

Alliances of Understanding presents, Two Peoples, One Fight: Palestinian and Tamil Perspectives on Genocide and Liberation

Panel discussion with, Mario Arulthas; Dr Madura Rasaratnam; Fathima Cader; Abarna Selvarajah; Dr Mjriam Abu Samra; Prof Neve Gordon (Chair).

Thursday 12th December 2024, 5.30pm

Thomas Paine Study Centre (TPSC) 2.04 and Online*

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Brief

In today's media landscape, news coverage often fails to offer deeper, comparative analyses of global struggles for justice. This panel seeks to bring together the histories and ongoing resistance of the Palestinian and Tamil peoples, demonstrating how, despite their distinct political and historical contexts, both struggles resonate with one another. Both communities have endured systemic violence, forced displacement, and sustained efforts to erase their identities. By examining these movements through a comparative lens, we aim to uncover important parallels that provide a richer, more nuanced understanding of their respective fights for liberation. This approach moves beyond the limitations of mainstream narratives, which often simplify complex conflicts, instead fostering the kind of cross-cultural understanding essential for informed global solidarity.

For Palestinians, the experience of exile and fragmentation is central to their struggle, as exemplified by the long-standing plight of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. As described by scholars like Rashid Khalidi, Palestinians have been forced into a state of perpetual diaspora, navigating life in refugee camps under conditions of economic deprivation, political marginalisation and now, since the unfolding of what many consider a genocide, the conditions of unbridled annihilation.

Similarly, the Tamil experience, shaped by the violent history of Sri Lanka's civil war, reflects the painful intersection of ethnic violence and political disenfranchisement. The Tamil Eelam movement, like the Palestinian resistance, faced intense military opposition and international isolation. The genocide faced by Tamils, marked by indiscriminate killings and displacement, parallels the tactics of destruction employed against Palestinians.

Through a comparative analysis of these two struggles, we aim to shed light on the intersection of colonial legacies, the role of memory in resistance, and the ongoing search for justice. Both the Palestinian and Tamil people continue to resist, holding fast to their demands for liberation despite the overwhelming challenges they face. This panel will emphasise the importance of drawing parallels between these two communities and highlighting their shared pursuit of freedom and recognition.

