

Peace and Justice-Based Solutions for Israel-Palestine Conflict

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Gaza and to a lesser extent West Bank have seen so much violence that talk of durable peace is almost vanishing in the local as well as international discourse. Most discussions just now are limited to very temporary solutions based on ceasefire and release of hostages. Of course this is very much needed just now but this should only be the first step in any quest for durable peace.

It needs to be stated loudly and emphatically today that hope for durable peace should never be lost. In the extremely difficult situations that exist today such hope is the only basis for carrying on many good efforts, and this hope should never be lost.

One basic reason why hope for durable peace has been diminishing at a fast pace is that peace has never been given a fair chance. Peace does not appear from miracles. We have to work for peace, work hard, and this can be a long haul.

So much is being done on daily basis for war preparation, involving a very large number of people, with a very big budget provided for this and with enormous efforts being made for military strategy and planning. On the other side, how many people are working daily and with continuity for peace? How many of the best talents are engaged in preparing and improving peace plans? How much budget is provided for peace work? Is it even five per cent of the military budget? Is it even one per cent?

If there is continuing sincere work on daily basis for peace for about five years, on a big enough scale, and if there is a firm faith in peace, peaceful solutions will emerge.

Just now we need immediate ceasefire, release of hostages and the start of a big relief and

rehabilitation effort in Gaza. This is the top priority just now but in addition we need efforts for durable peace.

We need the strengthening of peace efforts in Israel as well as in Gaza and West Bank. Specific solutions that have the most chance of success will emerge as people and communities from both sides talk peace with each other. The world will then see that people can be much more committed to peace than their politicians are, and among people women can be most committed to peace. Give them a fair chance, give peace a fair chance.

Such durable peace efforts on both sides of the affected region should be backed and supported fully by a growing peace movement in the USA and other western countries, in neighboring Arab countries, in Iran and in fact in all parts of the world. A broad-based peace effort in Israel and Palestine which gets such wide support at world level is most likely to achieve durable good results.

This peace effort should be integrated well with justice concerns, but at the same time it will be necessary to avoid such exaggerated interpretation of justice concerns which makes it impossible to achieve reconciliation and peace. Peace is achieved in a process of give and take, and not on the basis of repeated recalling of all the terrible injustices and atrocities that have taken place in the past.

The basis of future peace with justice is likely to be that the two state solution emerges in such a way that the Palestinians have a sovereign state with a fair share of resources, and its area is defined in such a way that its people do not have to pass through Israeli gates or need permission of a different country for travelling within their country. At the same the two sides should have a peace agreement that they will not allow their territories to be used for attacks against each other. This will help to build trust. All those who contest elections –and hence can emerge as future leaders on both sides—will have to declare their commitment to peace agreements that are reached, and hence agree to work within this framework.

While such peace will be a big blessing for the people on both sides on its own, in addition it will be very helpful to both sides for coping with challenges like environmental crisis, including climate change and worsening disasters like sea-storms and droughts. This entire region with its aridity, deserts and coastal areas is very vulnerable to climate change.

So instead of the extremely aggressive slogans of present times, in a future of peace we may hear something like this—

Between the Sea and the River,

Two friendly nations can prosper,

In droughts and in storms,

They are helpful and together.

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