

To prevent deterioration of the Palestinian issue into a road map of “liquidation”

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Jerusalem

December 25, 2016.

Amidst dramatic international developments and the crisis of crumbling Arab regimes in which destruction abounds and millions of people have been killed, migrated and displaced;

With ongoing fighting, preemptive regional wars, and attempts to exploit the Arab Initiative to “normalize security” without withdrawal from occupied Arab territory;

And after half a century of Israeli military occupation, policies and practices of Israelization, Judaization, isolation, exclusion, and hostility, in addition to exploiting Biblical myths about Palestine, particularly related to Jerusalem and its holy places;

And in the absence of Arab capability to end the occupation, and the absence of a national will to end the internal divide, and the dwindling of confidence in a political regime that is still unfinished;

And after the shattering of the illusions of negotiations, resistance and two-state solution.....

It is legitimate to ask if the Palestinian issue has reached a road map of ‘**liquidation**’.

The international context:

The Caesar of Federal Russia has restored his crown and sceptre, moving into our region at the invitation of some of us. He is sending his military into our bedrooms, destroying our mosques, churches, and

cities, and is displacing our people. He is meeting with our enemy to arrange a security presence that starts in the Golan and ends in Tehran. He is informing Washington and Brussels that he will stay in our land and will draw the map of the region with Turkey and Iran, and without Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

At the same time, Caesar Putin has invited the Authority in Ramallah for meetings in Moscow, although the meetings are suspended until Netanyahu arrives from Tel Aviv!!

The United States is witnessing a political earthquake after the presidential elections with consequences that signal a return to a culture of ethnic and religious discrimination, draft laws for exclusion and hostility, and allegations of Islamophobia.

President Trump announces his readiness to clash with, withdraw from, or bargain on every front.

Just before Trump entered the White House, the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, invited the leaders of Europe and NATO, with the presence of President Obama, for consultations to avoid any surprises. China opposes Trump's statements; Japan and Korea are reviewing their strategies; India and Pakistan await draft agreements; and Mexico is unable to confront the building of the wall. Meanwhile, the Canadian government has opened its doors to migrants and advocates prudence and acceptance of the other.

The regional context:

The leading countries of the region: Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran, differ in understating, explaining and interpreting their expectations in the wake of the American earthquake and the return of the Russian Caesar. Disputes and contradictions between them remain, while their individual strategy and priorities towards Washington after Obama and Moscow after Aleppo remain unknown.

The status of the Arab regimes in Egypt and Saudi Arabia remain weak and almost non-existent because these two countries operate in a state of security turmoil, political instability, and economic and financial chaos.

In Syria and Iraq, the fighting continues. This fighting will not end with the termination of ISIS as long as the Russians and Americans share a military presence, and as long as European hands tremble without a will to act.

Yemen - once termed golden Yemen - will continue to be unfortunate as it sits at a crossroads open to all fronts, from the Saudi- Iranian Preemptive war on its territories, to tribal conflict with different loyalties and arms dealers.

The Libyan gate will stay open to the neighboring Arab countries of North Africa, carrying the wind of change and all possibilities. Only NATO will decide the agenda and distribute roles.

Arab youth will continue to be steadfast “woodcutters” and will resist all challenges, refusing to allow “political Islam” to contain their movement, and resisting military control over their future. However, the young people seen in the liberation squares are almost non-existent, having disappeared behind bars or in exile.

Tel Aviv remains the exception; it welcomes the American earthquake, keenly awaiting its racist policies. It wants the US to be a partner and an ally to the Israelization of Jerusalem, the sacrilege of holy sites, the annexation of “Judea and Samaria”, and the containment of Gaza under a blockade.

At the same time, Israel does not object to the presence of the Russian Caesar’s army in the region, nor does it oppose Russian actions and policies as long as the security coordination starts in the Golan and ends in Tehran.

Tel Aviv is counting on European hypocrisy and the flow of financial spending on its military occupation that turned Ramallah into a five star hotel. Security agencies are spread throughout West Bank cities and villages without being able to stop the colonial tsunami of 700,000 settlers in the West Bank, or to end the siege of the population in cantons behind the wall, or the endless destruction and siege of Gaza.

Tel Aviv security agencies are shaking hands and normalizing with what is left of the Arab regime. Tel Aviv economic forces are playing politics with capitals of the African continent while we sit in hotels, coffee shops and conferences recalling the pleasant days of Nasser, Nehru, and Lumumba.

The Palestinian context:

During six decades of displacement and exile, even in the homeland, we have sought an Arab, international or socialist incubator. Our internal discourse was Emile Habibi's novel *The Pessoptimist*, while our external discourse was Ghassan Kanafani's novel *Returning to Haifa*. Our policies may be summarized in what Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad) once described as the 'no-yes' (rejection and acceptance at the same time). Fidel Castro commented that Palestinians were masters of the shrewd 'no-yes'.

During these years of Israeli occupation in which we shuffled between religious, political and national tracks and focused on reviving our homeland, our patriotism, and our identity, we ended hesitantly in a state of mental pessimism with optimism of will, as Garamchi, the Italian philosopher, once said.

Two decades later (1967-1974), the external discourse was the words of Yasser Arafat at the UN: "Do not drop the olive branch from my hand", while the internal discourse advocated by civil society was "development for resilience". The words of poet Mahmoud Darwish

were embraced in both cases to express how huge the idea (of Palestine) is, how difficult resistance and steadfastness, and how small is the state (a Palestinian entity on 22% of the Palestinian homeland).

The Israeli occupation has always obstructed our national project: clashing with us, killing our leaders inside and outside the homeland, in the military invasion of Lebanon, the massacre of Sabra and Shatila, and the departure, or rather deportation, of the PLO from Lebanon, with American coordination, Arab observation, and Israeli silence, to Tunisia through the Greek sea ports.

Then there were twelve years of waiting for international legitimacy to be invoked, for European intervention, or even for temporary or emergency action by brothers and comrades to stop internal Palestinian bleeding or the return of the PLO leadership from exile. During these years of waiting, the suffering of the people in the homeland escalated and the alienation of the leadership abroad worsened. Then, the Intifada and a United Leadership brought internal and external forces together and restored confidence by asserting that “we are the facts on the ground”.

The philosophy of the Intifada was that of a ‘white revolution’ and a new drafting of Palestinian strategy based on the argument that “I cannot destroy you Israel, and you cannot take away from us our homeland of Palestine, so we call for a third path of getting to acknowledge each other, negotiations and reconciliation towards a political solution based on the establishment of two states”. The Palestinian National Council adopted the Intifada and announced the document of independence in Algeria.

Everyone sympathized with the Palestinian Intifada in the occupied territory, even the Israeli left. The US recognized the PLO and in May 1989, Secretary of State James Baker called on Israel to abandon its unrealistic vision of greater Israel, the annexation of land and its

settlement activities, and deal with the Palestinians as neighbors who deserve political rights.

Yet Israel continued its suppressive colonial policy of occupation to extinguish the Intifada of the people and undermine the message of the leadership, perpetrating a massacre in which 21 people died in the courtyards of al-Aqsa Mosque on the first of October 1990.

Developments in the region - the first Gulf war and the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in 1990 - had an impact on all parties. The American umbrella moved to contain the states in the region and end the aggression. The Palestinian card was employed to justify the American military presence and to exert pressure on Israel (Itzhak Shamir) to participate in negotiations with a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation, and with regional and international parties in the Madrid Conference on October 30, 1990.

Ever since the Madrid Conference we have been busy with the ‘negotiations bandwagon’ in its various forms. In the first phase, Palestinians in exile and in the country were on the bandwagon and then inside it in Washington. In the second phase, the bandwagon was driven to Oslo by the Palestinians in exile in isolation from the elites in the occupied territory. In the third phase, the Palestinians in Tunisia pushed the bandwagon out of the road shared with Amman and Cairo, and also out of the long deep tunnels of the occupied territory. In the fourth phase, both Palestinians in exile and those in the occupied territory were off the bandwagon and joining the “Authority box”. ..praying that this Authority will succeed in achieving their goals with the help of regional capitals because, for them, negotiations have become “a way of life”!

When we reviewed the negotiations documents and those on Wikileaks, we did not find what we struggled for, namely an end to the occupation, liberation of our homeland, a halt to colonial settlement and the confiscation of land to build settlements. The gates of Jerusalem were

not opened for us to access its mosques and churches, our flags were taken down from Orient House and the Jerusalem walls, and an apartheid separation wall of 708 KM was constructed. Our 50 thousand prisoners and detainees have not been released. These prisoners have conducted strikes of four or five months to demand an end to their suffering and the minimal respect for their dignity behind bars. The pain and suffering has escalated as a result of four wars waged against Gaza without any intervention by Amman or Cairo. And after the destruction, states met in Sharm al-Sheikh suggesting fictitious billions of dollars for the revival of Gaza and support for the PA!

Our main concern has become to divide the “Authority cake” into administrative tasks and services delivered by 180,000 employees, with one part in the West Bank, with an agenda entitled ‘holy security coordination’, and under a discourse entitled ‘life is negotiations’. The other part in the Gaza Strip with an agenda entitled ‘terminals of pacification’, including even the tunnels, and a discourse entitled ‘armistice for years’. However, in both areas, there are no negotiations or resistance. Rather there is misery and hopelessness in the refugee camps. Talk about refugees is only heard at universities, special occasions and festivals.

Now we can see the spreading of hotels, bank loans, company shares, and the birth of new elites. One was a caesarian delivery of non-governmental commercial elites; the second was the birth of factional elites who are still in the driving seat; the third is a paramilitary security elite that brags about confiscating knives in school bags; the fourth is in the form of civil society businesses and NGOs looking for projects to provide means of sustenance, or investment projects in construction, the seaport and airport. Jerusalem is abandoned behind the walls while its people lament the theft of its historical heritage and religious legacy, and its young people criticizing the Arabs and Pan Arabism. Jerusalem’s al-Aqsa mosque and the Church of Holy Sepulcher appeal to the human conscience for the freedom of worship. The city of Jerusalem satirizes

Moslems, Christians and strangers, while Palestinians in exile reproach themselves as they look for an identity, a homeland, and a memory.

Palestinian civil society is preoccupied with its rights and claims in housing, work, health, education, and freedom of expression. The phenomenon of conferences, rallies and celebrations has spread, even for the centenary anniversary of the Balfour crime and his unfortunate declaration. The only exception has been individual Palestinian successes and distinction in the fields of education, art and painting, invention, and others.

In the midst of this scenario, Tel Aviv attempted to introduce 'economic peace' based on the Herzliya papers of 2009. The alleged objective is to create islands of economic prosperity by pledging millions of dollars for the Palestinian economy and attempting to bribe Palestinian Authority employees with promised salary increases of 40%. The final status issues will be postponed and the two million in the Gaza Strip will be left to an uncertain future, looking for a crossing in Rafah or a seaport project resulting from Turkish, Cypriot, or even American, mediation.

The racist apartheid regime in the West Bank continues. Discrimination in rights and interests was imposed on the basis of ethnicity, religion, and identity. The Palestinian presence was restricted to 12% of Palestine, while 700,000 Jewish settlers run wild in the West Bank confiscating land, and building and expanding colonies.

On the other side, the voice of Palestinian society from within the green line, which makes up 20% of the population there, can be heard to say that they struggle politically for equality and justice in their citizenship rights. Their way ahead is still long and rough after decades since the *Nakba* (catastrophe). They support the popular resistance in the occupied territory, but do not intervene in it to ensure that they do not lose what they have already gained as citizens of the state. Palestinian society in those areas says that its task now is to work with all parties to influence

Israeli public opinion in an attempt to topple the Zionist right-wing government.

In order to avoid greater misery, or a road map of liquidation that would eliminate what is left for us as a homeland, people and our rights, the Palestinian strategy should be to internationalize the Palestinian cause, starting with the UN Security Council, and continue to recruit international condemnation against settlements, especially in light of the recent UN Security Council Resolution. The UN and international community should be called upon to recognize a Palestinian state under occupation, and we should join the International Criminal Court and other international organizations.

Our people want and need a new strategy that includes internationalization of the Palestinian case, uniting Palestinians in the homeland, boycotting and ending all forms of coordination with the occupation, and prosecution of the occupation.

On the streets, the Palestinian youth movement should continue under the banner “Resist to exist with dignity, for freedom and justice”. Youth should define the tools of resistance: the first should be knowledge and education of the Palestinian national narrative, heritage and legacy; the second is boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) against Israel and extending it abroad; the third is to transfer the culture of fear to the other party; and the fourth is to unmask corruption, anarchy and sedition in the Palestinian house. With hopes for a new birth and new legitimacy that has pride in the previous struggle, ends the current suffering, and opens the horizon for the future.