he hoped that President Obama would pressure it to make peace just as President Carter did at Camp David in 1978

after Egypt had achieved a partial victory in the 1973 war.

This interview by Sand in which he justified Hamas and strongly criticized the actions of Israel in the Gaza Strip received great popularity in the Arab media. For example, *al-Awan* newspaper repeated the question of who won the war in the Gaza Strip. The author stated that although Hamas ultimately won, Israel demonstrated during three weeks of destruction and horror that it was above international law. The author expanded on Sand's approach to Hamas and his claim that the timing of the war for Israel was perfect because of the parliamentary elections. Minister of Defense Ehud Barak acted with an eye to the elections, and 1,300 Palestinians were killed while another 5,000 were wounded. Barak removed the tanks from the Gaza Strip just before the elections and on the precise day Obama entered the White House.<sup>43</sup>

In light of this, Sand was surprised by the next question: Why did Hamas use the Palestinian civilian population as human shields? His response was that it was hypocritical for Israel to make a claim of this sort and asked if his questioner had forgotten Mao Tse-Tung's dictum that every resistance movement needed to act among its population just like a fish in water. In Sand's view, Hamas had the full right to operate in areas with civilian populations. In contrast, the Israel Defense Forces did not have any right to act against Hamas, which Sand defined as a national liberation movement, similar to the communist movement in China and other locations.<sup>42</sup>

According to Sand, Israel was partially defeated by the Palestine Liberation Organization during the first *intifada* and, therefore, recognized the PLO and took the opportunity to work together for peace. Israel should also act this way with Hamas by recognizing the organization and offering it the opportunity to negotiate. But Israel, according to Sand, only understood the

## Conclusion

Sand claims that his beliefs are highly unusual in Israeli society but trusts his tenure at Tel Aviv University makes it virtually impossible to fire him. In an interview during Operation Cast Lead, which he called a slaughter,<sup>44</sup> he noted that although he felt alone, he was not afraid. In his account, there was some popular support for his position as

<sup>41</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>42</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>43</sup> Mukhtar Khalfawi, "[Hal Hasart Israil al-Harb?](#)" Hiwar Maa al-Muarikh al-Iasraili Shlomo Sand," *al-Awan* (Gaza), Feb. 8, 2009.

<sup>44</sup> [Ibid.](#)

shown by a January 3, 2009 demonstration in Tel Aviv against the Gaza fighting.<sup>45</sup>

In 2012, he published another book, *The Invention of the Land of Israel*,<sup>46</sup> whose Arabic version was also lauded by Hamas.<sup>47</sup> By the time Israel was forced to fight another war against Hamas in Gaza in the summer of 2014, Sand had taken his anti-Jewish libel a step further by writing yet another book, *Why I Stopped Being a Jew*. Not surprisingly, he has become a very popular interviewee on Hamas's website and on other pro-Palestinians sites.<sup>48</sup>

His many quotes in the Arab media glorify and support Palestinian rights but mostly ignore the rights of Israel and the Jewish people. Sand has not invented any

new concepts; his book supports the Nazi theory that there is no Jewish people, and that the modern Jewish nation is comprised of many ethnicities. When he received the prestigious French award for his book, Sand noted that "the book is not Zionist but is also not anti-Zionist."<sup>49</sup> Sand is correct—the book is simply anti-Jewish.

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<sup>45</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>46</sup> New York: Verso, 2012.

<sup>47</sup> Barum Jaraysi, "Mushkilat Israel maa Muourkhi al-Haqiqa," *Markaz al-Filastini li-l-A'lam*, Aug. 2, 2014.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, Rod Such, "[How historian Shlomo Sand 'stopped being a Jew.'](#)" The Electronic Intifada, Sept. 15, 2014; Amelia Smith, "[Shlomo Sand on his New Book, How I Stopped Being a Jew.](#)" *Middle East Monitor*, Oct. 29, 2014.

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<sup>49</sup> Maya Sela, "Itonaei Tsorfat He'eniku le-[Shlomo Sand](#) et Pras 'Hayum' le-Sefer Haiyun shel Hashsana," *Akhbar Ha'air* (Tel-Aviv), Mar. 12, 2009.