

## **Gaza 2009: De-Osloizing the Palestinian Mind By Dr. Haidar Eid**

'De-Osloizing Palestine is a precondition for the creation of peace with justice.' – Gaza, 14 marzo 2009

"Not only have the whites been guilty of being on the offensive, but by some skilful manoeuvres, they have managed to control the responses of the blacks to the provocation. Not only have they kicked the black, but they have also told him how to react to the kick. For a long time the black has been listening with patience to the advice he has been receiving on how best to respond to the kick. With painful slowness he is now beginning to show signs that it is his right and duty to respond to the kick in the way he sees fit." -- Steve Biko

One of the most important outcomes of the Gaza massacre (2009) has been the unprecedented tremendous outpouring of popular support for the Palestinian cause; something the signatories of the Oslo accords (1993) must have not been happy with. The return of the pre-Oslo slogans of liberation, as opposed to independence, have, undoubtedly, created a new dilemma, not only for Oslo political elites, but also for the NGOized, Stalinist Left.

The process of "Osloization" i.e, a combination of corruption, Ngoization, and a selling-out of revolutionary principles and sloganeering, fused with the fiction of the two-prison solution, has been dealt a heavy blow in the 2006 elections. Judging from statements made, not only by PA officials, but also by the Left, and even the Hamas government, the ultimate goal of the current river of blood has become the establishment of a Palestinian state in any dimension, i.e. the two-state solution. The contradiction between the tremendous international support, the revival of the BDS campaign, the outpouring of demos against Apartheid Israel and its war crimes against the Palestinians of Gaza, and the reiteration, by most political orgs, of the two state mantra is a strong indication of the need for an alternative program that makes the De-Osloization of Palestine its first priority.

In order to understand the Oslo Accords and the extreme damage they have caused to the Palestinian cause, one needs a historical contextualization of the so called "peace process", or rather what many critical thinkers have called the peace industry. This understanding is a necessary step towards a process of De-Osloization, a term I will get back to at a later stage.

The Oslo accord was claimed to be the first step towards self-determination and an independent state. But it is clear now, 16 years after the famous hand shake on the White House lawn, that no state in the short run will be established because of the mere fact that Oslo simply ignored the existence of the Palestinian people as a people. In other words, these accords have offered Zionism what it has always been striving for. Golda Meir's infamous statement that there are no Palestinians is a case in point here.

And yet, to claim that 'Oslo' and 'Camp David' were great missed opportunities and 'breakthrough', and that the so-called 'peace process' was in track until the Palestinians (i.e. colonized victims) blew it is a deliberate ideological distortion of reality claimed in order to prepare Palestinians for more concessions. Real comprehensive peace was not created in Oslo and Washington; rather what was created is an American/Israeli plan to resolve the conflict after the destruction of Iraq and the collapse of the Soviet Union and their attempt to construct a "new Middle East"—to use Condoleezza Rice's words--a Middle East characterized by imperialist-Zionist hegemony and supported by despotic regimes. The Oslo accord was born dead because it did not guarantee the minimum national and political rights of 10 million Palestinian. As long as there are refugees, cantons, detainees, blockade, settlements, 'legal torture' of prisoners, dispossession, assassinations and occupation, comprehensive peace cannot be achieved. It is an illusion in the minds of those who signed the Oslo accords.

These accords have led to the creation of a limited "administrative autonomy" in the Gaza Strip and some parts of the West Bank. The local population was given "the right" to form an authority that they could call "national." Now the question is what makes the PNA (Palestinian National Authority) beyond questioning? What is the 'legitimate' ground upon which it was established? Very simple: The Oslo Accords. It has now become very obvious that despite the famous hand shakes on the White house lawn and in Annapolis, and the optimistic talk of the 'New Middle East,' these accords, in contradistinction with UN and Security Council resolutions, have not guaranteed the establishment of a sovereign, independent Palestinian state, or the return of the refugees, nor even the demolition of the Jewish settlements, and

compensation for those Palestinians who have lost—and still losing—their homes, lands and properties; nor the release of all political prisoners, or the opening of all checkpoints, which have become daily nightmares for residents of the WB and GS; ...etc. In spite of all the hand shakes, kisses, and friendly press conferences, Israel launched one of the bloodiest wars in the history of the conflict against the civilian population of Gaza, killing in 22 days more than 1400 people, including 438 children, 120 women, 95 old people, 16 medics, 5 journalists, 5 foreign women, and in which it destroyed more than 40,000 institutions and houses, leaving many families homeless. That, of course, was not mentioned as an objective of the Oslo Accords, but nothing either was mentioned in them that would prevent such bloodletting from taking place.

This is the political reality that Palestinian officials who signed the agreement do not like to be reminded of. In fact, what has been created in parts of Gaza and the West Bank is a very strange entity—an apartheid-type Bantustan endorsed by the international community. Gaza 2009, therefore, is the mirror-image of Oslo. When we bear in mind that 75-80% of Gazans are refugees, the results of 2006 elections become more comprehensible not only in its anti-colonial context, but also in socio-political terms. What Oslo has created in Gaza, and the West Bank for that matter, is literally two different worlds, both of which have been led by undemocratic institutions, many security apparatuses, a Third Worldish military court (commended by the Clinton administration), corruption, mismanagement, inefficiency and nepotism—to mention but few (neo)colonial qualities.

By winning the 1948, 1956 and 1967 wars, and by getting international, Arab and Palestinian recognition, Israel—as an Apartheid settler-colonial state—has hoped to move into a new stage; a stage that requires the formation of 'new consciousness' amongst colonized Palestinians. Herein lies the danger of Oslo; Osloization, within this neo-Zionist context, means the creation of a new paradigm through which you wash out the consciousness of your supposed enemy—the 'Other'—and replace it with a one-dimensional mentality, through the construction of a fiction (two states for two peoples) whose end is unattainable. Even the fascist Lieberman has started singing the same song.

Put differently, to aim at creating the two-state Palestinian is to aim at creating false consciousness led by assimilated intelligentsia, some of whom have a revolutionary past record. Singing the slogans of "the two state solution," "two states for two peoples," "return to the 1967 borders,"—or even "a long-term Hudna" (as proposed by Hamas) -- is intended to guarantee the subordination and conformity of the Palestinians, especially those with revolutionary ideas. Gone are the right of return of 6 million refugees and their compensation, and the national and cultural rights of the indigenous population of Palestine 1948.

This goal, however, never sees the antithesis it creates as a result of displacement, exploitation, and oppression; it ignores the revolutionary consciousness that has been formulated throughout the different phases of the Palestinian struggle. Nor does it take into account the legacy of civil and political resistance that has become a trademark of the Palestinian struggle. Hence the necessity of the formulation of Palestinian alternative politics. To be conscious of the corruption of the Palestinian Authority, and of the huge class gape that the Oslo Accords have created has definitely been the beginning of De-Osloization represented in the Al-Aqsa uprising and the outcome of the 2006 elections. This is an oppositional consciousness that the signatories of Oslo did not take into account. Both events represent an outright rejection of the Oslo Accords and their consequences.

The Gaza Strip, however, is seen by the PA as one of three building blocks of an independent state, although it is geographically separated from the second block, i.e. the West Bank. The third block is, Jerusalem, is under total Israeli control. None of the Palestinians in the occupied territories believe that the 'semi-autonomous' zones in the GS and the WB—that is, the ones that fall under category A—can lay the foundation for an independent state. What Oslo has led to is, in fact, a South Africa. When black South Africans needed to move from their townships to big 'white' cities, they needed to get a 'pass'. During 'peace time,' Palestinians, not only those who work in Israel, but also those who wanted to visit the WB from Gaza, or vice versa, needed to apply for a 'permit'. Beside the permit, Palestinians needed a so-called 'magnetic card,' which is a computer card that has a password to its holder's security file. No one could work in Israel, or visit the WB, or even go to a hospital inside the 'green line' without a 'permit' and a 'magnetic card'. If one was granted such invaluable cards, one was still not allowed to visit any other area except the one s/he was entitled to visit. If one was

'caught' at another area, one's permit and card were confiscated immediately, not to mention the torture one was exposed to. Nowadays, no one is even given such luxurious 'permits' and cards. How was apartheid South Africa different?

The tribal chiefs of the South African Bantustans used to believe that they were the heads of independent states. Luckily, the ANC, despite its many compromises with the National Party, had never accepted the idea of separation and Bantustans. The official Palestinian leadership on the other hand, at the end of the millennium, boasts of having laid the foundation for a Bantustan, claiming it to be an independent state in the make. Undoubtedly, this is the ultimate prize Zionism can offer to its 'Other' after having denied her/his existence for a century, and after that same 'Other' has proved that she is human. For Zionism's continued presence in Palestine, the 'Other' must be assimilated and enslaved without her/ him being conscious of her/his enslavement. Hence the granting of 'semi-autonomous' rule over the most crowded Palestinian cities, and hence the logic driving the Oslo Accords.

Oslo, then, brought an unprecedented level of corruption into Palestine; and security coordination with Israel, under the supervision of—irony of ironies—an American general, has become the norm. Repeating the two-state mantra, carrying the Palestinian flag, singing the national anthem and— more importantly—recognizing Israel, regardless of the rights of two thirds of the Palestinian people, are what Oslo is all about.

The lesson we learn from Gaza 2009 is to harness all effort to fight the outcome of the Oslo Accords, and to form a United Front on a platform of resistance and reforms. This cannot be achieved without dismantling the PA and realizing that ministries, premierships, and presidencies in Gaza and Ramalah are a façade not unlike the South African Independent Homelands with their tribal chiefs. The classical national program, created and adopted by the Palestinian bourgeoisie has reached its end unsuccessfully. Most political forces, including the governing party in Gaza, fail to explain how 6 million Palestinian refugees will return to the Israeli State of the Jews and an independent Palestinian state will be created at the same time.

Hence the necessity for an alternative paradigm that divorces itself from the fiction of the two-prison solution, a paradigm that takes the sacrifices of the people of Gaza as a turning point in the struggle for liberation, one that builds on the growing global anti-apartheid movement that has been given an impetus by Gaza 2009. De-Osloizing Palestine is, therefore, a precondition for the creation of peace with justice.