

Made in Israel: The Crisis in Gaza

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The old dream of Ariel Sharon is becoming a reality: Palestinians are killing Palestinians, and Israel is counting the number of victims with great satisfaction. The tears of Israeli leaders are crocodile tears, and their claims that they are sorry for the tragic developments in Gaza are mere hypocrisy. The bloody confrontations were predictable, and the Israeli-US responsibility and active involvement are crystal clear.

Many Israeli journalists are analyzing Israel's responsibility as indirect: "1.4 million people closed in a small territory like Gaza, without any possibility to have normal economic life, but also without the possibility of escape, are doomed to kill each other... like mice closed in a box." That zoological explanation is not only typically racist, but also based on a huge understatement. For, the Israeli and US role in the present confrontations was much more than simply "creating the conditions" for an inner-Palestinian conflict.

For months, the US State Department has been pushing the Fatah leadership to launch a military offensive against Hamas, and two weeks ago, Israel was giving a green light to the entry of huge quantity of arms for Fatah militias in Gaza. In that sense, the Israeli part in the present situation is not only conjectural, but an active role.

Who is the Aggressor?

"Hamas is taking over," "A Hamas coup d'etat"-these are some of the headlines from the Israeli newspapers in the last days, repeating the big lies of the Tel Aviv and Washington administrations. It appears that there is a need to make clear what should be obvious: Hamas smashed Fatah in the last Palestinian elections, after an electoral process that the whole international community, including Washington, hailed as "the most democratic ever in the Middle East." Unquestionable democratic process and massive popular support, few regimes can claim such legitimacy.

Despite their huge victory, Hamas accepted to share the power with Fatah in a national unity government formed under the hospices of Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and hailed by the entire international community, with the exception of Washington and Israel. The political platform of the new government gave de facto recognition the State of Israel and endorsed the strategy of peaceful negotiations, based on the mechanism of Oslo.

The priority of the new government was to deal with the burning domestic issues-economic improvement, restoration of law and order in Gaza, fighting the endemic corruption of the old Fatah-led administration-while allowing President Mahmoud Abbas and the PLO to continue the negotiation process, if and when Israel would accept to renew it.

Hamas' moderate government platform, however, was confronted by two powerful enemies:

a segment of the Fatah cadres who are not ready to renounce their monopoly in the political power, and the material privileges connected to that monopoly, and the US-Israeli neoconservative governments, which are conducting a global crusade against political Islam. Muhammad Dahlan, former Preventive Security chief and present Security Adviser of Mahmoud Abbas represent both: they are the executioners of Washington's plans in the Palestinian leadership, as well as the representatives of those corrupt Fatah leaders who are ready to do everything in order not to lose their economic resources.

Since the electoral victory of Hamas, Dahlan's militia has been provoking the government, attacking Hamas militias and refusing to let the government control the Palestinian police forces. Despite Dahlan's aggression, Hamas has been doing its best to reach an agreement with Dahlan, asking its own activists to refrain from counter-violence. However, when it became clear that Dahlan was not looking for a compromise, but indeed attempting to liquidate Hamas, the Islamic organization had no alternative but to defend itself and fight back.

The Algerian Model

The US-Israeli plan is part of a global strategy aimed at imposing governments which are loyal to their interests, against the will of the local population. Algeria provides an example of such a strategy, but also of its failure and its colossal human cost: the unquestionable electoral victory of the FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) over the corrupted and discredited FLN, in 1991, was followed by a coup d'état, supported by France and the US, which paved the way for a civil war that lasted for more than a decade and provoked more than one hundred thousand civilian victims.

Hamas has clearly learned from the Algerian tragedy, and decided not to let Dahlan's plans succeed in his attempt to take power by force. Enjoying the support of the majority of the local population, Hamas militants smashed Fatah in less than two days, despite the arms supplied, indirectly, by Israel: a corrupt militia without any popular support could not face a relatively disciplined and highly motivated organization.

Even after its smashing victory on Fatah, Hamas leadership has reiterated its intention to keep a national unity government and not to exploit the failed coup d'état of Fatah as a pretext to eradicate the organization or to exclude it from the government. Fatah leadership, however, decided to cut any kind of relation with Hamas, and to establish a government without Hamas... in the West Bank. Another dream of Ariel Sharon is becoming a reality: total separation between the West Bank and Gaza, the later being considered a hopeless "Hamastan," a terrorist entity in which there are no civilians, but only terrorists which can be put under a total state of siege, and doomed to starvation.

Washington, which fully endorses this policy, promised its full support to Mahmoud Abbas and his new Bantustan in the West Bank, and Ehud Olmert decided to release some of the Palestinian money that is in the Israeli government hands.

Not a Civil War

One of the Israeli and US administrations' objectives failed however: there is no chaos in Gaza. On the contrary. As one Palestinian security officer told Haaretz (17 June): "For a very long time the city has not been quiet. I prefer the present situation to the previous one. I can, finally, go out from my house..." The eradication of Fatah gangs from Gaza may put an

end to a long period of anarchy, and allow for a return to a certain level of normal life. The latest events confirmed that Hamas does have the power to impose it.

Israeli talks about a “Palestinian civil war” are no more than wishful thinking. The armed confrontation was between armed militia only, and if, unfortunately, there were civilian casualties, there were what the US army calls “collateral damage.” The population is indeed politically divided-in the West Bank as well as in Gaza-but not fighting each other, in the meantime at least.

With Gaza being defined as a hostile entity and its whole population as allied to Hamas, there is no doubt that it will be, in the near future, the target of a brutal Israeli aggression: eventual military incursions, bombardments and starvation.

This is why our top priority, in Israel as well as throughout the world, is to organize solidarity with Gaza and its population.

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