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Gaza 2012!

Although the situation in Gaza now is eerily similar to almost 4 years ago, the difference is there's no more Mubarak.

Haidar Eid

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Over half of the deaths in Gaza so far within the last six days have been civilians, including women and children

It looks as though history is repeating itself, as we find ourselves in what seems like December 2008. However, many masks have been cast off since then. Instead of Ehud Olmert, we have Binyamin Netanyahu, and instead of Tzipi Livni shaking her finger in Cairo and threatening the innocent people of Gaza beside Egypt's Minister of Foreign Affairs, we have the fascist minister Avigdor Lieberman vowing to "transfer" or "nuke" us.

It seems as though time has decided to stand still, because we find that Gaza 2012 is eerily similar to Gaza 2009.

But Mubarak has gone. And so has his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ahmed Abu el-Gheit, along with his threats to break the legs of our children who, according to him, posed "a threat" to Egypt's national security. The Arab Spring came as an expression of a strong, popular desire to get rid of such corrupt, dictatorial, puppet regimes.

So what do we, Palestinians, expect from the new Egypt? As part of the Mubarak legacy, Egypt has continued to try to play the role of mediator between "the two sides". Yet by doing so, it swallowed the bait and convinced the Palestinian resistance factions last week to abide by a truce that Israel used as a cover to assassinate a senior Palestinian commander it had been trying to kill for several years.

What was the Egyptian reaction to this Israeli manipulation?

The decision to recall the Egyptian ambassador from Tel Aviv is a welcome step, but it should be the beginning of further steps to reconsider all the agreements signed with Israel, especially the Camp David Accords. Gaza after all is an integral part of Egypt's national security. We expect Egypt to lead an Arab campaign to isolate apartheid Israel until it complies with international law.

Palestinian deterrence depends on the fact that we have, what the late Edward Said called, "the higher moral ground", and our victory at the end will be the inevitable result of our steadfastness that has not wavered despite the feeling that we are left on our own.

When Israel attacked Gaza **for 22 consecutive days in 2009**, it made it crystal clear that it had four objectives which, unsurprisingly, it failed to achieve. Now, in 2012, Israel has declared "new" objectives for its latest barbaric war on the children and women of Gaza. But the residents of Gaza are resilient and steadfast, which gives them the right - together with the rest of the Palestinian people in the diaspora, the West Bank and 1948 - to steer the international campaign to boycott Israel. But that requires the full support of the new Arab world. Our only demand, at this point in time, is a boycott of Israel economically, politically and culturally. This is the least the indifferent "international community" can do to make up for its complicity in the crimes committed by Israel against our people.

Israel has tested the water of the Arab Spring since its inception. Had it not been for the complicity of the reactionary Arab regimes and the international conspiracy of silence, Israel likely **would not have attacked Gaza**. Full stop. In 2009, Palestinians of Gaza were left alone to face an army equipped with the F-16 aircraft and Apache and phosphorus bombs. Not only that, but fingers were pointed at us.

Now is the moment of truth, the moment of sending a clear message to the new Arab world: The Mubarak and Abu el-Gheit era is gone. That the power of deterrence, in light of the massive imbalance of power between Israel and the Palestinians, lies with the ordinary citizen in the streets of Tunis, Cairo, Rabat, Doha, Amman and Muscat. The demonstrations, which have erupted in London, New York, Glasgow and other cities must be translated into a new, concrete reality steered by Palestinians and Arabs. Egyptians, in particular, should be partners, not mediators.

As for the Palestinians, we must unify our ranks on the ground in a national front, a front that will turn its back on remnants of the ugly Oslo days and security coordination, **one that declares its divorce from all racist proposals**. And we must make it absolutely clear that there is no place for normalisers amongst us from now on. We should not allow them to sit comfortably among us until they sever their relations with the occupation and stop whitewashing its ugly face: A face that is stained with the blood of Palestinian children, Omar Mashharawi, Ranan Arafat, Safaa Hammoudeh, Mohamed Dardouna, and the Samouni children.

Gaza 2009 was the Sharpeville and Guernica of Palestine. Gaza 2012 is Palestine's Soweto 1976, that will lead inexorably to implementation of the Right of Return and the end of all racist solutions; the beginning of the end of occupation, colonisation and apartheid in Palestine.

Let history repeat itself, but not as a tragedy this time: 1976 witnessed the beginning of the end of apartheid in South Africa; 2012 will be the turning point that will lead to the end of it in Palestine.