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Opinion

Is the Israeli-Palestinian Two-State Solution Doomed? Will Israel's Likud Party Ever Respect the Rights of Palestinians?

In kicking off the new year, the central committee of the right-wing, governing Israeli party — the Likud — unanimously adopted a resolution calling for the annexation of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank. Though this was technically an advisory opinion, most observers recognize that this represents the views of Prime Minister Netanyahu's administration.

For years, the Israeli government has been doing a dance where they have, on the one hand, increased the illegal settlement of Palestinian territories while, on the other hand, claiming that they uphold the ultimate goal of a two-state solution to the Israeli/Palestinian dispute. The announcement of the Likud resolution puts to bed any further pretense; Likud seeks to eliminate Palestinians from the occupied terri-

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tories by seizing the best land and forcing the Palestinians into a situation that is further reminiscent of the Bantustan settlements established by

“The Israeli political establishment has made it impossible for a realistic two-state solution to come into existence

apartheid South Africa, pre-1994.

The Israeli political establishment has made it impossible for a realistic two-state solution to come into existence. If Israel goes forward with this annexation, there

will conclusively be no cohesive territory that the Palestinians can exist upon. Their land will be formally — rather than de facto — divided according to the wishes of the Israeli government; the Palestinians will have no access to the sea; and little assurance of access via the air. While the Palestinians may have a flag, they will have little else.

Coming shortly after Trump's unilateral decision

once again. To add insult to injury, the Israeli political establishment and their allies in the United States continue to relentlessly pursue efforts to suppress non-violent opposition to Israeli government policy, i.e., opposition to boycott/divestment/sanctions, as a tactic to pressure groups fighting for Palestinian rights.

For those of us who consistently oppose racism, annexations and apartheid, 2018 must represent a continuation of the struggle for Palestinian rights and freedom. There is no room to back down. The Israeli government has made its stand more than clear: there are no Palestinian rights that they feel bound to respect.

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Remembering the 1968 Memphis Sanitation Workers' Strike Never Forget Why Martin Luther King, Jr. Was in Memphis

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. didn't plan to get involved in the Memphis garbage worker's strike. He hadn't planned to be there on the fateful day when he was shot on April 4, 1968. King was pressured to go the first time and found the garbage worker's strike compelling. He promised to return, and felt it important to keep his word, despite a packed schedule.

Memphis was so very important, because the 1,300 Black men who worked in the city's sanitation department were treated despicably. Two workers had been crushed in a garbage compactor in 1964, but the faulty equipment had not been replaced. On February 1, 1968, two more men, Echol Cole, 36, and Robert Walker, 30, were crushed in the compactor. The two men were contract workers, so they did not qualify for workmen's compensation, and had no life insurance. The city of Memphis paid \$500 plus one month's pay for their funeral expenses. Robert Walker's wife, Earline, was pregnant at the time of his death.

Memphis garbage workers were notoriously ill-treated. They were poorly paid, at \$1.60 (the minimum wage) to \$1.90 per hour. They were not paid overtime, even though they were often required to work more than 8 hours a day. Their pay was so low that many held second jobs, or received public assistance. They were not paid to work when there was inclement weather, like rain or snow. And their

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Columnist

supervisors, mostly White, were much better paid, no matter what the weather. After the deaths of Echol Cole and Robert Walker, garbage workers demanded better wages, better working conditions, and union recognition.

“We must resist the current administration's attempts to dehumanize all of workers

The city council agreed, but the racist, indifferent mayor, Henry Loeb, vetoed the city council's action. The men went on strike on February 11, 1968, and stayed out 64 days, until April 12.

Have we forgotten the poignant pictures of grown men carrying hand-lettered signs that said “I Am A Man,” and the irony of these hard-working men having to declare that which should have been perfectly obvious? Memphis Black garbage workers were not treated as men, but as disposable beings considered only useful for dealing with other people's rubbish. They

weren't the only ones. Many Black people, even after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, received unequal pay, and thoroughly unacceptable terms and conditions of work. The city of Memphis was violating national labor laws, but, because the people they were abusing were Black, nobody cared, and nobody noticed until the garbage workers went on strike.

The Association of Federal, State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) is the union that the Memphis garbage workers were affiliated with. They have developed a campaign called “I AM 2018,” that is focused on organizing and on a series of events to commemorate the strike, to honor the memories of Cole and Walker, and to focus on the dignity of work.

The “I AM 2018” campaign is needed now, more than ever, as worker dignity is continues to be assailed. The U.S. Department of Labor seems to be on a campaign to rescind Obama-era rules that improve life for workers. For example, an Obama rule would require employers to pay four hours of wages to workers who are “on call” whether they are used or not. Why? Because, if the workers are on call, they are tethered to the telephone and need to be paid for their time. Since “45,” was elected, though, many companies have lined up to ask the Department of Labor to rescind the proposed rule. They say that the rule is too costly for corporations and businesses and that it will cost the nation

jobs. New York State Senator Chris Jacobs says the proposed rule will be a “devastating blow” to business. In this aggressively and myopically pro-business climate, who wants to bet that the proposed rule will be rescinded?

Just as King stood with Memphis garbage workers, he would now stand with the “I AM 2018” campaign, and with the “on call” workers who can't get respect or compensation for their availability. We are still not finished with the work Dr. King started, not finished with the struggle for economic justice. We have not attained equality or developed an economic agenda for shared prosperity, for workplace dignity and for human rights.

We must remember Echol Cole and Robert Walker, who were killed because Memphis just didn't care enough to have working equipment for their garbage workers. We must remember the audacity that Black men had to strike and a time when they might lose their jobs for simply talking back; And we must reclaim audacity and resist the current administration's attempts to dehumanize all of us. The struggle for justice clearly must continue.

Julianne Malveaux is an author, economist and founder of Economic Education. Her latest book “Are We Better Off? Race, Obama and Public Policy” is available to order at Amazon.com and at www.julianne-malveaux.com. Follow Dr. Malveaux on Twitter @drjlastword.