

## 'Cleansing' the Two-state 'Vision' in Jerusalem

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"Israel Slides towards the Disastrous One State Trap," The Baltimore Sun's editorial concluded on June 5. The conclusion is no more true than in Jerusalem, where systematically and persistently Israel is accelerating her "Israelization" plans for eastern Jerusalem that will in the foreseen future doom the "land-for-peace" formula as obsolete, outdated and dead letter, and rule out the widely trumpeted solution of the two-state "vision" based on it as "unrealistic" wishful thinking, unless the world community intervenes with determination to make a difference in salvaging whatever remains of potential peace prerogatives in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

"Forty years later, Jerusalem still a divided city," CNN reported on June 7. Israel officially claims that the "eternal" capital of Israel was irreversibly "reunified" and will remain "undivided." However "the mantra is accurate only as myth," Kevin Peraino wrote in the Newsweek on June 4. Geographical, demographic, legal and political realities on the ground dispel Israeli claims as no more than day dreaming of an occupying power determined to continue challenging those realities as well as the world community who sees peace can only make or break in Jerusalem .

Israel is refutably invalidating her "unification" claims by unmercifully "dividing" the city with a concrete barrier, condemned by Palestinians as "the Apartheid Wall," which is expected to be finished by early next year. She claims, "The fence is not political. It is not a border. It is only a security fence," according to Nezah Mashiah, an official at Israel 's "Defense" Ministry who oversees the project. The 'Wall' has absorbed 88,000 Jewish settlers in eastern Jerusalem but cut off 55,000 Palestinian Jerusalem tax payers, says the Israeli Peace Now. Asking anybody to draw a map of today's municipal boundaries would be an impossible mission; Israeli urban planners and security experts are already having a headache in deciding the route of the "security barrier."

The division was recently highlighted by a move to create an Arab - Palestinian municipality council independent of the Israeli Jewish city council imposed on Jerusalem since 1967, which coincided both with a U.S. Congress motion to move the U.S. embassy in Israel to the Holy City and with Israeli celebrations in the city to mark the 40 anniversary of its "reunification" on June 5 that year, celebrations that were boycotted by all the diplomatic corps accredited to the Hebrew state.

Since Israel cut Jerusalemites off their Palestinian compatriots in 1993 she did everything possible to finish off their civil organization that could preserve their national identity, from the Orient House to the Association of Palestinian Writers. But recently more than 53 institutions grouped together under the Jerusalem Association of Civil Institutions, have announced their intention to form a separate and independent municipality: "All U.N. resolutions since 1948 are based on the fact that Jerusalem is occupied territory, and that

the occupation has no right to change its legal status, its geographical character or demographic makeup, and it is the right of its residents to take the necessary steps to organize and maintain their civilian lives," they said in a statement last week; a similar message was sent to U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

UN Security Council resolutions 252, 267, 271, 298, 476 and 478 – passed without U.S. objections during both Democratic and Republican administrations – specifically call on Israel to rescind its annexation and other efforts to alter the city's legal status. Article 5 of resolution 478 specifically calls on all UN member states not to recognize Israel's annexation efforts. U.N. Security Council resolution 242, long seen as the basis for Arab-Israeli peace, emphasizes the "inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war."

### **Self-contradictory U.S. Policies**

Ironically however U.S. lawmakers were not only trivially insensitive to international legitimacy when they overwhelmingly endorsed and celebrated one of Israel's spoils of her 1967 conquests by calling on the President on June 5 to make good on the 1995 Jerusalem Act, but were also self-contradictory when they days later passed another congressional resolution reaffirming the United States' "commitment to a true and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on the establishment of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, and with recognized borders."

Similarly, the Israel Zionist Council has petitioned the Government to amend the "Basic Law: Jerusalem, Capital of Israel," known as the (former prime minister Menachem) Begin law, which was passed on 30 July 1980 and reads: "Jerusalem, Capital of Israel: 1. Jerusalem, complete and united, is the capital of Israel. Seat of the President, the Knesset, the Government and the Supreme Court: 2. Jerusalem is the seat of the President of the State, the Knesset, the Government and the Supreme Court." Seems unsatisfied with this text, the Zionist Council is seeking to have the words "and the Jewish people" added after the words "capital of Israel." Justifying the move, Professor Uzi Arad, Head of the Council's strategic department was quoted by The Jerusalem Post as saying the change is "a reflection of the political, social, historic and moral situation that exists in any case."

U.S. President George W. Bush was more realistically adaptable to the world community's sensitivities and on June 1 extended a waiver of the 1995 Jerusalem Embassy Act on moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, "to protect the national security interests of the United States," the White House said in a statement. The waiver came days before the U.S. House of Representatives on June 5 passed without opposition a non-binding resolution calling on Bush to make good on the 1995 Act. The Senate was set to follow suit. The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America commended the bipartisan resolution "relating to the 40th anniversary of the reunification of the City of Jerusalem."

European major donors to Bush's "vision" of a two-state solution were more balanced, though miserably less decision-makers, than their American co-sponsors of the envisioned plan and more sensitive to peace-making than the Zionist leaders of Israel. Germany, the rotating presidency of the European Union, in a letter from the German foreign ministry to the Speaker of the Knesset, Dalia Itzek, refused to attend the Israeli official 40th anniversary celebrations of "reunifying" Jerusalem, where no single foreign embassy retains premises anymore and where the celebrations were also boycotted by all foreign envoys.

## **'Israelization' Accelerated**

Regardless however, Israel is sustaining her unabated "Israelization" plans inside and outside the Holy City's municipal borders, and is encouraged by the congressional support as well as by a U-turn in the policies of the administration of her US strategic ally and the helpless European inaction to confuse her real intentions of bulldozing the two-state vision first of all in Jerusalem with the same bulldozers that are wiping out the Palestinian reality in the city and trying to create a new Israeli reality there.

"The Palestinian dream to see East Jerusalem become the capital of Palestine, which in the early 1990s appeared within reach, now appears further than ever from being attained ... What's left of the future capital of the Palestinian state are heaps of ruins, a political phantom; a surrounded city, encircled by settlements and isolated from the rest of the West Bank, a city that had already been dying for 15 years before the separation fence came to finish it off," Dr. Hillel Cohen wrote in his new book, "The Market Square Is Empty: The Rise and Fall of Arab Jerusalem, 1967-2007." (Quoted by Sayed Kashua, "Loosing Jerusalem ," Haaretz, June 10, 2007)

The first public proof of Israel's real intentions was unfortunately American and surfaced with the letter of guarantees, condemned by Palestinians as "Balfore Declaration II," President Bush wrote to the comatose former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on April 14, 2004, whereby Bush subscribed to Israel's interpretation of the status quo in the West Bank, Jerusalem inclusive, and ruled out a return to June 4, 1967 armistice line of 1948, the return of Palestinian refugees and dismantling there of the illegal Jewish colonial settlements, home to 450.000 settlers, as "unrealistic," in a 180 degrees U-turn drawing on an almost bipartisan congressional consensus on the U.S. policy vis-à-vis the Israeli settlements, which were all declared illegal by previous administrations.

Bush's letter was a par excellence example of words-versus-deeds policies because the content thereof is in a head-to-head contradiction with his "vision" of the two-state solution. No wonder then that Israel embarked on her unilateral plans to divide the occupied West Bank between the occupying power and the occupied people, who are left with 42 percent of the area for their promised state, but the division move stopped short of encompassing Jerusalem, a city spared for unifying Israelization plans.

The latest Israelization move was a governmental plan to move all ministries and government offices to Jerusalem , except the "Ministry of Defense," to house at least 10.000 staff in premises that will be built on 125.000 square meters to be cut off the Palestinian-owned area where Palestinians hope to set up the capital of their envisioned state.

Moroccan King Mohammed VI, who chairs the Al Quds (Jerusalem) Committee of the 57-member Organization of the Islamic Conference OIC) and whose country is home to the largest Jewish community in any Arab or Muslim country, warned against such a move; the Arab monarch urged the heads of State of the U.N. Security Council member countries, Pope Benedict XVI and presidents of the EU and EC, among others, to use their "good offices" to persuade Israel "to renounce any measure that would in no way serve the cause of peace in the region and in the world."

The Israeli government also has recently allocated \$90 million over eight years until 2013 for maintaining the Israelization of the Old City, \$79 million to attract non-profit groups and NGOs into the city and \$50 million for the Jewish municipality to help bring in more settlers,

whose numbers rocketed from zero to more than 210.000 since 1967, while indigenous Arab citizens are completely cut off western Jerusalem and left with only 9% of the municipal area to accommodate the natural growth of those of them who so far survived what Israeli historian Ilan Pappé termed as Israel's "ethnic cleansing."

According to the Israeli activist Jeff Halper and the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, Israel's "Jerusalem metropolis" covers 10% of the West Bank, 440 sq. km., where 75% of the West Bank settlers live in colonial settlements extending from the Latron (Beit Shemesh) in the West, through Kiriath Sefer to Ramallah in the North then Southeast through Maale Adumim almost to the Jordan River; thence, southwest, the metropolis is due to include the Palestinian cities of Bait Sahour, Bethlehem and the settlements blocks of Efrat and Gush Etzion, thence Westwards to Beitar Illit, Tzur Hadassa and Beit Shemesh.

Maintaining the current Israeli demographic, urban and political plans for the Holy city "means no viable Palestinian state, no Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem, and thus no viable two-state solution," said Saeb Erekat, who heads the Negotiations Affairs Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Israel's partner to the Oslo Accords. "Greater Jerusalem" breaks the territorial contiguity needed for a viable Palestinian state by separating the southern part of the West Bank from the northern part.

Proclaiming the conquered city as the prize of all prizes of Israel's 1967 conquests, former "Defence" Minister Moshe Dayan said that year: "We have united Jerusalem ... We have returned to the holiest of our holy places, never to part from it again." But the euphoria of 1967 is fading away as a "wasted victory," as *The Economist* had marked the 40th anniversary, and increasing numbers of daring souls are voicing more realistic warnings and calls to say "the once unthinkable: that Jerusalem may never truly be united," according to Kevin Peraino in the *Newsweek*, who quoted historian Tom Segev as saying: "All these dreams of 1967 were actually illusions."

In a May 15 op-ed in the *New York Sun* ("Mounting Figures"), the writer Hillel Halkin marked the 40th anniversary of the "reunification" of Jerusalem by calling for its division, citing among other reasons that in the post-1967 municipal borders there are 28 Arab villages, and concluding his op-ed with a bold call on Israel to relinquish Islam's third holiest site of Al-Aqsa Mosque compound known to Jews as the Temple Mount, claiming its retention is an imperative "felt more strongly by religious Muslims than by religious Jews."

Other whistle blowers are citing demography as the reason. Latest Israeli surveys and studies exaggerate the forecasted Arab population numbers, saying they increased at more than twice the rate of its Jewish inhabitants over the last decade and predicting that only 60% of the "capital"'s residents will be Jews by 2020. The American-Israel Demographic Research Group's 2,400-word study on May 15, titled, "Realities on the Ground: Jerusalem 2007 - 2025," could be a reference. Accordingly they prefer division to preserve the Jewish purity of the Jewish unilaterally-declared capital. However unification advocates promote the same unconfirmed statistics as a justification for persisting with what Ilan Pappé describes as the ethnic cleansing strategic policies. The "Realities on the Ground: Jerusalem 2007 - 2025," concludes however, citing data from Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, that for the first time since 1948, Israel holds a strong demographic advantage in Jerusalem: "There is no inherent demographic crisis for Jerusalem's Jews."

## **Historical Trend: Message of War**

Illusions or no illusions Israel seems stubbornly clinging to biblical “promises.” “The international community has sought to re-establish the status quo ante (in Jerusalem ) as part of a political settlement,” the former Israeli ambassador to the United Nations, Dore Gold, wrote in *The New York Sun* on June 8, but “A completely new international legal reality emerged since 1967,” he added. Finding solace in U.S. backing, he quoted U.S. ambassador to the U.N. in 1967, Arthur Goldberg, as saying: “Resolution 242 in no way refers to Jerusalem and this omission was deliberate.” He also quoted former secretary of state, George Shultz, as saying in 1988 that Israel “will never negotiate from or return” to the 1967 lines, before he cited Bush’s letter to Sharon in April 2004. But Gold missed to note that none of them was a representative of international law or legitimacy.

Gold was in fact merely confirming an Israeli historical trend. Israel’s policies and plans in Jerusalem are building on an historical trend that has its base precedent in the immediate aftermath of the British mandate, which on May 15, 1948 left the fate of Palestine and Palestinians to the unmerciful whims of the Zionist leaders and the overwhelming military superiority of their paramilitary troops and terrorist gangs who came to lead the Jewish people.

That was the first of several major Israeli missed opportunities to trade victorious conquests for peace. Earlier the Zionist Jewish leadership missed minor opportunities like the Jewish self-rule proposal of late Jordanian monarch King Abdullah I. The recently proposed Arab Peace Initiative to trade the Israeli conquests of 1967 for a full and collective peace with the 22-member League of Arab States was the recent major missed opportunity.

On the basis of the principle of “land-for-peace” as stipulated by the U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 that were adopted after the 1967 and 1973 wars respectively, the international community has developed the currently deadlocked and dormant Arab - Israeli peace process, the cornerstone of which is creating a viable and independent Palestinian state living in security and peacefully alongside Israel.

Only the Israeli military occupation of Arab lands on June 5, 1967 made possible the two-state option, which was originally decided by the United Nations General Assembly’s resolution 181 of 1947, but was precluded the following year by Israel’s military victory in the Arab - Israeli war, which created the Palestinian refugee problem and resulted in her first military expansion.

Had Israel used her conquered land then as a bargaining chip and traded her conquests for peace on the basis of the two-state solution of resolution 181, which ruled out Jerusalem to an international status not subject to the jurisdiction of either state, the conflict might not have dragged on to the present time.

But Israel did not, and since then set out a precedent that her military onslaughts and conquests are irreversible and won’t be reversed, at least not voluntarily, unless she is forced to. If this precedent is to serve as indicator of her stance vis-à-vis her conquests of 1967, it will explain her policies in the occupied Palestinian territories over the past 40 years.

However, by upholding this historical trend Israel is only sending the wrong message to the Arab-Palestinian side of the conflict, namely that she will never cede the spoils of her conquests unless forced to. Proving the point was her converging back from the Sinai following the 1973 war, from southern Lebanon following 18-year of stubborn resistance and

from the Gaza Strip after proving uncontrollable. This is a message of war, not peace.

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