

No longer asking By Gideon Levy, Haaretz 18/06/2006

La strutturazione del testo e il neretto sono di Alfredo Tradardi

We've stopped **asking**.

The press, whose job is to **ask**, almost doesn't **ask** questions;

the Knesset doesn't **ask** questions;

the attorney general doesn't **ask** questions;

the Supreme Court doesn't **ask**;

nearly all the teachers, doctors, students, and intellectuals don't **ask** questions;

the heads of the army and the defense establishment certainly don't **ask** questions, they never **asked**.

Nothing is more symptomatic of a society's ills than the fact that the society has stopped **asking** questions.

Even during a particularly bloody week like last week, when 14 innocent civilians were killed,

nearly no questions were **asked**,

and certainly not the real questions.

In a feeble voice it was **asked**

why it was necessary to fire missiles at a vehicle in the heart of Gaza,

and why the second barrage was necessary when it was obvious that innocent civilians would gather around the car after the first barrage.

But nobody **asked** about the difference

between firing a missile into the heart of a city

and a suicide bomber blowing himself up in the heart of another city.

They **asked** who killed the Ghalia family on the beach and what Israel should do about the Qassams,

but few **asked** what Israel should not do,

under any circumstances,

and what would happen

if, heaven forbid, the GRAD missile in the vehicle were to blow up on a street bustling with people.

Nobody, of course, even considered **asking** the commander of the air force or the chief of staff if they should take responsibility for this war crime.

And nobody **asked** what happened to the debate,

which nonetheless has been underway here for some time,

about the very policy of assassination,

its legality and morality,

nor even whether it is sensible or effective.

Does anyone take into account the bloodshed stemming from the reaction to assassinations?

They **asked** who started the current round of violence and answered in a chorus: the Palestinians.

They fired first.

But nobody dared **ask**, why do they fire?

Were they born to kill, to launch Qassams?

Do they enjoy it?

What really motivates them?

Has a new round of fighting begun, this time with Qassams,

or maybe it is the inhumane conditions in which they live,

the **boycott Israel has imposed on the Palestinian Authority and the intolerable siege?**

We've locked them up in Gaza and blocked international economic aid,

they shoot to free themselves of the heavy yoke we've placed on them

"as just a struggle as any for freedom"

and we don't even **ask** why,

just dare to argue that "they started it."

And why has Israel rejected Mahmoud Abbas' outstretched hand for so long?

Israel at least admits he is peace-seeking.

And why haven't we listened to the new voices in Hamas?

What would have happened if the prime minister were to invite his counterpart Ismail Haniyeh to a meeting the day after the latter was democratically elected?

Would the danger to Israel from that meeting have been greater than the horror of the Qassams and the terrorist attacks yet to come?

The killing we sowed has undermined the prisoners' document that was supposed to encourage Israel.

Through a campaign of assassinations and massive bombings, Israel made it practically impossible for Abbas to conduct the referendum, which would have yielded results that could have been a lever for peace.

And has anyone **asked** lately why the "safe passage" has not been opened as we promised,

or why prisoners,

starting with Marwan Barghouti,

have not been freed?

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert returned empty-handed from a series of failed visits in world capitals, despite his hubris and self-satisfaction,

and only in Israel does anyone still believe his claim

that the "convergence" will advance either peace or an end to the occupation.

Nobody **asks** why we should move in a direction that the entire world, from Washington to Ramallah, opposes.

They tell us and the world that Israel will give a year for negotiations, and darn it,

nobody **asks** why attempts to negotiate have not already begun.

Israel is waiting, silent and indifferent.

Any glimmer of good news from the Palestinian side is immediately trampled by brutal military operations.

We are pushing Hamas, really pushing, back into the cycle of terror,

as a senior officer in the army,

who of course refused to be identified, admits.

In Gaza there is a prime minister who says he wants to reach an arrangement with Israel on the basis of the 1967 borders,

a far-reaching statement as far as he is concerned,

and Israel responds with threats on his life.

In Ramallah is the most moderate of all Palestinian leaders,

and Israel more or less is ignoring his existence.

Four years ago the Arab world passed a brave decision "the Saudi Arabian plan"

to normalize relations with Israel,

but that didn't even get a serious discussion here.

Without **asking** questions,

Israel is morally collapsing.

African refugees are rotting in jail,

an airline wanted to allow aboard only Jewish travellers,

and in our backyard an entire nation is struggling

against an Israeli boot that from year to year

becomes more ruthless and brutal.

And above it all hovers the horrible question:

Do we really want peace?

**Do we really want to live in a just and sympathetic country?
Or is the sad truth that the greed for territory and power
has blinded and deafened us
so that we are no longer able
even to ask?**