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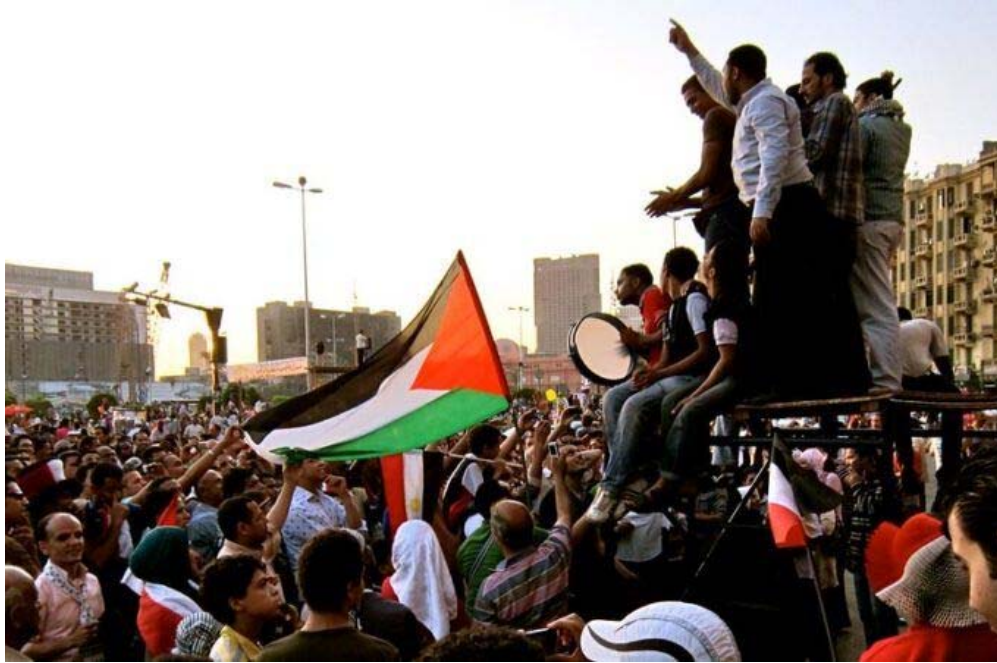
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Palestine is My Cause: Arabs Reaffirm Support for Palestinians, Rejection of the Occupation



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The latest [Arab Opinion Index 2022](#) is yet more proof that Arab societies are diverse in every possible way, from their assessment of their economic situation and living conditions to their take on immigration, state institutions and democracy. With one single exception: Palestine.

76 percent of all respondents to the poll, which is carried out annually by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies in Doha, [said](#) that Palestine is a cause for all Arabs, not Palestinians alone.

Three important points must be kept in mind when trying to understand this number:

First, Arabs are not merely expressing sympathy or solidarity with Palestinians. They are irrevocably stating that the Palestinian struggle against the Israeli Occupation is a collective Arab struggle.

Second, these views are the same across all sections of society throughout the entire geographic expanse of the Arab world, from the Gulf to the Maghreb regions.

Third, equally important is that the public opinions that have been examined in the poll come from countries whose governments have either full diplomatic ties with Israel or vehemently reject normalization.

The study is quite extensive, as it included 33,000 individual respondents and was carried out in the period between June to December 2022.

Once again, the Arab people collectively reject normalization with Israel, with Algeria and Mauritania topping the list at 99 percent each.

Though some might discount the detailed study by claiming that Arabs inherently hate Israel due to their deep-seated aversion to the Jews, the study breaks down the reason why Arab masses have such a low opinion of Israel.

When they were asked as to why they reject diplomatic ties between their countries and Israel, the respondents mostly “cited Israel’s colonial and expansionist policies, as well as its racism toward the Palestinians and its persistence in expropriating Palestinian land.”

Only five percent cited religious reasons behind their position and that too cannot be dismissed as mere religious zealotry, as indeed many Arabs formulate their views based on the moral values enshrined in their religions; for example, the need to oppose and speak out against injustice.

It must be stated that this is hardly new. Arabs have exhibited these views with an unmistakable consistency, since the start of the Arab Opinion Index in 2011 and one would dare argue, since the establishment of Israel atop the ruins of Palestine in 1948.

But if that is the case, why are the latest poll results deserving of a discussion?

While examining the American public view of Russia, the state of democracy in the US, or the greatest threat to national security, opinion polls often fluctuate from one year to the other. For example, 70 percent of all Americans considered Russia an ‘enemy’ to the US in March, compared to only 41 percent in January.

The massive jump in two months is not directly related to the Russian war in Ukraine, since Ukraine is not a US territory, but because of the anti-Russia media frenzy that has not ceased for a moment since the beginning of the war.

However, for Arabs, neither media shift in priorities, internal politics, class orientation or any other factor seem to alter the status of Palestine as the leading Arab priority.

In 2017 and 2022 respectively, two American presidents visited the Arab region. Both Donald Trump and Joe Biden labored to execute a major shift in the region's political priorities.

Biden summed up his agenda in a meeting with six Arab leaders in Jeddah in July by stating, "This trip is about once again positioning America in this region for the future. We are not going to leave a vacuum in the Middle East for Russia or China to fill."

None of these self-serving priorities seem to be paying any real dividends.

That said, the pressure to dismiss the centrality of Palestine as an Arab cause does not only come from the outside. It is also guided by the internal dynamics of the region itself. For example, some pan-Arab news networks, which put much focus on Palestine in previous years, have been relentlessly and, sometimes, purposely, ignoring Palestine as an urgent daily reality in favor of other topics that are consistent with the regional policies of host countries.

Yet, despite all of this, Palestine remains the core of Arab values, struggles and aspirations. How is this possible?

Unlike most Americans, Arabs do not necessarily formulate their views of the world based on the media agenda of the day, nor do they alter their behavior based on presidential speeches or political debates. To the contrary, their collective experiences made them particularly cynical of propaganda and fiery speeches. They formulate their views based on numerous grassroots channels of communication, whether using social media tools or listening to the Friday sermon in their local mosque.

The struggle for Palestine has been internalized in the everyday acts of the average Arab woman or man; from the names they choose for their newborn, to the quiet muttering of prayers before falling asleep. No amount of propaganda can possibly reverse this.

Arab public opinion obviously matters, even though most Arab countries do not have functioning democratic systems. In fact, they matter most because of the lack of democracy.

Every society must have a system of political legitimacy, however nominal, for it to maintain relative stability. It means that the collective Arab view in support of Palestinians and rejection of normalization without an end to Israeli Occupation would have to be taken seriously.

Though some Arab governments are listening to their people and thus condition normalization on Palestinian freedom and sovereignty, the US and Israel insist on ignoring the Arab masses, as they have done for many years. However, if Washington believes that it can simply compel the Arabs to hate Russia and China and love Israel, while the latter continues to kill Palestinians and occupy their land, it will be sorely disappointed, not only today, but for many years to come.

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