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Gaza Changed Everything

Things Cannot Stay the Same after Israeli Genocide in Gaza

by RAMZY BAROUD

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After every bloody episode of violence perpetrated by Israel, media spin doctors are often deployed with one grand mission: to absolve Israel of any responsibility in their acts of carnage.

Not only do these apologists demonize Palestinians, but anyone who dares to take a stand on their behalf. The main staple of this Israeli strategy has been blaming the victim. Such a tactic is nothing new in the way the so-called “Arab-Israeli conflict” has been presented in Western media, whose narrative has been much closer to that of Israeli official and media discourses than that of Palestinians. This continued despite the decades-long military occupation, successive wars, and countless massacres.

Specifically, since the Israeli siege on Gaza, following the democratic elections that brought Hamas to power in January 2006, Israel needed all of its hasbara savvy, alongside that of its backers in western countries to explain why a population has been brutalized for making a democratic choice. The sheer amount of deception involved in the cleverly knitted story which purposely mixed between Hamas and al-Qaeda (as they once did between late Yasser Arafat and Hitler), among other ruses was a new low, even by Israel’s own standards.

While the media demonized Hamas, the resistance and all the other “bad” Palestinians who voted for the movement, it intentionally ignored the fascism that was taking over Israeli society.

For the bad – as in “radical,” “extremist,” anti-peace – Palestinian to exist, they have to be juxtaposed with the good Palestinian, represented in Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and any faction, person or leader willing to, practically speaking, co-exist with the Israeli occupation. The PA went even further, by cooperating with Israel to ensure the demise of the Palestinian “radicals,” as in those who insist on resisting the occupation.

Thanks to the PA, the price for the Israeli occupation has never been so cheap. Despite repeated attempts at re-activating the so-called peace process, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu always found a way to torpedo such efforts, even those promoted by his closest allies in Washington. “Peace” is a major risk for Netanyahu, whose government is sustained by Jewish nationalists and extremists, who feel no particular need to end their colonization of the West Bank. Abbas had done a great deal to ensure that Israel feels no pressure to negotiate. Every attempt at resistance, even by standing peacefully with placards and banners in Ramallah’s al-Manara Square was crushed; often brutally.

Gaza, however, remained an exception. Israel’s brutality there has reached unprecedented levels, especially after Israel’s Cast Lead Operation, which killed and wounded thousands. Many predicted that the crimes in Gaza would turn the tide against Israel, but they didn’t. Israeli influence over the media was still tight enough that somehow they managed to, at least, neutralize the impact of Cast Lead. The advent of the Arab Spring and the devaluing of human life, as happened in Syria, Libya and Egypt, somehow buried the Israeli crimes in Gaza; however temporarily.

But Israel’s latest war on Gaza mounted to a genocide. Israel’s argument that it was “defending itself” was no longer a sufficient excuse. No amount of hasbara was enough to explain the burying alive of entire families, the summary execution of civilians, the pulverizing of entire neighborhoods, the gunning down of fleeing children playing at the beach during a deceptive moment of “lull,” the destruction of dozens of mosques and churches, the killing of civilians hiding in UN schools-turned temporary shelters.

It was particularly embarrassing for Israel, but also telling, that the Gaza resistance, which stood alone, fighting tens of thousands of well-armed invaders from tunnels, killed 64 Israelis. All but three were soldiers, mostly killed inside Gaza.

As the world was awakened to the level of devastation created by Israel in Gaza, many also became aware that such wrath is not independent from the fascism that has gripped Israeli society for years. In Israel, there is no longer room for dissent, and those in the highest positions of power, are the ones who openly and freely preach genocide.

In his excellent article in the American Conservative on August 06, Scott McConnell, wrote, “All societies have their hate groups and extremists, but nowhere in the democratic world are they nearer to the center of power than Israel.” He elaborated, “In the 1980s Meir Kahane had a

small following in Israel, but his pro-ethnic cleansing party was made illegal. Now Kahanists are in the center of the country's ruling ideology.”

This was discussed in context of statements made by Moshe Feiglin, deputy speaker of the Knesset and a “top player in Israel's ruling Likud Party.” Feiglin called for Palestinians from Gaza to be resettled in concentration camps, and all of Hamas and its supporters to be “annihilated.” Who can now, with a good conscience, protest those who infuse the Nazi analogy to what is happening in Palestine?

Meanwhile, in this age of social media, where mainstream news networks no longer have complete command over the narrative, no self-respecting intellectual, journalist, official or any citizen with a conscience can plead ignorance and stand on the fence of neutrality.

Gaza has indeed changed everything. Israel's criminality and fascism should no longer be open for vibrant media debates, but it must be acknowledged as an uncontested fact. Our language, as in our perception, must also change to accommodate this uncontested reality.

To end the Israeli genocide and occupation, the wheel of continuous action must turn and keep on turning. Those who support Israel must be exposed, and those who facilitate the Israeli occupation and sustain its war machine are partakers in the war crimes committed daily in Gaza and the rest of Palestine. They must be boycotted. The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement must grow and serve as the main platform for international solidarity.

Time for clever words and no action are long gone, and those who remain “soft” on Israel, for whatever reason, have no place in what is becoming a global movement with uncompromising demands: end the occupation, punish its sustainers, halt ethnic cleaning and genocide, end the siege, and bring Israeli and other culprits to the international criminal court for their massive war crimes and crimes against humanity.