

Violence in the “Territories” by Mr. Zougbi Zougbi

Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable. – John F. Kennedy

It is all too common to hear the Israelis and their close allies, the “mediators”, the USA, say that it is important for the violence to stop before returning to the negotiating table. This is, no doubt, supported by both parties in this conflict. However, what is viewed as violence is different for the Palestinians and Israelis. The violence referred to by the Israelis, and their ally, is insurgent violence, which is the result of the systemic violence that has plagued the Palestinian people for many years at the hand of their occupier. Shlomo Ben-Ami, former Israeli Foreign Minister in the Barak Government, said, “Accusations made by a well-established society about how a people it is oppressing is breaking the rules to attain its rights do not have much credence” (*Ha'aretz*, 28 November 2000, Article by Akira Elder). Unfortunately, the violence of occupation, the violence committed by the colonial power, has been legitimized. We must, after all, remember that might does not make it right.

There are currently **four types** of violence influencing the lives of the peoples of this land. The most talked about is **insurgent violence**, carried out by nationalists and others who have opted to revolt against the occupation, siege, and oppression inflicted upon them (for more than 33 years). Let us remember the words of former Prime Minister, Ehud Barak, who said, “If I were a Palestinian, I'd also join a 'terror' group” (*Ha'aretz*, 3 June 1998), epitomizing the idea that one person's terrorist is another's freedom fighter. It is a common fallacy for people to ignore uniformed violence, and simply blame the victims rather than the perpetrators of these evils.

But the other three forms of violence are being carried out against the Palestinians by the Israelis and their supporters. Structural violence, environmental violence, and state sponsored violence are all part of the system being used to continue to subject the Palestinians to the de facto apartheid that is currently in place.

Structural violence is that which is carried out directly by the occupier and its agents against the occupied people. This violence may either be threatened or actualized. It consists of house demolitions, destruction of businesses, and infrastructure, whether through the use of bulldozers or shelling, and the closure policy, which is an active part of the current siege, and part of everyday occupation. The threat of these things happening is almost as great as this being actualized. The terror created through demolition orders for homes or businesses that have been built or expanded with or without “proper” documentation from the occupying power is paralyzing. Israel is using the system of laws to subjugate the Palestinian people further... laws that have been set in place by four systems: Ottoman rule, Emergency British laws from the Mandate Period, Jordanian laws, and finally Israeli Military law. The Palestinians are unable to challenge any of the laws passed against them unless they have been forced or have chosen to become citizens of the state of Israel (this is only possible for Palestinians living within the land taken to form the state of Israel in 1948).

Environmental violence, consisting of the destruction or confiscation of agricultural land, crops, trees, etc., is seldom reported, but always present.

State sponsored violence consists of allowing heavily armed settlers, placed in the occupied territories illegally by the occupying power, to roam, unchecked and undeterred, as they terrorize the indigenous people of the land. In its attempts to carry on its divide and conquer policy, Israel has recruited collaborators and “death squads” to carry out clandestine actions that it would not like to be publicly responsible for. Such policies aim to enhance chaos and further hopelessness among the Palestinian people.

We must not fall into the trap of legitimizing the violence perpetrated by **those in uniform**, especially when that violence is committed on civilians and uniformed persons who did not provoke an attack, but simply want to live as human beings in land where they have lived for countless generations.

Violence always has an adverse effect. Those who are most affected by the violence are those who have to spend every moment trying to cope with its effects. The Palestinians live with the violence created by the occupation on a daily basis, and therefore, deserve much less blame for the current situation. They did not ask to be occupied, to have their land systematically stolen from them to build settlements... in the West Bank, in the Gaza Strip, and East and West Jerusalem.

The violence experienced by the Palestinians has led to many problems, including the psychological impact on the people created by the siege. Trauma is experienced by all of the people here. This trauma is not limited by age, sex, status, or religion. Women, children, men, shopkeepers, religious leaders, tour guides, police officers, and teachers are all traumatized

by the violence being perpetrated against them. Tanks fire on a regular basis into civilian areas, helicopters attack homes, businesses, and people. After a while, the people are so frightened by the sight of such high-tech weaponry that the sight or sound of these weapons causes trauma. Mental health, as well as physical health, are seriously disturbed by the impact of violence. It is rare to come across someone who has not suffered health problems during the time of the siege. **While physical structures may be rebuilt, it is much more difficult to rebuild the psyche of an entire people who have been traumatized by the policies and practices of their oppressors. The implications of this trauma will have to be dealt with for years to come, even after the occupying colonial power withdraws its weapons of destruction and fear!**

Stress related sicknesses are on the rise. They are becoming more and more prevalent within society. The lack of medical supervision, as many “patients” are unable to travel to hospital only adds to this problem. The number of cases of stress related illness has grown exponentially over the last months, and with the current siege, there is little hope that this will change in the near future.

The physical impact of the violence is the most apparent for the observer. It takes little time to see the devastation that has occurred at the hands of the occupying colonial power. Homes with new “windows”, blown out by missiles fired from tanks and helicopters, are common place. In some villages, an observer would have to look long and hard to find a single pane of glass still intact. The livelihood of the people is being taken from them. Olive trees, orchards, agricultural land, and greenhouses have all been destroyed/confiscated. Roads connecting villages have been destroyed by trenches or blocked with piles of earth or large concrete blocks. Buildings, farms, and factories have been destroyed through shelling and shooting.

The economic impact of violence is crippling for the Palestinian people. This is well documented by journalists, economists, and diplomats, both international, as well as Palestinian and Israeli. Tourism, farming, construction, and industries have all been devastated by the destruction of roads, closure policy, travel restrictions on tourists, and restrictions placed on the indigenous people. Unemployment has reached dangerous levels because of the siege and lack of possibilities for work. **The frustration created by unemployment has caused the people to feel inadequate, and eventually leads to greater psychological impact due to the violence.** As a result of the siege, fear and violence of the occupier, the entire population of the West Bank (as always, including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip has been taken hostage under the new Israeli apartheid policy.

There is a great political impact due to the current violence and siege. The arms of dialogue have been replaced by the dialogue of arms. The Palestinian Authority is unable to do what is considered necessary of them. Programs and Ministries have not been able to locate the proper funding to support their work. The United Nations special envoy to the region has warned that the Palestinian Authority is teetering on collapse because it does not have the monetary funds to pay its workers and staff. He said that it is only a matter of time before there is nothing left for the colonial power to hold “peace talks” with.

Because of the current siege, all the violence the indigenous people are facing, the psychological, physical, economic, and political impact of the violence, occupation, and oppression, there is an increased number of Palestinian people seeking to emigrate. Palestinians are forced to look outside for work to support their families. With their homes and businesses destroyed, there is less to hold them to their native land, and as they are not people who appreciate being subjected to such hardship, hatred, racism, bigotry, and de facto apartheid, they are looking elsewhere for employment, security, freedom, liberty, and justice. Visas are readily available for anyone with a one-way ticket out of the country. The Israeli policy seems to be to let people leave if, and only if, it looks likely that they will not return.

The Israeli policy on dealing with the Palestinians is well known and documented at this point, and is possibly best represented here, “We declare openly that the Arabs have no right to settle on even one centimeter of Eretz Israel... Force is all they do or ever will understand. We shall use the ultimate force until the Palestinians come crawling to us on all fours... When we have settled the land, all the Arabs will be able to do about it will be to scurry around like drugged roaches in a bottle” (Israeli Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan, quoted in *The New York Times*, 14 April 1983). The persistent suppression, occupation, subjugation, and siege perpetrated by this formidable colonial power are disastrous to the indigenous people of Palestine/Israel. It has been said, diplomacy is the art of delaying the inevitable. If this is the case the Palestinians seem to want no more of it. “Why should we all continue to lose our daughters and sons, parents and spouses, brothers and sisters?” There will come a time when the two peoples that now inhabit this land, the colonials and the indigenous, will live together, for the simple fact remains, neither will leave on their own, and we pray that the world will not allow either to be forced out.