

September 18, 1970

**Statement on Palestine by Eldridge Cleaver,
Minister of Information, Black Panther Party,
International Section, Alger, Algeria, September 18
,1970**

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Summary:

Founded in 1966 in Oakland, California, by college-educated and -socialized Huey Newton (1942-1989) and Bobby Seale (born 1936), the Black Panther Party (BPP) was a particularly influential part of Black Power from the later 1960s to the 1970s in the United States. During its heyday Black Power was quite distinct from the civil rights movement (CRM), which had begun in the 1950s, in terms of its separatist-nationalist aims, its readiness to use arms as a means to that end, and its revolutionary style, which included exercising the right to carry firearms. However, as Nico Slate's introduction to the edited volume *Black Power beyond Borders: The Global Dimensions of the Black Power Movement* (2012) stresses, the extent of changes from the CRM to Black Power is a still debated and deeply political issue. Thus, there were political and personnel overlaps between the CRM and Black Power. And regarding the BPP, both it and the CRM were fundamentally focused on African Americans while both also nurtured relationships abroad. This being said, certainly to white Americans the BPP's Marxist-inspired internationalism was more radical than the CRM's, and more radical, too, was the anticolonial politics of the BPP's foreign friends like the Vietcong and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

Soon after the BPP's foundation, its leaders started stressing internationalist relationships and linking US black liberation to anticolonialism. They would continue to do so in several stages and places of the BPP's existence. As Sean Malloy' *Out of Oakland: Black Panther Party Internationalism During the Cold War* (2017) in general and in particular Michael Fischman's *Black Power and Palestine* (2018) show, it was already in 1967 that the Palestinian cause started interesting BPP members, when all were still in the United States. After the Arab-Israeli War of June 1967, the influence and visibility of the political-military organization Fatah—officially founded in 1959 and led by Yasser Arafat (1929-2004) who in 1969 took over the PLO—rose fast. BPP members

identified with Fatah/PLO fighters' bravery and long odds more than with perhaps any other non-US anticolonial cause.

This recognition soon turned into a relationship in the United States with PLO representatives and with Arab American organizations. The relationship deepened in 1969. That year, Eldridge Cleaver (1935-1998), his wife Kathleen Neal Cleaver (1967-1987), and additional BPP members landed in Algeria after a stay in Cuba, on the run from the US government. In Algiers, they associated inter alia with Fatah/PLO officials. When in September 1970 the Algerian government granted the BPP the status of a liberation organization, it issued the below statement, in English. Its context was the Jordanian army's attack that month—since called Black September—on the PLO and on Palestinian refugee camps, which forced the PLO to relocate to Lebanon. BPP members in the US and the organ Black Panther used language similar to that of this text. At the selfsame time, however, Newton began invoking Arab-Jewish co-existence. Tellingly, this move mirrored a domestic reorientation of his, away from armed struggle for revolutionary separatism towards social services for black communities and towards electoral participation in order to challenge white racism from within. All this contributed to BPP-internal tensions that, partly due to FBI misinformation, split the party in 1971, with Newton's faction ending up in control of most BPP assets.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Transcript - English

The powerful armed struggle of the heroic Palestinian people for the national liberation and national salvation against the US has thoroughly exposed the contradiction between the glorious struggle of the Palestinian people and the dyed-in-the-wool lackey clique of Amman, headed by arch-puppet King Hussein.

In this dire hour all the reactionary and criminal political conspirators in the hire of US imperialism have openly combined their forces to stamp out the struggle of the Palestinian people as part of the evil scheme of the US Imperialist aggressors for world domination and control of the people.

The Black Panther Party regards the confrontation in Jordan between the oppressors and the oppressed as a battlefield on which the aspirations of mankind to be free face a showdown with the US imperialist's plot.

The Black Panther Party unequivocally supports the Palestinian people and their vanguard forces in their struggle against the [Zionist] aggressors and the Hussein reactionaries who have combined with US imperialist aggressors to drown in blood the glorious march of the Palestinian people to freedom, liberty, independence, and peace.

We pledge our active solidarity and unequivocal support all the way to victory. We call upon all the revolutionary and progressive people of the world to make clear a line of demarcation between ourselves and the enemy. The struggle of the Palestinian people for their freedom and liberation from US imperialism and its lackeys is also our struggle. We recognize that if the Palestinian people cannot get their freedom and liberation, neither can we.

It is the duty of all progressive people, organizations, and governments to rally all their forces in support of the Palestinian people and to take all possible steps with their power, and crush the diabolical plot against the Palestinian people and their vanguard forces.

The days of imperialists, lackeys, and reactionaries are numbered. We the people, firmly united and full of hatred for imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, and fascism shall crush once and for all, all over the world, these monstrous criminal elements that stand between us and our freedom, liberation, and happiness.

Long live the heroic Palestinian people!

Death to the US Imperialists and their lackeys of Tel-Aviv and Amman!

Alger, September 18, 1970

Eldridge Cleaver
Minister of Information
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