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## The Palestinian Tipping Point



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On Wednesday, 13 June, for the second time in few days, Palestinians took the streets of central Ramallah, in the occupied West Bank, as part of a popular campaign launched against the financial sanctions imposed by the Palestinian Authority on the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip. The hardships imposed by the Fatah-led PA on the tormented coastal enclave include cutting the wages of over 63,000 government employees, refusing to pay Gaza's electricity bill, ending all spending on ministerial functions in Gaza, and severely limiting support to Gaza's healthcare ministry and system, including decreasing permits

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for patients to leave the strip. The aim of the sanctions is to try to topple the Hamas government, in what many Palestinians, especially from young generations, perceive as a cheeky collaboration with the regime of siege and isolation inflicted on the Gaza population by Israel and Egypt.

In Ramallah, the demonstrators defied an order issued by President Abbas which banned protests until the end of the three-day Id al-Fitr holiday marking the end of the Ramadan month of fasting. Can you imagine living under military occupation and your own people who claim to struggle for your national liberation impose on you the same measures of the occupying power?

As it has often happened during the recent years, the protests were met with brutal repression: tear gas, stun grenades, bullets shot in the air, journalists and protesters beaten, arbitrary arrests.

Among the many who were detained by the PA security forces there was Laith Abu Zayed, one of my former students at Al Quds Bard College Human Rights Program. After a brilliant study career, Laith has worked for several years for the rights of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli and Palestinian jails at Addameer (the Palestinian Support and Human Rights Association), before being hired by Amnesty International, for which he was monitoring the Ramallah protest, before being detained, severely beaten, and tortured while in police custody. Amnesty reported that “Upon his release, he recalled seeing 18 other fellow detainees receive the same treatment. His plight is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the mass show of excessive force and torture unleashed by the Palestinian security forces last night. We demand a full, independent investigation into these violations, and call for all those responsible to be held to account.”

Laith is part of a new generation of Palestinians who have grown under the shadow of the Second Intifada, witnessing the increasing transformation of the Palestinian Authority into an entity that vicariously enforces Israel’s colonial policies through its collaboration with the occupying power: from the assistance to the Israeli military in maintaining Israel’s security through a cooperation that has resulted in the arrest and killing of many Palestinians who fought for their right to self-determination; through the reproduction of an economic system of dependency from the occupation; to the imposition of fratricide measures like the sanctions that West Bank Palestinians have decided to oppose at the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

The Palestinian question has reached a point of no return, no matter how much violence is deployed by the Palestinian security forces to repress internal democracy. To Laith, those

who participated in the demonstrations he was monitoring, and the many Palestinians who still do not take the streets for the fear of the PA repression, it has become clear that the struggle for justice in Palestine is not anymore merely a struggle against Israel's regime of dispossession. They are aware that like in other colonial situations, the colonizer has built a mechanism of indirect rule with the participation of the colonized elite, as the sanctions on Gaza clearly reveal. Thus, they have realized that the meaning of the word liberation has irreversibly changed, and self-determination will be achieved only by making the struggle against the occupier and that for the end of internal political divisions, democracy and human rights at home part of the same political horizon.